

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Accounts and Audit Committee 7 February 2024
Executive and Council 21 February 2024
Report for: Decision
Report of: The Executive Member for Finance, Change and Governance and the Director of Finance and Systems

Report Title

TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2024/25 – 2026/27

Summary

This report outlines the:

- strategy to be implemented during this period for investments and borrowing,
- outlook for interest rates,
- management of associated risks,
- policy to be adopted on Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) and
- Prudential Indicators.

Recommendations

That Accounts & Audit Committee be requested to note and recommend the report to Executive.

That Executive notes the report and recommends that Council approves;

- the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 – 2026/27 including the:
- policy on debt strategy as set out in section 4;
- the updated policy on Minimum Revenue Provision in section 5;
- Investment Strategy as set out in section 6;
- Prudential Indicators and limits including the Authorised Limit (as required by section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2003), Operational Boundary, Minimum Revenue Provision Statement and Investment criteria as detailed in Appendix 2.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Frank Fallon

Background papers: None

Relationship to Corporate Priorities	Value for Money
Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	Not applicable
Financial	The treasury management strategy will aim to minimise risk to the Council whilst maximising investment interest. The Council's debt position will be administered effectively and any new loans taken will be in-line with that provided for within the Medium Term Financial Plan and Prudential Indicators as approved by Council.
Legal Implications:	Actions are undertaken in accordance with legislation issued by Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and guidance from Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) Prudential Code and the Treasury Management Code of Practice.
Equality/Diversity Implications	All treasury management transactions undertaken by the Council are carried out with institutions with no known direct links to any illegal regimes or which promote the use of forced labour.
Sustainability Implications	The Council, when undertaking any treasury management investment fully supports the ethos of socially responsible investments and will avoid direct investment in institutions with material links to environmentally harmful activities. Opportunities to invest monies in products which both supports sustainable assets and complies with the Council's investment strategy will continue to be explored as and when they become available.
Carbon Reduction	Not directly applicable – See above
Staffing/E-Government/Asset Management Implications	Not applicable
Risk Management Implications	The monitoring and control of risk underpins all treasury management activities and these factors have been incorporated into the systems and procedures for this function which are independently tested on a regular basis. Failure to properly manage and monitor the Council's loans and investments could lead to service failure and a loss of reputation. Whilst no Treasury activity is without risk, the Council's in-house treasury management team continually monitor risks to ensure that security of capital sums is maintained at all times and adverse fluctuations in interest rates are avoided.
Health & Wellbeing Implications	Not applicable
Health and Safety Implications	Not applicable

Executive Summary

This report has been prepared in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure Rules number 8 and outlines the forecasted treasury management activities for the forthcoming three years. Additional reports are produced during the course of the year informing Members of the preceding financial year actual activities together with a current mid-year update.

Economic position (Section 3)

Major influences on the Authority's treasury management strategy for 2024/25:

- Impact of higher interest rates and inflation
- weakening economic outlook
- uncertain political climate due to an upcoming general election
- war in Ukraine and the Middle East

Debt (Section 4)

- New external borrowing will be taken to assist in financing the capital borrowing requirement as outlined in the 2024/27 Capital Programme report
- All associated costs of new borrowing to be contained within the Medium Term Financial Plan
- Debt restructuring exercises will only be undertaken in order to produce revenue savings or reduce overall treasury risk

MRP (Section 5 and Appendix 2)

- MRP Policy and any potential review
- The Council switched from an approach of setting aside MRP for both supported and unsupported (prudential) borrowing on an equal instalment basis to an annuity basis in 2023/24

Further detail can be found in Section 5 of this report.

Investments (Section 6 and Appendix 3)

- The Council's investment criteria remains unchanged from that previously adopted of **S**LY, **S**ecurity of capital first, then **L**iquidity of its cash flows and finally **Y**ields.
- Council is required to agree the Investment criteria and this is set out for Member approval at Appendix 3.

Prudential Indicators and limits (Section 8 and Appendix 2)

- Council is required to approve a set of Prudential Indicators and limits ensuring its capital expenditure plans and borrowing remain robust, prudent, affordable and sustainable. These are detailed at Appendix 2 for Member approval.

Background

- 1.1 The Council is required to operate a balanced budget with cash raised during the year being used to pay for expenditure incurred. A primary part of the treasury management operation is to ensure that the Council's cash is organised in accordance with the relevant professional codes, so that sufficient cash is available to meet service activity with any temporary surplus monies being invested in low risk institutions.
- 1.2 Another function of this service is to ensure that the Council's capital borrowing requirement, the longer-term cash flow planning, is provided for which may involve arranging long or short-term loans or using longer-term cash flow surpluses. In addition to this and when it is financially prudent to do so, any debt previously obtained may be restructured.
- 1.3 The Council's in-house treasury management team will ensure that:
 - all treasury management transactions undertaken comply with the statutory requirements as stipulated within the relevant professional codes and legislation (Local Government Act 2003, CIPFA Prudential Code and Treasury Management Code, MRP Guidance, and DLUHC Investment Guidance, (a brief outline of these frameworks is provided at Appendix 1),
 - sufficient cash is available to meet both service activity and the Council's capital strategy,
 - various periodic cash flows are prepared and maintained accurately using all known information available,
 - where capital plans require, appropriate borrowing facilities are undertaken and
 - when financially prudent any debt previously obtained is restructured.
- 1.4 Treasury management is defined by CIPFA as:

"The management of the local authority's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks."
- 1.5 Management of the Treasury function will seek to ensure sufficient funding is in place to cover planned payments or undertaking the investment of temporary surplus funds when available in a secure manner.
- 1.6 Since cash balances generally result from reserves and balances, it is paramount to ensure adequate security of all monies invested is achieved to avoid any potential loss of principal which in turn would result in a loss to the General Fund Balance
- 1.7 The scope of investments within the Council's operations now includes both conventional treasury investments, (the placing of residual cash from the Council's functions as covered by this report), and more strategic investments, such as regeneration properties, which are reported and managed through the capital programme. To assist with this activity, the Council uses a specialist external advisor.
- 1.8 Whilst any strategic initiatives or loans to third parties will impact on the treasury function, these activities are classed as non-treasury activities, (arising from capital expenditure) and are separate from the day-to-day treasury management activities. Details of these transactions are shown in Appendix 4 for reference.
- 1.9 Members are required to receive and approve, as a minimum, three main treasury reports each year which incorporate a variety of policies, forecasts and actuals as follows;

- **Annual Treasury Strategy** (issued February - is the most important report and includes):
 - A MRP policy (this reflects capital expenditure previously financed by borrowing and how the principal element is charged to revenue over time),
 - The treasury management strategies (how the investments and borrowings are to be organised) including treasury prudential indicators and limits and
 - An investment strategy (the parameters on how investments are to be managed).
 - **Mid-year update** – (issued November / December – this provides an);
 - update for Members with the progress of the treasury management activities undertaken for the period April to September and
 - opportunity for amending prudential indicators and policies if necessary.
 - **Annual outturn** – (issued June);
 - this provides details of actual treasury operations undertaken in the previous financial year.
- 1.10 Each of the above 3 reports are scrutinised by the Council’s Accounts & Audit Committee before being forwarded onto either Executive or Council for final approval.
- 1.11 This report which has been prepared in accordance with the required statutory regulations and guidance, includes;
- The current treasury position (section 2);
 - Economic & Interest Rate forecast (section 3)
 - Debt Strategy (section 4)
 - Minimum Revenue Provision (section 5)
 - Investment Strategy (section 6)
 - Investment Risk Benchmarking (section 7)
 - Prudential Indicators (section 8)
 - Related Treasury Issues (section 9)
 - Recommendations (section 10)
 - Appendices.
- 1.12 The Council uses Arlingclose as its external treasury management advisors who provide a range of services on treasury matters from the supply of credit ratings to technical support. The Council recognises that there is value in using external providers for this service which is subject to regular reviews.
- 1.13 Whilst the external advisors provide support to the in-house team, the Council will consider all available information when forming an opinion on matters concerning treasury management and acknowledges that the final decision remains with the Council at all times.
- 1.14 The Council also acknowledges the importance of ensuring that all members and staff involved in the treasury management function receive adequate and relevant training in order to undertake the duties and responsibilities allocated to them. This is further highlighted in the CIPFA Code which requires the responsible officer, the Director of Finance and Systems, ensures that members with responsibility for this task, receive adequate training in treasury management.
- 1.15 The CIPFA Treasury Management Code was updated in September 2021 and from 2023 required that all staff involved in the Treasury Management function have the necessary expertise, knowledge and skills to perform their role. In addition board/council members tasked with treasury management responsibilities, including those responsible for scrutiny, have access to training relevant to their needs and those responsibilities.

