

Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23

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1.0 Introduction

Treasury management is the management of the Council's cash flows, borrowing and investments, and the associated risks. The Council has borrowed and invested substantial sums of money and is therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of financial risk are therefore central to the Council's prudent financial management.

Treasury risk management at the Council is conducted within the framework of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2017 Edition (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Council to approve a treasury management strategy before the start of each financial year. This report fulfils the Authority's legal obligation under the *Local Government Act 2003* to have regard to the CIPFA Code.

Investments held for service purposes or for commercial profit are considered in a different report, the Investment Strategy.

2.0 External Context (See also Appendix B)

2.1 Economic Background

The ongoing impact on the UK from coronavirus, together with higher inflation, higher interest rates, and the country's trade position post-Brexit, will be major influences on the Authority's treasury management strategy for 2022/23.

The Bank of England (BoE) increased Bank Rate to 0.25% in December 2021 while maintaining its Quantitative Easing programme at £895 billion. The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) voted 8-1 in favour of raising rates, and unanimously to maintain the asset purchase programme.

Within the announcement the MPC noted that the pace of the global recovery was broadly in line with its November Monetary Policy Report. Prior to the emergence of the Omicron coronavirus variant, the Bank also considered the UK economy to be evolving in line with expectations, however the increased uncertainty and risk to activity the new variant presents, the Bank revised down its estimates for Q4 GDP growth to 0.6% from 1.0%. Inflation was projected to be higher than previously forecast, with CPI likely to remain above 5% throughout the winter and peak at 6% in April 2022. The labour market was generally performing better than previously forecast and the BoE now expects the unemployment rate to fall to 4% compared to 4.5% forecast previously, but notes that Omicron could weaken the demand for labour.

UK CPI for November 2021 registered 5.1% year on year, up from 4.2% in the previous month. Core inflation, which excludes the more volatile components, rose to 4.0% y/y

from 3.4%. The most recent labour market data for the three months to October 2021 showed the unemployment rate fell to 4.2% while the employment rate rose to 75.5%.

In October 2021, the headline 3-month average annual growth rate for wages were 4.9% for total pay and 4.3% for regular pay. In real terms, after adjusting for inflation, total pay growth was up 1.7% while regular pay was up 1.0%. The change in pay growth has been affected by a change in composition of employee jobs, where there has been a fall in the number and proportion of lower paid jobs.

Gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 1.3% in the third calendar quarter of 2021 according to the initial estimate, compared to a gain of 5.5% q/q in the previous quarter, with the annual rate slowing to 6.6% from 23.6%. The Q3 gain was modestly below the consensus forecast of a 1.5% q/q rise. During the quarter activity measures were boosted by sectors that reopened following pandemic restrictions, suggesting that wider spending was flat. Looking ahead, while monthly GDP readings suggest there had been some increase in momentum in the latter part of Q3, Q4 growth is expected to be soft.

GDP growth in the euro zone increased by 2.2% in calendar Q3 2021 following a gain of 2.1% in the second quarter and a decline of -0.3% in the first. Headline inflation has been strong, with CPI registering 4.9% year-on-year in November, the fifth successive month of inflation. Core CPI inflation was 2.6% y/y in November, the fourth month of successive increases from July's 0.7% y/y. At these levels, inflation is above the European Central Bank's target of 'below, but close to 2%', putting some pressure on its long-term stance of holding its main interest rate of 0%.

The US economy expanded at an annualised rate of 2.1% in Q3 2021, slowing sharply from gains of 6.7% and 6.3% in the previous two quarters. In its December 2021 interest rate announcement, the Federal Reserve continue to maintain the Fed Funds rate at between 0% and 0.25% but outlined its plan to reduce its asset purchase programme earlier than previously stated and signalled they are in favour of tightening interest rates at a faster pace in 2022, with three 0.25% movements now expected.

2.2 Credit outlook

Since the start of 2021, relatively benign credit conditions have led to credit default swap (CDS) prices for the larger UK banks to remain low and had steadily edged down throughout the year up until mid-November when the emergence of Omicron has caused them to rise modestly. However, the generally improved economic outlook during 2021 helped bank profitability and reduced the level of impairments many had made as provisions for bad loans. However, the relatively recent removal of coronavirus-related business support measures by the government means the full impact on bank balance sheets may not be known for some time.

The improved economic picture during 2021 led the credit rating agencies to reflect this in their assessment of the outlook for the UK sovereign as well as several financial institutions, revising them from negative to stable and even making a handful of rating upgrades.