Regular training is provided to Members of the Accounts and Audit Committee and for reference a member training event was provided on 23rd January 2024 as part of the consideration of this annual strategy by the Council's in-house team and its external advisors Arlingclose. Additional training is also provided as a precursor to the regular updates at year-end and mid-year.

Continuing attendance at relevant courses / seminars / webinars by staff and members as presented by CIPFA, Arlingclose and other suitable professional organisations will be encouraged.

2. Treasury Position

2.1 The Council's investment and debt positions at the beginning of the current financial year and as at 31st December 2023 are listed in the table below;

	31 March 2023		31 December 2023	
	Principal £m	Average Interest Rate %	Principal £m	Average Interest Rate %
DEBT				
<i>Short term (payable before 31.03.24)</i>				
PWLB	4.3	6.62	4.2	6.75
Market	15.0	4.24	0.0	0.00
Sub-total	19.3	4.77	4.2	6.75
<i>Long term (payable after 31.03.24)</i>				
PWLB	277.8	2.32	277.8	2.32
Market	21.0	4.79	21.0	4.79
Sub-total	298.8	2.49	298.8	2.49
Total debt	318.1	2.63	303.0	2.55
INVESTMENTS				
<i>Short term (less than 1 year duration)</i>				
- Instant access	26.3	4.06	7.4	5.32
- Call accounts	0.0	0	0.3	5.14
- Term deposit	27.4	3.92	6.0	4.88
Sub-total	53.7	3.99	13.7	5.12
<i>Long term (greater than 1 year duration)</i>				
- CCLA	4.7	4.65	4.6	5.62
- Strategic Investment programme (SIP)	12.0	n/a	12.0	n/a
Sub-total	16.7	4.65	16.6	5.62
Total Investments	70.4	4.04	30.3	5.25

Information in the above table reflects the;

- level of funds available on a temporary basis for investment purposes which fluctuate on a daily basis due to the timing of precept payments, receipt of grants and spend progress on the capital programme,
- repayment of monies borrowed and;

- value of original monies placed with CCLA was £5m. The fall in value from March 2023 to December 2023, of £0.1m, is representative of a reduction in property values driven, in part, by rising interest rates. Although, capital valuations have shifted down, the rental market is still strong in multiple sectors, and so yields are expected to be less effected.

3. Economic & Interest Rate forecast

3.1 The impact on the UK from higher interest rates and inflation, a weakening economic outlook, an uncertain political climate due to an upcoming general election, together with war in Ukraine and the Middle East, will be major influences on the Authority's treasury management strategy for 2024/25. The Bank of England (BoE) increased Bank Rate to 5.25% in August 2023, before maintaining this level for the rest of 2023. In December 2023, members of the BoE's Monetary Policy Committee voted in favour of keeping Bank Rate at 5.25%.

Office for National Statistics (ONS) figures showed CPI inflation was 4.0% in December 2023, down from a 4.6% rate in the previous month and, in line with the recent trend, lower than expected. The core CPI (excluding energy, food, alcohol and tobacco) inflation rate declined to 5.1% from the previous month's 5.7%, again lower than predictions. Looking ahead, using the interest rate path implied by financial markets the BoE expects CPI inflation to continue falling slowly, but taking until early 2025 to reach the 2% target before dropping below target during the second half 2025 and into 2026.

3.2 Arlingclose produce interest rate projections periodically throughout the year and the latest forecasts (December 2023) are shown below for reference;

Average rates	2023-24 Forecast %	2024-25 Forecast %	2025-26 Forecast %	2026-27 Forecast %
Bank Rate	4.94	5.06	3.88	3.08
Investment Rates 3 month	5.40	5.16	3.93	3.12
PWLB Loan Rates				
5 Year	4.57	4.50	4.23	4.12
20 Year	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.02
50 Year	4.60	4.69	4.70	4.75

3.3 The December 2023 Bank Rate of 5.25% is expected to remain at this level until Q3 2024/25 and then decrease to 4.75% by the end of the financial year.

3.4 The Council will continue to adopt a cautious approach to its treasury management activities whilst utilising the information available from both Arlingclose and other external sources which may become available during this time.

4. Debt Strategy

4.1 The Council's capital expenditure plans are set out in the Capital Programme report and this provides details of the service activity. The treasury management function ensures in accordance with the relevant professional codes, that sufficient cash is available to meet this service activity. This will involve both the organisation of the cash flow and where capital plans require, appropriate borrowing facilities.

- 4.2 The underlying need to borrow comes from the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) which represents the total level of outstanding capital expenditure both historic and current, not yet paid for from either revenue or capital resources (eg capital grants). It is essentially a measure of the Council's indebtedness or its underlying borrowing need.
- 4.3 The Council needs to ensure that its debt does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates going out to 2026/27. Whilst this allows some flexibility for limited early borrowing for future years, it also ensures that borrowing is not undertaken for revenue or speculative purposes. The Director of Finance and Systems can confirm that to date the Council has not exceeded the CFR with its debt.
- 4.4 CFR increases with new debt-financed capital expenditure and reduces with contributions made under Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) and capital receipts used to replace debt. The CFR is not allowed to rise indefinitely and statutory controls are in place to ensure that capital assets are broadly charged to revenue over the life of the asset with an annual revenue charge, the MRP, being applied to reduce the CFR each year.
- 4.5 Included within the CFR are any other long-term liabilities such as Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schemes and finance leases. Whilst these increase the overall balance of the CFR, the Council's borrowing requirement is not increased as this type of liability includes a borrowing facility by the PFI or lease provider. The Council currently has £3.4m (31 March 2024) liability of such schemes within the CFR which is set to fall to £2.20m by 31 March 2027 as highlighted in the table below;

Other long-term liabilities	2023/24 Estimate £000	2024/25 Estimate £000	2025/26 Estimate £000	2026/27 Estimate £000
Total at 1 April	3,755	3,404	3,029	2,628
Expected repayment	(351)	(375)	(401)	(428)
Total at 31 March	3,404	3,029	2,628	2,200

- 4.6 With effect from April 2024, the International Financial Reporting Standard 16 will require that all Council leases are also included within the CFR. Whilst the compliance of this new accounting requirement will impact on the Council's overall long term liabilities, it is deemed at this stage to be immaterial.
- 4.7 The total of the Council's loans outstanding as at 31 December 2023 totalled £303.0m and a breakdown of this debt is provided for reference in Section 2 above.
- 4.8 The Council held, as mentioned above £36.0m of Non-PWLB (Market) loans and of these £15.0m were held at variable rates of interest in the form of Lender's Option Borrower's Option (LOBO) loans. With regards to this type of loan, the lender has the option to propose an increase in the interest rate at set dates and should this situation occur then the Council can either accept the new rate or repay the loan at no additional cost. In accordance with the Director of Finance and Systems delegated authority, the Council repaid the £15m of LOBO loans in June 2023 due to the lender proposing an increase to the interest rate.
- 4.9 The Council continues, as in previous years, to be in an under-borrowed position which reflects that the CFR balance is greater than the level of external debt and this is in line with the majority of other UK local authorities. This under-borrowed position has arisen from previous and current years annual CFR (borrowing need),

not being fully funded with new loans, as cash supporting the Council's reserves, balances and cash flow has been used as a temporary measure.

- 4.10 Since March 2023, the Council's forecast under-borrowing is expected to grow to a level which is not considered sustainable due to the impact on the Council's cash balances. Therefore, the Council will reduce the level of under borrowing over the next couple of years by using external debt to finance in-year borrowing requirements and when asset strategy investments are repaid these receipts will be used to pay back the internal borrowing. This process is expected to begin within 2023/24, with the under-borrowing at year end expected to be £92.7m.

This externalisation of this debt will be funded by existing provisions within the Treasury Management and Strategic Investment Programme revenue budgets. The situation will be continued to be monitored, with considerations given to movements in interest rates and future capital plans. The decision to borrow will be taken by the Director of Finance and Systems per delegated powers, and in accordance with the approved Treasury Management and Debt Strategies.

- 4.11 As in line with previous years requirements any new capital projects which are to be funded from borrowing will need to generate sufficient revenue savings in order to be self-financing therefore avoiding any impact on the Council's MTFP.
- 4.12 The Director of Finance and Systems will continue to monitor interest rates and adopt a sensible approach to changing circumstances within the 2024/25 treasury operations before taking on any new debt.
- 4.13 Based on current commitments the table below reflects the level of external debt the Council potentially may have for the period 2023/24 to 2026/27 which is used to part fund its capital programme. In addition, it reflects to the borrowing required to finance the projected future pipeline of schemes for the Council's Strategic Investments.

	2023/24 Estimate £000	2024/25 Estimate £000	2025/26 Estimate £000	2026/27 Estimate £000
Strategic Investment Programme				
Total at 1 April	170,158	220,514	314,017	365,491
Planned repayments	(154)	(158)	(162)	(25,367)
Potential New external debt	50,510	93,661	51,636	25,367
Sub-Total at 31 March	220,514	314,017	365,491	365,491
General Capital Programme				
Total at 1 April	148,010	148,314	162,324	183,744
Planned repayments	(19,185)	0	0	(2,354)
Potential New external debt	19,490	14,010	21,420	0
Sub-Total at 31 March	148,314	162,324	183,744	181,390
Total Estimated External Debt	368,828	476,342	549,235	546,881
Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	461,524	519,406	587,410	573,233
Estimated (Under)/Over	(92,696)	(43,064)	(38,175)	(26,352)

Borrowing at year end				
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- 4.14 All interest incurred on the Council's external debt is charged directly to treasury management apart from where it has previously been agreed by Executive for interest incurred on major development schemes e.g. Sale Magistrates Court to be capitalised.
- 4.15 When any form of borrowing is required to finance the Council's capital expenditure, be this long or short term, consideration will continue to be given to obtaining funds at the most advantageous rates possible at that time, from the following sources:
- Other local authorities,
 - The Government via the PWLB,
 - Dedicated publicly funded companies e.g. Salix,
 - Financial institutions within the money market (insurance companies, pension funds and banks).
- 4.16 The uptake of new long term debt will be processed in accordance with the Council's approved scheme of delegation and reported to members at the earliest opportunity. Action of this sort will be undertaken in accordance with a number of factors such as affordability, proposed life of the asset, current interest rate projections and advice obtained from the Council's external advisors.
- 4.17 Rescheduling any of the Council's current loans will only be undertaken when it is cost effective to do so taking into account the high early repayment penalty (premium) which will be incurred. This situation will be monitored during the course of the year and in the event any debt rescheduling is done, it will be reported to the Members at the earliest opportunity following its action.
- 4.18 Whilst the Council retains the flexibility to borrow funds in advance of requirement as a result of potential changes to market conditions i.e. a sharp rise in interest rates, it will not borrow more than or in advance of its needs purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed. Any decision to borrow in advance will ensure that funds are taken within the forward approved CFR estimates and that value for money can be demonstrated.
- 4.19 Any borrowing taken by the Director of Finance and Systems in advance of need will be done in accordance with delegated powers and within the constraints stated below;
- no more than 50% of the expected increase in borrowing need (CFR) over the three year planning period and
 - the Council would not look to borrow more than 12 months in advance of need.
- 4.20 The Council's debt maturity profile is provided at Appendix 2 for reference which also shows, in accordance with the Code of Practice, the potential first date the lending banks could amend the rate of interest for their respective market LOBO loans (if any).
- 4.21 *The Council is required to approve;*
- *the above debt strategy and*
 - *as part of the Prudential Indicators and Limits requirement, the limits for external debt in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003, having regard to CIPFA's prudential code before the commencement of each financial year. These limits are detailed at Appendix 2.*

5. Minimum Revenue Provision Strategy

- 5.1. Local Authorities are required by statute to make a charge to their revenue account to provide for the repayment of debt resulting from capital expenditure, known as Minimum Revenue Provision (“MRP”).
- 5.2. The Council is required to determine a level of MRP it considers to be prudent, whilst having regard to the MRP Guidance issued by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (“DLUHC”).
- 5.3. The Guidance provides suggested methods for the calculation of MRP that the DLUHC consider to be prudent, however the Guidance and legislation do not define what is prudent. It is for each Authority to determine a prudent repayment based on its own individual circumstances, considering the medium and long-term financial plans, current budgetary pressures, future capital expenditure plans and funding needs.
- 5.4. Any change to the Authority’s MRP Policy needs to consider:
 - Its appropriateness and compliance with the MRP guidance.
 - Affordability, prudence and sustainability with regard to current revenue budgets of the Authority, balanced against deferring costs of future Council Taxpayers.
 - The Authority’s future capital programme in terms of complexity, variability and deliverability.
 - Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) forecasts and the level of borrowing proposed by the Authority in future years.
 - S151 officer consideration of what constitutes a prudent provision
- 5.5. The main consideration for the MRP policy and referred to in the Guidance is to align the period over which the MRP is made to one that is commensurate with the period over which their capital expenditure provides benefits. Therefore, when considering the broad aim of MRP making a prudent provision, there is scope to recognise the flexibilities which exist in determining an appropriate annual repayment profile and the context of the Authority’s current and future financial position.
- 5.6. An authority may also consider that ‘prudent’ in this context does not necessarily mean the quickest possible repayment period and will also have regard to the prudent financial planning of the authority overall, the flow of benefits from the capital expenditure, and other relevant factors. For example, the MRP Policy may also take account of the financial forecast in the authority’s medium / long term financial plan in determining what is prudent MRP in the circumstances.
- 5.7. The majority of the MRP which the Council sets aside is done so currently under an Annuity Method. Under the Annuity Method, rather than setting aside MRP on an equal instalment basis it operates similar to a repayment mortgage where the principal element of the repayment increases over the life of the loan. Therefore, under this method MRP would start low then increase over the time.
- 5.8. This method is now being increasingly applied by a number of authorities and The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) puts forward the following reasoning for using the annuity method in ‘The Practitioner’s Guide to Capital Finance in Local Government’ (2019) which states:
 - The annuity method provides a fairer charge than equal instalments as it takes account of the time value of money, whereby paying £100 in 10 years’ time is less of a burden than paying £100 now.

- The schedule of charges produced by the annuity method thus results in a consistent charge over an asset's life, considering the real value of the amounts when they fall due.
- The annuity method would then be a prudent basis for providing for assets that provided a steady flow of benefits over their useful life.

5.9. The MRP Policy will continue to be reviewed annually to make sure the approach is prudent and that it is appropriate based on the condition and profile of benefits being derived from the assets.

5.10. In December 2023, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities published a consultation on changes to the Minimum Revenue Provision statutory guidance and regulations. This follows a consultation in November 2021 aimed at strengthening the duty to make Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) and a further consultation in June/July 2022 to address concerns of unintended consequences that the initial consultation may have caused.

As a result of the complexity introduced by the previous consultation outcomes, the government said it would review the Statutory MRP Guidance before putting in place changes to the Regulations, and that no changes would take effect before April 2024. This current consultation, closing in February 2024, is looking for views on the revised MRP guidance and amended regulations, which do not differ substantially from the June/July consultation.

5.11. The council's MRP policy is considered to comply with the updated proposals set out in the consultation. Should there need to be a change in policy following the outcome of the consultation and once the detailed guidance is issued, this will be reported to Council in the next update.

5.12. The Council is requested to approve the MRP Statement as detailed at Appendix 2.

6. Investment Strategy

6.1 In accordance with both DLUHC and CIPFA guidelines, the term 'investments' now reflects both financial and non-financial investments. This report deals solely with financial investments, (as managed by the in-house treasury management team). Non-financial investments, essentially the Council's Strategic Investment programme, are covered in the Capital Strategy, (a separate report).

6.2 When the Council's in-house treasury management team places an investment, it does so with regard to current legislation and guidance as highlighted below but also with regards to the outlook for short-term interest rates.