Looking ahead, while there is still the chance of bank losses from bad loans as government and central bank support is removed, the institutions on the Authority's counterparty list are well-capitalised and general credit conditions across the sector are expected to remain benign. Duration limits for counterparties on the Authority's lending list are under regular review and will continue to reflect economic conditions and the credit outlook.

2.3 Interest rate forecast

The Authority's treasury management adviser Arlingclose is forecasting that Bank Rate will continue to rise in calendar Q1 2022 to subdue inflationary pressures and the perceived desire by the BoE to move away from emergency levels of interest rates.

Investors continue to price in multiple rises in Bank Rate over the next forecast horizon, and Arlingclose believes that although interest rates will rise again, the increases will not be to the extent predicted by financial markets. In the near-term, the risks around Arlingclose's central case are to the upside while over the medium-term the risks become more balanced.

Yields are expected to remain broadly at current levels over the medium-term, with the 5, 10 and 20 year gilt yields expected to average around 0.65%, 0.90%, and 1.15% respectively. The risks around for short and medium-term yields are initially to the upside but shifts lower later, while for long-term yields the risk is to the upside. However, as ever there will almost certainly be short-term volatility due to economic and political uncertainty and events.

A more detailed economic and interest rate forecast provided by Arlingclose is attached at Appendix A.

For the purpose of setting the budget, it has been assumed that new treasury investments will be made at an average rate of 0.02%, and that new long-term loans will be borrowed at an average rate of 3.0%.

3.0 Local Context

On the 31st December 2021, the Council held £39.1m of borrowing and £61.2m of investments (banks, MMFs, DMO, local authorities and property fund). This is set out in further detail at Appendix C. Forecast changes in these sums are shown in the balance sheet analysis in table 1 below.

Table 1: Balance sheet summary and forecast

	31.3.21 Actual £m	31.3.22 Forecast £m	31.3.23 Forecast £m	31.3.24 Forecast £m	31.3.25 Forecast £m
General Fund CFR	44.3	47.1	49.8	49.0	47.4
CIS CFR	27.1	26.9	26.8	26.6	26.4
CFR	71.4	74.0	76.6	75.6	73.8
Less: Other debt liabilities *	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Less: External borrowing **	39.1	38.8	38.7	38.6	38.4
Internal borrowing	31.8	34.7	37.4	36.5	34.9
Less: Balance Sheet Resources	97.5	90.0	85.0	80.0	75.0
(Investments) or New borrowing	(65.7)	(55.3)	(47.6)	(43.5)	(40.1)

* finance leases, PFI liabilities and transferred debt that form part of the Council's total debt

** shows only loans to which the Council is committed and excludes optional refinancing.

The underlying need to borrow for capital purposes is measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), while usable reserves and working capital are the underlying resources available for investment. The Council's current strategy is to maintain borrowing and investments below their underlying levels, known as internal borrowing.

The Council has an increasing CFR due to the capital programme, but minimal investments and will therefore not be required to borrow up to 2023/24 but depend on alternative funding sources to deliver the capital programme over the next 4 years.

CIPFA's *Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities* recommends that the Council's total debt should be lower than its highest forecast CFR over the next three years. Table 1 shows that the Council expects to comply with this recommendation during 2022/23.

4.0 Liability Benchmark

To compare the Council's actual borrowing against an alternative strategy, a liability benchmark has been calculated showing the lowest risk level of borrowing. This assumes the same forecasts as table 1 above, but that cash and investment balances are kept to a minimum level of £10.0m at each year-end to maintain enough liquidity but minimise credit risk.

Table 2: Liability benchmark

	31.3.21 Actual £m	31.3.22 Forecast £m	31.3.23 Forecast £m	31.3.24 Forecast £m	31.3.25 Forecast £m
CFR	71.4	74.0	76.6	75.6	73.8
Less: Balance Sheet Resources	97.5	90.0	80.0	70.0	60.0
Plus: Liquidity Allowance	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0
Liability Benchmark	(16.1)	(6.0)	6.6	15.6	23.8

5.0 Borrowing Strategy

The Council currently holds £39.1m of loans, as part of its strategy for funding previous years' capital programmes and Commercial Investment Strategy. The balance sheet forecast in table 1 shows that the Council does not expect to need to borrow in 2021/22. The Council may also borrow additional sums to pre-fund future years' requirements, providing this does not exceed the authorised limit for borrowing of £135.0m.