- DLUHC's Guidance on Local Government Investments ("the Guidance")
- CIPFA Treasury Management in Public Services Code of Practice and Guidance Notes 2021 ("the Code")

6.3 On each occasion when the Council's in-house treasury management team places an investment it continues to ensure that the primary principle will be as that followed in previous years of **SLY**, **S**ecurity of funds first, **L**iquidity second followed by **Y**ield.

6.4 Environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues are increasingly significant for the Council and its residents. The CIPFA Treasury Management Code recommends that councils consider their credit and counterparty policies in light of

ESG information. The Investments Strategy has therefore been updated for 2024/25, to confirm that the Council will only place funds with institutions which are signatories to the UN Principles for Responsible Banking, or are UK Government or Local Government bodies. The UN Principles for Responsible Banking are a unique framework for ensuring that signatory banks' strategy and practice align with the vision society has set out for its future in the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Agreement. The Council will also remove from its approved lending list any financial institutions whose practices or behaviours are not deemed to be commensurable with the values or ethical standards of the Council.

- 6.5 The Council will aim to achieve the maximum return (yield) on its investments appropriate with proper levels of security and liquidity in line with the Council's risk appetite. In order to safeguard its funds the Council's in-house treasury management team will continue its approach of not undertaking any investment without thoroughly understanding the product together with associated risks or in any institution which is paying considerably over and above market levels.
- 6.6 Funds making up the Council's investments derive from monies received in advance of spend requirement and from the balances and reserves which it holds. Whilst greater returns are usually obtainable by investing for longer periods, most cash balances are required to manage the movements of the Council's day to day cash flows. Cash not required for immediate use may be invested for longer periods of time, however before doing so careful assessment to the value to be obtained from this is undertaken.
- 6.7 Guidance issued by both the DLUHC and CIPFA as identified at paragraph 6.2 places a high priority on the management of risk and whilst this will never completely be eliminated, it can be minimised. The Director of Finance and Systems will maintain a counterparty list with the assistance of Arlingclose specifying which institutions it can place funds with. By only placing funds with those institutions which appear on this list it reduces the risk of an institution defaulting, enables diversification and avoids concentration risk. The key credit ratings used to monitor institutions are the short term and long-term ratings.
- 6.8 The Council will use UK institutions, including banks, building societies and local authorities together with banks located in a country which has a minimum Sovereign Long term credit rating of AA-. As well as detailing the criteria institutions must meet to enable them to be included onto the Council's approved lending list, within their respective category, Appendix 2 also specifies both the maximum value and duration funds can be placed at any one time.
- 6.9 Credit rating information is supplied by Arlingclose, the Council's treasury advisors, on all active counterparties that comply with the criteria above. Any rating changes, rating Watches (notification of a likely change), rating Outlooks (notification of the longer-term bias outside the central rating view) are provided to officers immediately after they occur and this information is considered before dealing. For instance, a negative rating Watch applying to an institution at the minimum Council criteria will be suspended from use, with all others being reviewed in light of market conditions.
- 6.10 This approach uses real time credit rating information provided by Arlingclose and enables an institution, should they meet or no longer meet the minimum credit criteria required to be immediately included on to or removed off the approved list.
- 6.11 A full explanation of the credit ratings determining the institutions which the Council will use can be found at Appendix 3.

- 6.12 The Council's in-house treasury management team recognises ratings should not be the sole basis of determining the quality of an institution. It is important to continually assess and monitor institutions both on the economic and political environments in which they operate together with information that reflects the opinion of the markets. To achieve this, the Council will, with Arlingclose, monitor market pricing on additional factors such as "credit default swaps" (CDS) and overlay this information on top of the credit ratings. This additional market information is detailed for Members' reference at Appendix 3.
- 6.13 Members are asked to approve this base criteria, however the Director of Finance and Systems may temporarily restrict further investment activity to those institutions considered of higher credit quality than the minimum criteria set out for approval should any exceptional market conditions be encountered.
- 6.14 Investments will continue to be placed as follows;
- Short-term – cash required to meet known cash flow outgoings in the next month, plus a contingency to cover any unexpected transaction over the same period with bank notice accounts and money market funds being the main methods used for this purpose.
 - Medium-term – cash required to manage the annual seasonal cash flow cycle covering the next 12 months and will generally be in the form of fixed term deposits and ultra-short dated bond funds.
 - Long-term – cash not required to meet any immediate cash flow requirements and can be used primarily to generate investment income by using fixed or structured term deposits, certificates of deposits, government bonds or the Local Authority Property Investment fund.
- 6.15 Investment instruments identified for use in the financial year together with institution limits are detailed for members reference in Appendix 2. The use of longer term instruments (greater than one year from inception to repayment) falls in the Non-specified investment category and these will only be used where the Council's liquidity requirements are safeguarded and be limited to the Prudential Indicator which is also detailed at Appendix 2.
- 6.16 The level of the Council's investments together with the average interest rate, as at 31 December 2023, is provided for reference at paragraph 2.1
- 6.17 *The Council is requested to approve the;*
- *adoption of the above Investment strategy and*
 - *minimum criteria for providing a list of high-quality investment institutions, instruments and limits to be applied as set out at Appendix 2.*

7. Investment Risk Benchmarking

- 7.1 The CIPFA Code of Practice and DLUHC Investment Guidance require that appropriate security and liquidity benchmarks are considered and reported to members annually and details of these are provided below with more detail concerning the security benchmark being provided in Appendix 3.
- 7.2 Benchmarks are simple guides (not limits) to maximum risk for use with cash deposits and so may be breached from time to time, depending on movements in interest rates and institution criteria. The purpose of the benchmark is to assist officers to monitor the current and trend position and amend the operational strategy to manage risk as conditions change. For reference the benchmarks proposed are;
- Security - Each individual year the security benchmark is:

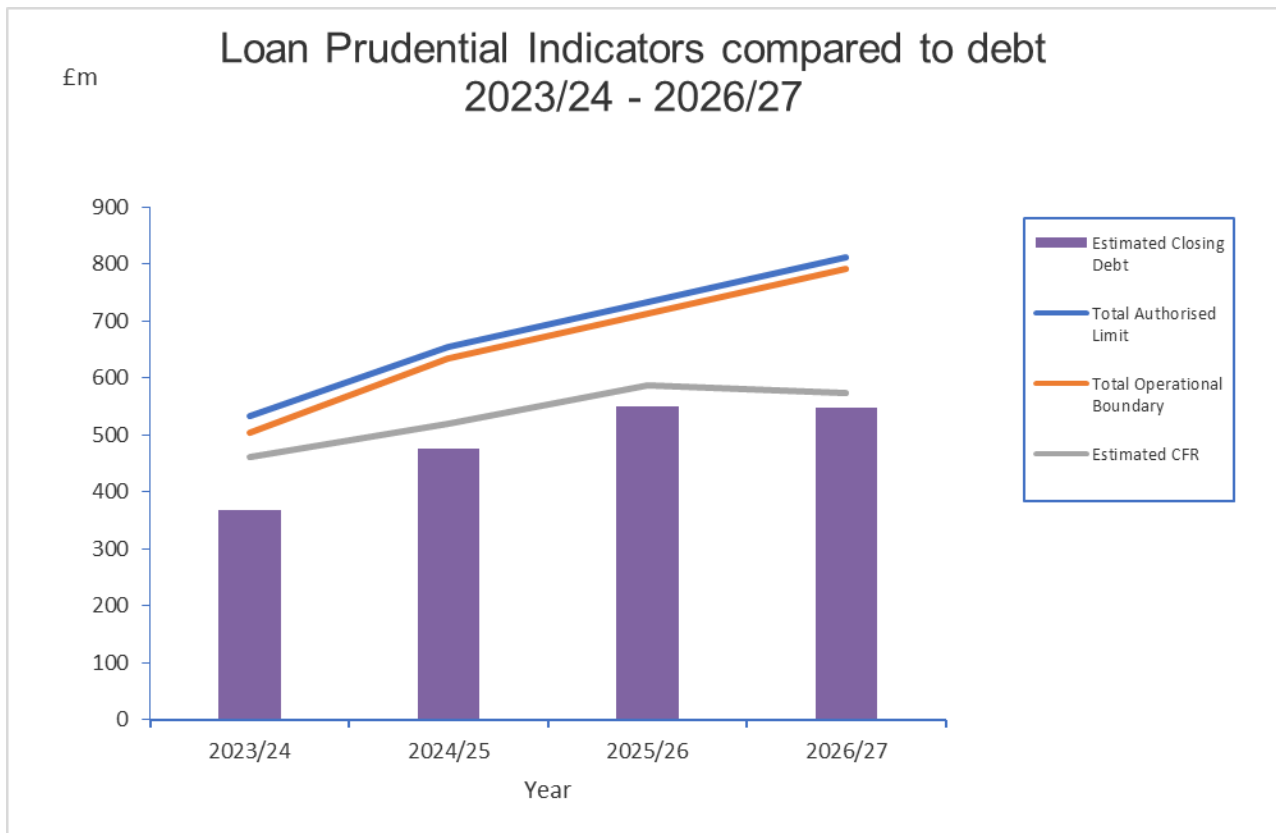
1 year investments	2 year investments	3 year investments
0.03%	0.08%	0.10%

Note - This benchmark is an average risk of default measure and would not constitute an expectation of loss against a particular investment. At the end of December 2023, the Council's default rate of its investments placed was 0.03% which is in line with the 1 year benchmark of 0.03%.

- Liquidity - The current CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice defines this as *“having adequate, though not excessive cash resources, borrowing arrangements, overdrafts or standby facilities to enable at all times to have the level of funds available which are necessary for the achievement of its business / service objectives”*.
 - Weighted Average Life (WAL) - benchmark for 2024/25 is set at 6 months, with a maximum of 3 years for cash time deposits;
 - Liquid short term deposits - at least £5m is available within a week's notice.
- Yield- The Council aims to achieve a return on its investments of greater than 1 month Sterling Overnight Index Average (SONIA) rate.

8. Prudential Indicators

- 8.1 A number of prudential indicators have been devised for the treasury management process and these have been prepared to assist managing risk and reduce the impact of an adverse movement in interest rate. These indicators have been set at levels which do not restrict day to day activities whilst at the same time ensure the Council's capital expenditure plans are prudent, affordable and sustainable.
- 8.2 The graph below shows how two of these prudential indicators (Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary) relate to forecast levels of debt.



8.3 *Members are requested to approve the full set of Prudential Indicators for the Council's treasury management activities as detailed at Appendix 2.*

9. Related Treasury Issues

9.1 Asset Investment Strategy. During 2017/18 the Council introduced a programme to acquire suitable assets which will deliver significant regeneration benefits for the area and increase the Council's income generating capacity thereby enabling it to maintain the provision of services in future years.

9.2 Whilst investments under Asset Investment Strategy are made to support policy related activities and are therefore considered outside the treasury management function, their implementation will have an impact on the Council's cash flow. All such investments are also considered on each occasion in accordance with the principles set out in paragraphs 6.2 and 6.3 above.

9.3 International Financial Reporting Standards 9 (IFRS9). This was introduced to enable a reader of the Council's accounts to fully assess the worth and risk of its financial instruments with any potential losses or profits being taken to the accounts in full in the year they occur. Whilst IFRS 9 is primarily a re-classification not a re-valuation exercise, its introduction has not had any major impact for the Council to date. Currently there is one investment which is affected by this re-classification which is placed with the pooled Church Commissioners Local Authority in its Property fund. To mitigate against revaluation losses or gains impacting on the Council's General Fund, DLUHC issued an override which has been extended to 31 March 2025 enabling local authorities' time to either arrange for a planned exit or for potential surpluses to be placed into an unusable reserve and applied in those years when a downward revaluation occurs.

The Council's in-house team will;

- continue to monitor both the monthly valuations received for this investment and the quarterly market forecasts produced to ensure that any potential losses in valuation are kept to a minimum and
- consider setting aside a proportion of the annual interest received into a reserve for use to smooth out any potential losses.

10. Recommendations

That Accounts & Audit Committee be requested to note and recommend the report to Executive.

That Executive notes the report and recommends that Council approves;

- the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 – 2026/27 including the:
- policy on debt strategy as set out in section 4;
- the Minimum Revenue Provision policy as set out in section 5;
- Investment Strategy as set out in section 6;
- Prudential Indicators and limits including the Authorised Limit (as required by section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2003), Operational Boundary, Minimum Revenue Provision Statement and Investment criteria as detailed in Appendix 2.

Other Options

This report is a mandatory report which has been produced in order to comply with Financial Procedure Rules and relevant legislation. The DLUHC Guidance and CIPFA Code do not prescribe any particular treasury management strategy for Councils to adopt and there are an unlimited number of other options that the Council could consider as part of its treasury management activities. This report however outlines a clear and practical approach with an appropriate balance between risk management and cost effectiveness and is recommended by the Director of Finance and Systems.

Consultation

There are no applicable consultation requirements in respect of this report. Advice has been obtained from Arlingclose, the Council's external advisors.

Reasons for Recommendation

The Financial Procedure Rules, incorporating the requirements of the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice requires that the annual strategy report is provided to the Council as an essential control over treasury management activities. In it the Council approves the parameters under which officers will operate. In addition The Local Government Act 2003 requires that the Council approves an annual borrowing limit (the Authorised Limit) and DLUHC Guidance an annual investment strategy (setting out the limits to investment activities) prior to the commencement of each financial year.

Key Decision

This will be a key decision likely to be taken in: February 2024

This is a key decision currently on the Forward Plan: Yes

Finance Officer Clearance DM

Legal Officer Clearance DS



Corporate Director's Signature

STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

Local Government Act 2003

In accordance with the Local Government Act 2003 (and supporting regulations and guidance) each Council must before the commencement of each financial year, produce a report fulfilling three key requirements as stipulated below;

- The debt strategy in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management (section 4);
- The investment strategy in accordance with the DLUHC investment guidance (section 6);
- The reporting of the prudential indicators as required by the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (Appendix 3).

CIPFA Code of Practice

The Council's treasury activities are strictly regulated by statutory requirements in conjunction with a professional code of practice (the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice). These Codes are revised from time to time and the Council complies with any revisions.

ELEMENTS FOR COUNCIL APPROVAL

(Including Prudential and Treasury Indicators, Minimum Revenue Provision & Investment Criteria)

In accordance with the current DLUHC Guidance, CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice, each council is required to set before the commencement of each financial year Treasury Management Prudential Indicators and limits, a Minimum Revenue Provision Statement and Investment criteria.

The Accounts and Audit Committee and Executive are requested to recommend that Council approve these for the period 2024/25 – 2026/27 as detailed below. Upon recommendation, Council is required to approve the prudential indicators and limits affecting treasury management performance for this period.

TREASURY PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND LIMITS –

In accordance with the current CIPFA Prudential code, the Council is required to produce prudential indicators and limits reflecting the projected capital activity regarding its capital investment programme. These have an impact on the Council's treasury management activities and are monitored on a regular basis with any breaches being reported to Council at the earliest opportunity.

Authorised Limit for External debt	2023/24 estimate £m	2024/25 estimate £m	2025/26 estimate £m	2026/27 estimate £m
General Capital Programme	280.0	280.0	310.0	310.0
Strategic Investment programme	250.0	370.0	420.0	500.0
Other Long Term Liabilities (PFI)	3.8	3.4	3.0	2.6
Total	533.8	653.4	733.0	812.6

Authorised Limit for External debt - This is a key prudential indicator and represents a control on the maximum level of external debt that the Council will require for all known potential requirements. It includes headroom to cover the risk of short-term cash flow variations that could lead to temporary borrowing and any potential effects arising from bringing "off balance sheet" leased assets onto the balance sheet in compliance with IFRS 16. This statutory limit as determined under section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2003 needs to be approved by Council prior to the commencement of each financial year.³

Operational Boundary for External debt	2023/24 estimate £m	2024/25 estimate £m	2025/26 estimate £m	2026/27 estimate £m
General Capital Programme	250.0	260.0	290.0	290.0
Strategic Investment programme	250.0	370.0	420.0	500.0
Other long term Liabilities (PFI)	3.8	3.4	3.0	2.6
Total	503.8	633.4	713.0	792.6

Operational boundary for External Debt- calculated on a similar basis as the authorised limit but represents the likely level of external debt that may be reached during the course of the year and is not a limit.