5.1 Objectives

The Council's chief objective when borrowing money is to strike an appropriately low risk balance between securing low interest costs and achieving certainty of those costs over the period for which funds are required. The flexibility to renegotiate loans should the Council's long-term plans change is a secondary objective.

5.2 Strategy

Given the significant cuts to public expenditure and in particular to local government funding, the Council's borrowing strategy continues to address the key issue of affordability without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio. With short-term interest rates currently much lower than long-term rates, it is likely to be more cost effective in the short-term to either use internal resources, or to borrow short-term loans instead.

By doing so, the Council can reduce net borrowing costs (despite foregone investment income) and reduce overall treasury risk. The benefits of internal and short-term borrowing will be monitored regularly against the potential for incurring additional costs by deferring borrowing into future years when long-term borrowing rates are forecast to rise modestly. Arlingclose will assist the Council with this 'cost of carry' and breakeven analysis. Its output may determine whether the Council borrows additional sums at long-term fixed rates in 2022/23 with a view to keeping future interest costs low, even if this causes additional cost in the short-term.

The Authority has previously raised all of its long-term borrowing from the PWLB but will consider long-term loans from other sources including banks, pensions and local authorities, and will investigate the possibility of issuing bonds and similar instruments, in order to lower interest costs and reduce over-reliance on one source of funding in line with the CIPFA Code. PWLB loans are no longer available to local authorities planning to buy investment assets primarily for yield; the Authority intends to avoid this activity in order to retain its access to PWLB loans.

Alternatively, the Council may arrange forward starting loans during 2022/23, where the interest rate is fixed in advance, but the cash is received in later years. This would enable certainty of cost to be achieved without suffering a cost of carry in the intervening period.

In addition, the Council may borrow short-term loans to cover unplanned cash flow shortages.

5.3 Sources of Borrowing

The approved sources of long-term and short-term borrowing are:

- HM Treasury's PWLB lending facility (formerly the Public Works Loan Board)
- any institution approved for investments (see below)
- any other bank or building society authorised to operate in the UK
- any other UK public sector body
- UK public and private sector pension funds
- capital market bond investors
- UK Municipal Bonds Agency plc and other special purpose companies created to enable local authority bond issues

5.4 Other sources of debt finance

In addition, capital finance may be raised by the following methods that are not borrowing, but may be classed as other debt liabilities:

- leasing
- hire purchase
- Private Finance Initiative
- sale and leaseback

5.5 Municipal Bonds Agency

UK Municipal Bonds Agency (UK MBA) plc was established in 2014 by the Local Government Association as an alternative to the PWLB. It issues bonds on the capital markets and lends the proceeds to local authorities at a rate below PWLB. This is a more complicated source of finance than the PWLB for two reasons: borrowing authorities will be required to provide bond investors with a joint and several guarantee to refund their investment in the event that the agency is unable to for any reason; and there will be a

lead time of several months between committing to borrow and knowing the interest rate payable. When the Council makes the decision to borrow, the option will be taken to consider whether the PWLB or the Municipal Bonds Agency are the most effective and efficient lender. Prior to approval to borrow from the UK MBA, separate approval will be sought from Cabinet.

5.6 LOBOs

The Council does not hold any LOBOs (Lender's Option Borrower's Option) loans. This where the lender has the option to propose an increase in the interest rate at set dates, following which the Council has the option to either accept the new rate or to repay the loan at no additional cost.

5.7 Short-Term and Variable Rate Loans

These loans leave the Council exposed to the risk of short-term interest rate rises and are therefore subject to the interest rate exposure limits in the treasury management indicators below.

5.8 Debt rescheduling

The PWLB allows authorities to repay loans before maturity and either pay a premium or receive a discount according to a set formula based on current interest rates. Other lenders may also be prepared to negotiate premature redemption terms. The Council may take advantage of this and replace some loans with new loans, or repay loans without replacement, where this is expected to lead to an overall cost saving or a reduction in risk.

6.0 Investment Strategy

The Council holds invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves held. In the year 2021/22 to December, the Council's investment balance has ranged between £28m in April and £71m in December, these levels are expected to reduce in the forthcoming year.

6.1 Objectives

The CIPFA Code requires the Council to invest its funds prudently, and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its investments before seeking the highest rate of return, or yield. The Council's objective when investing money is to strike an appropriate balance between risk and return, minimising the risk of incurring losses from defaults and the risk of receiving unsuitably low investment income. Where balances are expected to be invested for more than one year, the Council will aim to achieve a total return that is equal or higher than the prevailing rate of inflation, in order to maintain the spending power of the sum invested.

6.2 Negative interest rates

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the risk that the Bank of England will set its Bank Rate at or below zero, which is likely to feed through to negative interest rates on all low risk, short-term investment options. Since investments cannot pay negative income, negative rates will be applied by reducing the value of investments. In this event, security will be measured as receiving the contractually agreed amount at maturity, even though this may be less than the amount originally invested.

6.3 Strategy

Given the increasing risk and very low returns from short-term unsecured bank investments, the Council aims to, where possible to diversify its long-term investments into more secure and higher yielding asset classes during 2021/22. The majority of the Council's surplus cash will be invested in short-term unsecured bank deposits, and money market funds.

6.4 Business models

Under the new IFRS 9 standard, the accounting for certain investments depends on the Council's "business model" for managing them. The Council aims to achieve value from its internally managed treasury investments by a business model of collecting the contractual cash flows and therefore, where other criteria are also met, these investments will continue to be accounted for at amortised cost.

6.5 Approved counterparties

The Council may invest its surplus funds with any of the counterparty types in table 3 below, subject to the cash limits (per counterparty) and the time limits shown.

Table 3: Approved investment counterparties and limits

Sector	Time Limit	Counterparty Limit	Sector Limit
UK Government	50 years	unlimited	n/a
Local Authorities & other government entities	25 years	£4m	Unlimited
Secured investments*	25 years	£4m	Unlimited
Banks (unsecured)*	13 months	£4m	Unlimited
Transactional Bank (Natwest)	Overnight	£22m	Unlimited
Building Societies (unsecured)*	13 months	£4m	£10m
Registered providers (unsecured)*	5 Years	£4m	£10m
Money Market Funds*	n/a	£4m	Unlimited

Strategic pooled funds	n/a	£5m	£20m
Real Estate investment trusts	n/a	£5m	£15m

*** Minimum credit rating:** Treasury investments in the sectors marked with an asterisk will only be made with entities whose lowest published long-term credit rating is no lower than [A-]. Where available, the credit rating relevant to the specific investment or class of investment is used, otherwise the counterparty credit rating is used. However, investment decisions are never made solely based on credit ratings, and all other relevant factors including external advice will be taken into account.

For entities without published credit ratings, investments may be made either (a) where external advice indicates the entity to be of similar credit quality; or (b) to a maximum of £50,000 per counterparty as part of a diversified pool e.g. via a peer-to-peer platform.

This table must be read in conjunction with the notes below

6.6 Government

Loans, bonds and bills issued or guaranteed by national governments, regional and local authorities and multilateral development banks. These investments are not subject to bail-in, and there is generally a lower risk of insolvency, although they are not zero risk. Investments with the UK Central Government may be made in unlimited amounts for up to 50 years.

6.7 Secured investments

Covered bonds, reverse repurchase agreements and other collateralised arrangements with banks and building societies. These investments are secured on the bank's assets, which limits the potential losses in the unlikely event of insolvency, and means that they are exempt from bail-in. Where there is no investment specific credit rating, but the collateral upon which the investment is secured has a credit rating, the higher of the collateral credit rating and the counterparty credit rating will be used to determine cash and time limits. The combined secured and unsecured investments in any one bank will not exceed the cash limit for secured investments.

6.8 Banks and building societies unsecured

Accounts, deposits, certificates of deposit and senior unsecured bonds with banks and building societies, other than multilateral development banks. These investments are subject to the risk of credit loss via a bail-in should the regulator determine that the bank is failing or likely to fail. See below for arrangements relating to operational bank accounts.

6.9 Registered providers

Loans and bonds issued by, guaranteed by or secured on the assets of registered providers of social housing and registered social landlords, formerly known as housing

associations. These bodies are tightly regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing. As providers of public services, they retain the likelihood of receiving government support if needed. This does not include service loans which are subject to separate authorisation by Cabinet.

6.10 Money Market Funds

Pooled funds that offer same-day or short notice liquidity and very low or no price volatility by investing in short-term money markets. They have the advantage over bank accounts of providing wide diversification of investment risks, coupled with the services of a professional fund manager in return for a small fee. Although no sector limit applies to money market funds, the Authority will always take care to diversify its liquid investments over a variety of providers to ensure access to cash .

6.11 Strategic Pooled funds

Bond, equity and property funds offer enhanced returns over the longer term but are more volatile in the short term. These allow the Council to diversify into asset classes other than cash without the need to own and manage the underlying investments. Because these funds have no defined maturity date, but are available for withdrawal after a notice period, their performance and continued suitability in meeting the Council's investment objectives will be monitored regularly.