Upper limit for Principal sums invested over 1 Year	2023/24 estimate £m	2024/25 estimate £m	2025/26 estimate £m	2026/27 estimate £m
Maximum limit	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Current investments:</i>				
Manchester Airport Shares as at 31 March 2023 *	37.7	37.7	37.7	37.7
Church Commissioners Local Authorities Property Investment Fund	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Strategic Investments	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0
Total Current Investments	54.7	54.7	54.7	54.7

* Manchester airport shares are included for clarity and transparency purposes only as they are a non-treasury investment.

Upper Limit for sums invested for over 1 year – these limits are set with regard to the Council’s liquidity requirements.

Upper Interest limits	2023/24 estimate £m	2024/25 estimate £m	2025/26 estimate £m	2026/27 estimate £m
Fixed interest rate exposure based on net debt	9.5	9.5	9.5	9.5
Variable interest rate exposure based on net debt	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0

Upper Interest Limits – identifies the maximum limit of interest payable after deducting all investment interest for each category of interest rate fixing

Maturity structure of all external loan debt – 2024/25 to 2026/27	Lower limit %	Upper limit %
Under 12 months	0	40
12 months to 2 years	0	40
2 years to 5 years	0	40
5 years to 10 years	0	40
10 years to 20 years	0	40
20 years to 30 years	0	40
30 years to 40 years	0	70
40 years and above	0	90

Maturity Structure of Borrowing – these gross limits are set to reduce the Council’s exposure to large sums falling due for payment or refinancing and reflect the next date on which the lending bank can amend the interest rate for any Lender Option Borrower Option loans the Council currently has.

Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement

The Council needs to ensure that its gross debt does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2024/25 and the following two financial years. This allows some flexibility for limited early borrowing for future years but ensures that borrowing is not undertaken for revenue or speculative purposes.

The Director of Finance and Systems reports that the Council complied with this prudential indicator in the current year and does not envisage difficulties for the future. This view takes into account current commitments, existing plans, and the proposals in this budget report.

Liability Benchmark

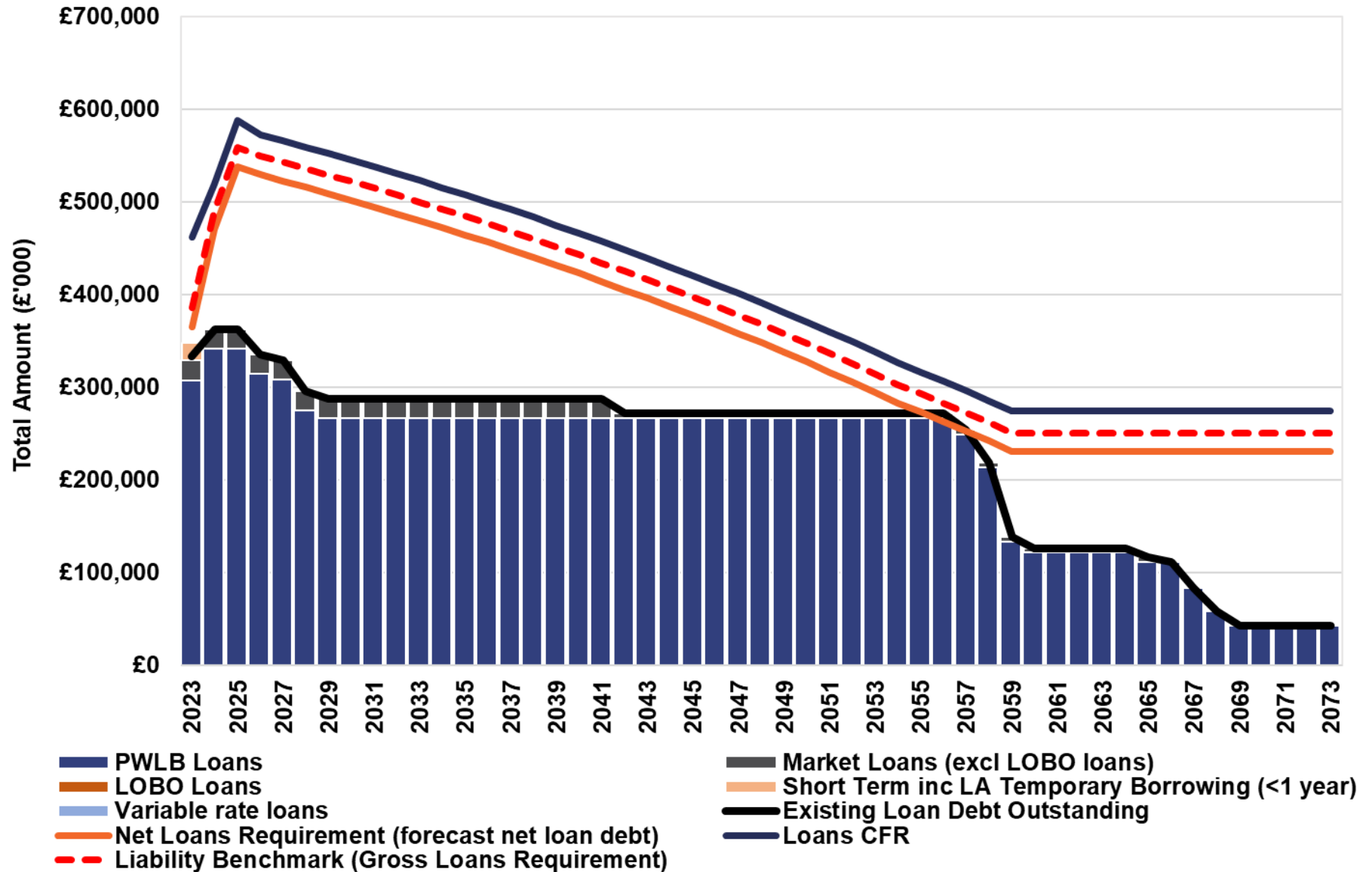
In the update to the Treasury Management Code made in December 2021, a requirement has been made for the Council to estimate and measure its liability benchmark. The liability benchmark is not a single measure but is presented as a chart of four balances as described below. A warning would be indicated if the Liability Benchmark (which is the Net Loans Requirement plus a notional buffer of £20m) exceeds the Loans CFR.

- Existing loan debt outstanding: the Council's existing loans which are still outstanding in future years.
- Loans CFR: calculated in accordance with the loans CFR definition in the Prudential Code, and projected into the future based on approved prudential borrowing and planned MRP taking account of approved prudential borrowing
- Net Loans Requirement: the Council's gross loan debt, less treasury management investments, at the last financial year end, projected into the future based on its approved prudential borrowing, planned MRP and any other forecast major cash flows
- Liability Benchmark (or Gross Loans Requirement) = Net loans requirement + short term liquidity allowance (a notional buffer of £20m)

The chart, below, shows that actual loans are less than the benchmark, which indicates a future borrowing requirement driven by spending with the capital strategy.

The chart below shows that the Liability Benchmark (forecast total external debt less investment) is less than the Loans Capital Financing Requirement.

Liability Benchmark



MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION

In accordance with the current DLUHC Guidance, the Council shall determine an amount of minimum revenue provision that it considers to be prudent and submit to Council for approval an annual MRP Statement which sets out its policy.

The following MRP Statement has been reviewed and prepared in accordance with the Council's accounting procedures and is recommended for approval to be effective from 1st April 2024:

- **Capital expenditure financed by Supported Borrowing:** MRP will be calculated on the Asset Life Method (up to 50 years), using an annuity calculation in accordance with DLUHC guidance;
- **Capital expenditure financed by Prudential Borrowing:** MRP will be based on either the estimated life of the assets once operational and charged on a straight line or annuity basis in accordance with DLUHC guidance;
- **Strategic Asset Investment Strategy financed by Prudential Borrowing:** Voluntary Revenue Provision (VRP) using the periods stipulated within the DLUHC Guidance of up to 50 years will be applied and written down on an annuity basis in accordance with DLUHC guidance. By adopting this approach it will enable the Council upon the sale of each asset, to either apply the capital receipt or use the VRP receipts to extinguish debt taken.
- **PFI schemes and leases shown on the balance sheet:** MRP will be based on the amount of the principal element within the annual unitary service payment and financed from the provision set-up to cover the final bullet payment. Capital receipts are to be used to replenish this provision to ensure any final bullet payment can still be made in 2028/29;
- **Expenditure that does not create an asset:** this is where the Council through the Strategic Asset Investment Strategy has made equity investment with Joint Venture companies with VRP being provided and calculated on a straight line basis for periods up to 50 years or annuity basis in accordance with DLUHC guidance;.
- **Use of a Capitalisation Direction:** Expenditure incurred in response to the issuance of a Capitalisation Direction by Central Government, MRP will be made over a period not exceeding 20 years, in accordance with the 2018 Guidance;
- **Lending to a third party:** In instances where the Council lends funds to a third party and in accordance with the guidelines issued (February 2018) by the Secretary of State, MRP is required to be provided over the useful life of the asset created. The Council in this instance will not follow the guidance but rather treat any advance as "Serviced debt" and therefore no MRP will be set-aside providing there is an agreed repayment date. Annually the Council will undertake a financial assessment of the third parties ability to repay the debt and where any adverse changes are perceived to be occurring then a provision will be created to cover any future potential financial losses.
- **Equity** – MRP for the acquisition of share capital will be calculated on a straight line basis for a period up to 20 years or annuity basis in accordance with DLUHC guidance;. The Council will consider on a case by case basis the appropriateness of the application of this period against any equity investments it undertakes.

INVESTMENT CRITERIA – (changes in relation to ESG)

Counterparty Selection

- The Council will only use institutions which are located in the UK or from a country with a minimum Sovereign Long term credit rating of AA-. The individual credit criteria is highlighted below and where credit ratings have been issued, both the Long and Short term rating from 2 of the 3 main agencies will need to meet the minimum required. The requirements shown below for categories 1 to 5 and 7 will be applied to both Specified and Non-specified investments. Category 6 applies only to The Church Commissioners Local Authorities Property Investment fund.
- The CIPFA Treasury Management Code requires local authorities to consider their counterparty policies in regard to environmental, social and governance (ESG) information. With this in mind, the Council will only place funds with institutions which are signatories to the UN Principles for Responsible Banking, or are UK Government or Local Government bodies.
- The Council will remove from its approved lending list any financial institutions whose practices or behaviours are not deemed to be commensurable with the values or ethical standards of the Council.

The limits shown in the table below are set at a contingency level and operationally monies will be placed with a number of institutions with a maximum 20% of the portfolio being placed with any one institution at the time each investment is made. This situation will be monitored during the course of the year with any corrective action being undertaken at the first opportunity without any financial penalty being incurred.

	Fitch (or equivalent) – Long Term	Maximum Group Limit	Maximum Time Limit
Category 1 – •UK & Non UK Banks (bank subsidiaries must have a parent guarantee in place), •UK Building Societies Institutions must also have an individual minimum short term credit rating of – Fitch F1 or equivalent.	AA to AAA	£75m	3yrs
	A+ to AA-	£25m	1yr
	A- to A	£10m	1yr
Category 2 – UK Building Societies which are unrated or do not meet the minimum ratings as per Category 1 with assets in excess of; •£5bln+, •£2.5bln - £4.99bln	-	£5m	1yr
	-	£3m	1yr
Category 3 – UK Banks part nationalised - Royal Bank of Scotland. This bank or its subsidiaries can be included provided it continues to be part nationalised or meets the ratings in category1 above.	-	£20m	1yr
Category 4 – The Council's own banker for transactional purposes if the bank falls below the above criteria.	-	n/a	1day

Category 5 – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pooled Investment Vehicles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Money Market Funds (per fund) ➤ Ultra-Short Dated Bond Funds(per fund) • Social & Ethical funds (per fund) • UK Government (including treasury bills, gilts and the DMO) • Local Authorities (per authority) • Supranational Institutions 	AAA AA - - - -	£20m £15m £5m £20m £10m £20m	3yrs 3yrs 10yrs 3yrs 3yrs 1yrs
Cont...	Fitch (or equivalent) – Long Term	Maximum Group Limit	Maximum Time Limit
Category 6 – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Authority Property Investment fund 	-	£10m	10yrs
Category 7 – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for the Strategic Asset Investment Programme 	-	£50m	5yrs

Specified and Non Specified Investments – (no changes)

In accordance with the current Code of Practice, the Council is required to set criteria which identify its investments between Specified and Non Specified investments and these are classified as follows;

- **Specified investments** - are high security and liquid investments with a maturity of no more than a year or those which could be for a longer period but where the Council has the right to be repaid within one year if it wishes. These are considered low risk assets where the possibility of loss of principal or investment income is small.
- **Non specified investments** - are any other type of investment not defined as specified above. Once an investment is classed as non-specified, it remains non-specified all the way through to maturity i.e. an 18 month deposit would still be non-specified even if it has only 11 months left until maturity. A maximum of £100m is permitted to be held in this classification as detailed on page 22, Prudential Indicator Upper limit for sums invested over one year.

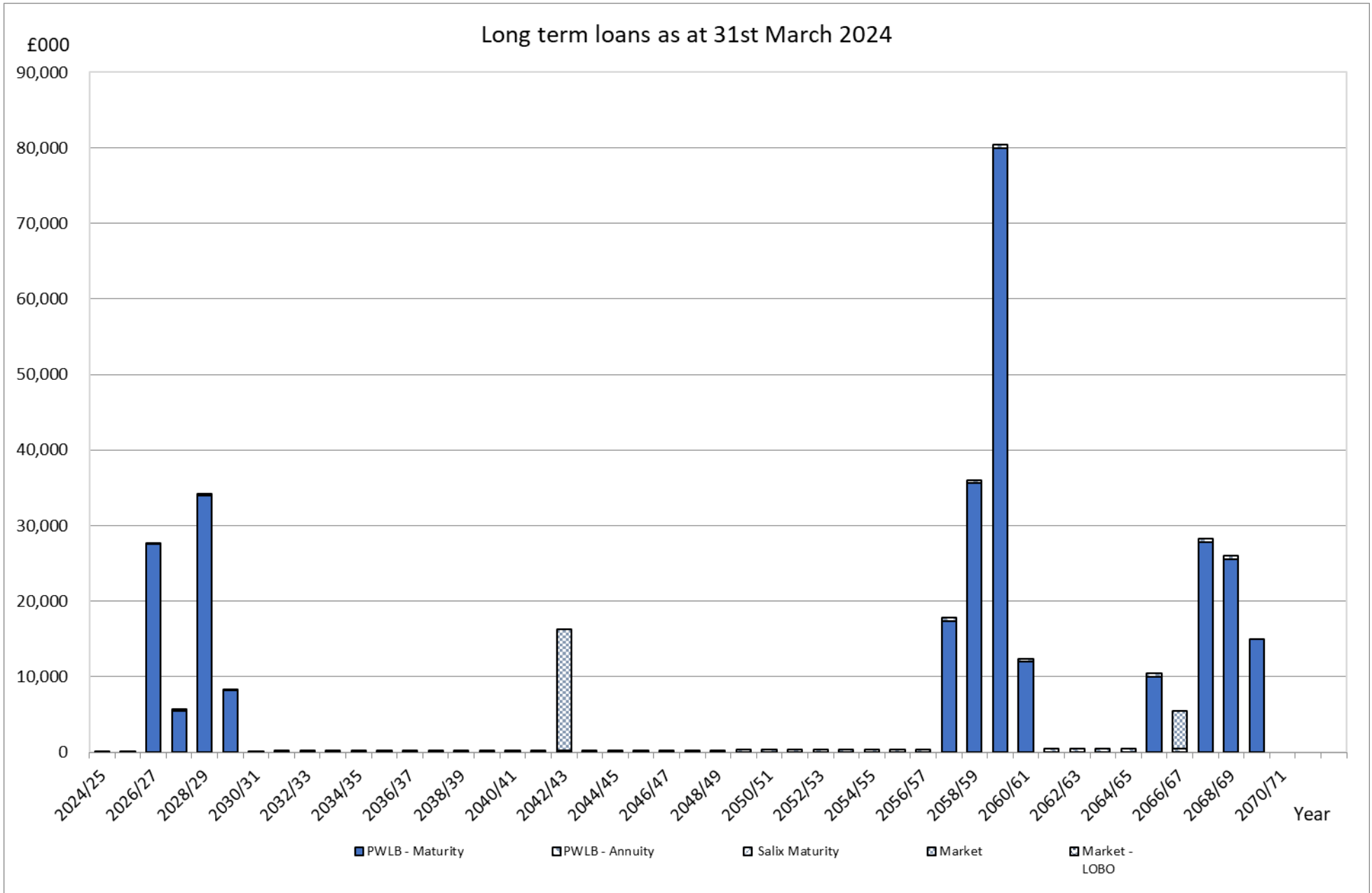
Instruments & Maximum period

All Investments undertaken will be in Sterling and placed in any of the following instruments: Term Deposits, Money Market Funds, Ultra Short Dated Bond Funds, Treasury Bills, Bonds, Gilts or Certificates of Deposits unless otherwise stated below;