6.12 Real estate investment trusts

Shares in companies that invest mainly in real estate and pay the majority of their rental income to investors in a similar manner to pooled property funds. As with property funds, REITs offer enhanced returns over the longer term, but are more volatile especially as the share price reflects changing demand for the shares as well as changes in the value of the underlying properties.

6.13 Other investments

This covers treasury investments not listed above, for example unsecured corporate bonds and company loans. Non-bank companies cannot be bailed-in but can become insolvent placing the Authority's investment at risk.

6.14 Operational Bank Accounts

The Council may incur operational exposures, for example through current accounts, collection accounts and merchant acquiring services, to any UK bank with credit ratings no lower than BBB- and with assets greater than £25 billion. These are not classed as investments, but are still subject to the risk of a bank bail-in, and balances (not available on a daily basis) will therefore be kept low and only contain balances sufficient for operational purposes. The Bank of England has stated that in the event of failure, banks

with assets greater than £25 billion are more likely to be bailed-in than made insolvent, increasing the chance of the Council maintaining operational continuity.

6.15 Risk assessment and credit ratings

Credit ratings are obtained and monitored by the Council's treasury advisers, who will notify changes in ratings as they occur. Where an entity has its credit rating downgraded so that it fails to meet the approved investment criteria then:

- no new investments will be made,
- any existing investments that can be recalled or sold at no cost will be, and
- full consideration will be given to the recall or sale of all other existing investments with the affected counterparty.

Where a credit rating agency announces that a credit rating is on review for possible downgrade (also known as "rating watch negative" or "credit watch negative") so that it may fall below the approved rating criteria, then only investments that can be withdrawn on the next working day will be made with that organisation until the outcome of the review is announced. This policy will not apply to negative outlooks, which indicate a long-term direction of travel rather than an imminent change of rating.

6.16 Other information on the security of investments

The Council understands that credit ratings are good, but not perfect, predictors of investment default. Full regard will therefore be given to other available information on the credit quality of the organisations in which it invests, including credit default swap prices, financial statements, information on potential government support, reports in the quality financial press and analysis and advice from the Council's treasury management adviser. No investments will be made with an organisation if there are substantive doubts about its credit quality, even though it may otherwise meet the above criteria.

When deteriorating financial market conditions affect the creditworthiness of all organisations, as happened in 2008 and 2011, this is not generally reflected in credit ratings, but can be seen in other market measures. In these circumstances, the Council will restrict its investments to those organisations of higher credit quality and reduce the maximum duration of its investments to maintain the required level of security. The extent of these restrictions will be in line with prevailing financial market conditions. If these restrictions mean that insufficient commercial organisations of high credit quality are available to invest the Council's cash balances, then the surplus will be deposited with the UK Government via the Debt Management Office or invested in government treasury bills for example, or with other local authorities. This will cause a reduction in the level of investment income earned but will protect the principal sum invested.

6.17 Investment Limits

The Council's revenue reserves (including general fund and earmarked) available to cover investment losses are forecast to be £60.0m on 31st March 2022. In order that no more than 15% of available reserves will be put at risk in the case of a single default, the maximum that will be lent to any one organisation (other than the UK Government) will be £5m. Overnight deposits with the transactional bank (Natwest) are limited to £22m, but kept as low as possible to meet operational purposes.

A group of banks under the same ownership will be treated as a single organisation for limit purposes. Limits will also be placed on fund managers, investments in brokers' nominee accounts, foreign countries and industry sectors as below. Investments in pooled funds and multilateral development banks do not count against the limit for any single foreign country, since the risk is diversified over many countries.

Table 4: Additional Investment limits

	Cash limit
Any group of pooled funds under the same management	£5m per manager
Negotiable instruments held in a broker's nominee account	£4m per broker
Foreign countries	£2m per country

6.18 Liquidity management

The Council uses a cash flow forecasting spreadsheet to determine the maximum period for which funds may prudently be committed. The forecast is compiled on a prudent basis to minimise the risk of the Council being forced to borrow on unfavourable terms to meet its financial commitments. Limits on long-term investments are set by reference to the Council's medium-term financial plan and cash flow forecast.

7.0 Treasury Management Prudential Indicators

The Council measures and manages its exposures to treasury management risks using the following indicators.