Specified Investments	Maximum Maturity
The UK Government including Local Authorities and Debt Management Office.	1 Year
Supranational bonds of less than one year duration (e.g. International Monetary Fund)	1 Year
Pooled investment vehicles such as money market funds (including the revised categories of Low Volatility Net Asset value and variable Net Asset Value funds) Social & Ethical funds and	1 Year

low volatility bond funds.	
Specified Investments.....cont.	Maximum Maturity
An institution that has been awarded a high short term credit rating (minimum F1 or equivalent) by a credit rating agency, such as a bank or building society.	1 Year
Non-Specified Investments	
Multilateral development bank bonds - These are bonds defined as an international financial institution having as one of its objects economic development, either generally or in any region of the world (e.g. World Bank). The security of principal and interest on maturity is on a par with the Government and these bonds usually provide returns above equivalent gilt edged securities. The value of the bond may rise or fall and losses may accrue if the bond is sold prematurely.	3 Years
Gilt edged securities. These are Government bonds and provide the highest security of interest and principal. The value of the bond may rise or fall before maturity and losses may accrue if the bond is sold before maturity.	3 Years
The Council's own bank if it fails to meet the basic credit criteria with balances being kept to a minimum.	1 Day
UK Banks which have significant Government holdings	1 Year
Any bank or building society which meets the minimum long term credit criteria for Category 1 institutions detailed on page 23 with a maturity of greater than one year (including forward deals in excess of 1 year from inception to repayment).	3 Years
Building societies The operation of some building societies does not require a credit rating, although in every other respect the security of the society would match similarly sized societies with ratings. The Council may use such building societies which have a minimum asset size of £2.5bln but will restrict these type of investments as shown for Category 2 institutions on page 23.	1 Year
The UK Government including Local Authorities and Debt Management Office.	3 Years
Pooled investment vehicles such as money market funds (including the revised categories of Low Volatility Net Asset value and variable Net Asset Value funds) Social & Ethical funds and low volatility bond funds.	10 Years
Share capital or loan capital in a body corporate – The use of these instruments will be deemed to be capital expenditure, and as such will be an application (spending) of capital resources. It is envisaged this facility will apply to the Manchester Airport share-holding which the Council holds at a historical value of £37.7m as reported in the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts.	Unspecified
Manchester Airport Group – This is in response to the restructuring of the airports existing debt and is included for	Term of loans

clarity and transparency purposes only.	
Church Commissioners Local Authorities Property Investment Fund - This fund is aimed solely for use by public sector organisations wishing to invest in the property market whilst at the same time generating a favourable rate of return.	10 Years
Support the Strategic Asset Investment programme - where external borrowing to support the investment would not be in accordance with the CIPFA Prudential Code.	5 Years



INVESTMENT CREDIT AND INSTITUTION RISK MANAGEMENT

Monitoring of investment counterparties - The Council receives credit rating advice from Arlingclose and when ratings change this information is checked promptly to ensure institutions affected comply with the Council's criteria. On the occasion a rating may be downgraded when an investment has already been made, the criteria used are such that this should not affect the full receipt of the principal and interest. Any institution failing to meet the criteria, or those on the minimum criteria placed on negative credit watch, will be removed from the list immediately and if required new institutions which meet the criteria will be added.

Classification	Description	Credit Rating Agency		
		Fitch (Minimum)	Moody's (Minimum)	Standard & Poors (Minimum)
Short Term	Ensures that an institution is able to meet its financial obligations within 1 Year	F1 (Range F1+ , F2 A to D)	P1 (Range P1 to P3)	A1 (Range A-1 , to C)
Long Term	Ensures that an institution is able to meet its financial obligations greater than 1 Year	A- (Range AAA to D)	A3 (Range AAA to C)	A- (Range AAA to CC)

The Council's list of Investment institutions is prepared primarily using credit rating information with full regard also being given to other sources of available information concerning credit quality. The information below will continue to be considered when undertaking investments;

- Credit default swaps - CDS were first created in 1997 and are a financial instrument for swapping the risk of debt default. Essentially the owner of the debt would enter into an agreement with a third party who would receive a payment in return for protection against a particular credit event – such as default. Whilst absolute prices can be unreliable, trends in CDS spreads do give an indicator of relative confidence about credit risk.
- Equity prices – like CDS prices, equities are sensitive to a wide array of factors and a decline in share price may not necessarily signal that the institution in question is in difficulty.
- Interest rates being paid - If an institution is offering an interest rate which is considerably out of line with the rest of the market this could indicate that the investment is likely to carry a high risk.
- Information provided by treasury management advisors – this may include some information detailed above together with weekly investment market updates.
- Market & Financial Press information – information obtained from the money market brokers used by the Council in respect of interest rates & institutions will also be considered.

No investment will be made with an institution if there are substantive doubts about its credit quality, even though it may meet the credit rating criteria.

In order to further safeguard the Council’s investments and in addition to the information shown at Appendix 3, due care will be taken to consider country, group and sector exposure as follows;

- **Country** – this will be chosen by the credit rating of the Sovereign state as shown at Appendix 3 and no more than 40% of the Council’s total investments will be directly placed with non-UK counterparties at any time;
- **Group** – this will apply where a number of financial institutions are under one ownership (e.g. Royal Bank of Scotland / Nat West) and the Group limit will be the same as the individual limit for any one institution within that group;
- **Sector** limits will be monitored regularly for appropriateness.

Investment Risk benchmarking

Security benchmarks are central to the approved treasury strategy through the institution selection criteria and proposed benchmarks for these are set out below.

A method to benchmark security risk is to assess the historic level of default against the minimum criteria used in the Council’s investment strategy. The table below shows the latest average defaults for differing periods of investment grade products for each of Fitch, Moody’s and Standard and Poors long term rating category over the period 1981 to 2022. The Council can generally place investments up to a maximum period of 3 years and for this purpose will only use high rated institutions in order to ensure any potential risk in the form of defaults are kept to a minimum. Investments placed over 1 year but up to 3 years are placed with higher rated institutions in order to ensure that any potential risk of default as highlighted in the table below is kept to a minimum.

Long term rating	Average 1 yr default	Average 2 yr default	Average 3 yr default	Average 4 yr default	Average 5 yr default
AAA	0.04%	0.09%	0.17%	0.26%	0.38%
AA	0.03%	0.08%	0.10%	0.18%	0.25%
A	0.03%	0.17%	0.28%	0.43%	0.59%
BBB	0.17%	0.41%	0.71%	1.09%	1.49%
BB	0.73%	2.11%	3.72%	5.24%	6.63%
B	2.86%	6.84%	10.62%	13.77%	16.29%
CCC	19.79%	28.25%	33.87%	37.16%	40.15%

The Council’s minimum long term rating criteria is currently “A-”, meaning the average expectation of default for a one year investment in an institution with a “A-” long term rating would be 0.03% of the total investment (e.g. for a £1m investment the average loss would be £500). This is only an average as any specific institution loss is likely to be higher.

NON-TREASURY INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES

Details of the actual spend and commitments on the Council's non-treasury activities are outlined below:

Description	£m	Purpose
General		
Manchester Airport Group	29.7	Regeneration – 3 Shareholder loans
Homestep	0.5	Regeneration – Capital loan monies advanced to assist first time buyers to acquire property within Trafford which remains in place
Town Centre	0.65	Regeneration – Capital loan monies advanced to assist businesses occupy empty high street units within Trafford.
Sub-total	30.85	
Asset Regeneration Schemes		
Property Purchases	62.5	
Property Development	15.9	
Equity	53.9	
Development Debt	262.7	
Sub-total	395.0	
TOTAL	425.85	Further information can be found in Capital Strategy Report February 2024