7.1 Security

The Council has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to credit risk by monitoring the value-weighted average credit rating of its investment portfolio. This is calculated by applying a score to each investment (AAA=1, AA+=2, etc.) and taking the arithmetic average, weighted by the size of each investment. Unrated investments are assigned a score based on their perceived risk.

Credit risk indicator	Target
Portfolio average credit rating	A-

7.2 Liquidity

The Council has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to liquidity risk by monitoring the amount of cash available to meet unexpected payments within a rolling 3 month period, without additional borrowing.

Liquidity risk indicator	Target
Total cash available within 3 months	£10m

7.3 Interest Rate Exposures

This indicator is set to control the Council's exposure to interest rate risk. The upper limits on the one-year revenue impact of a 1% rise or fall in interest rates will be:

Interest rate risk indicator	Limit
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>rise</u> in interest rates	£600,000
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>fall</u> in interest rates	£600,000

The impact of a change in interest rates is calculated on the assumption that maturing loans and investments will be replaced at new market rates. £600,000 is a 1% impact on forecast reserves of £60m.

7.4 Maturity structure of borrowing

This indicator is set to control the Council's exposure to refinancing risk. The upper and lower limits on the maturity structure of borrowing will be:

Refinancing rate risk indicator	Upper limit	Lower limit
Under 12 months	80%	0%
12 months and within 24 months	80%	0%
24 months and within 5 years	80%	0%
5 years and within 10 years	100%	0%
10 years and above	100%	0%
20 years and above	100%	0%

Time periods start on the first day of each financial year. The maturity date of borrowing is the earliest date on which the lender can demand repayment.

7.5 Long Term Treasury Management Investment

The purpose of this indicator is to control the Council's exposure to the risk of incurring losses by seeking early repayment of its investments. The limits on the long-term principal sum invested to final maturities beyond the period end will be:

Price risk indicator	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Limit on principal invested beyond year end	£12m	£10m	£8m

8.0 Related Matters

The CIPFA Code requires the Council to include the following in its treasury management strategy.

8.1 Financial Derivatives

Local authorities have previously made use of financial derivatives embedded into loans and investments both to reduce interest rate risk (e.g. interest rate collars and forward deals) and to reduce costs or increase income at the expense of greater risk (e.g. LOBO loans and callable deposits). The general power of competence in Section 1 of the *Localism Act 2011* removes much of the uncertainty over local authorities' use of standalone financial derivatives (i.e. those that are not embedded into a loan or investment).

The Council will only use standalone financial derivatives (such as swaps, forwards, futures and options) where they can be clearly demonstrated to reduce the overall level of the financial risks that the Council is exposed to. Additional risks presented, such as credit exposure to derivative counterparties, will be taken into account when determining the overall level of risk. Embedded derivatives, including those present in pooled funds and forward starting transactions, will not be subject to this policy, although the risks they present will be managed in line with the overall treasury risk management strategy.

Financial derivative transactions may be arranged with any organisation that meets the approved investment criteria. The current value of any amount due from a derivative counterparty will count against the counterparty credit limit and the relevant foreign country limit.

In line with the CIPFA Code, the Authority will seek external advice and will consider that advice before entering into financial derivatives to ensure that it fully understands the implications.

8.2 Markets in Financial Instruments Directive

The Council has opted up to professional client status with its providers of financial services, including advisers, banks, brokers and fund managers, allowing it access to a greater range of services but without the greater regulatory protections afforded to individuals and small companies. Given the size and range of the Council's treasury management activities, the Chief Financial Officer believes this to be the most appropriate status.

9.0 Financial Implications

The budget for investment income in 2022/23 is £0.05m, based on an average investment portfolio of £25.0m at an interest rate of 0.02%. The budget for debt interest paid in 2022/23 is £1.23m, based on an average debt portfolio of £44.0m at an average interest rate of 2.83%. If actual levels of investments and borrowing, or actual interest rates, differ from that forecast, performance against budget will be correspondingly different.

10.0 Other Options Considered

The CIPFA Treasury Management Code does not prescribe any particular treasury management strategy for local authorities to adopt. The Chief Financial Officer, having consulted the Executive Councillor for Strategic Resources believes that the above strategy represents an appropriate balance between risk management and cost effectiveness. Alternative strategies, with their financial and risk management implications, are listed below.

Alternative	Impact on income and expenditure	Impact on risk management
Invest in a narrower range of counterparties and/or for shorter times	Interest income will be lower	Lower chance of losses from credit related defaults, but any such losses may be greater
Invest in a wider range of counterparties and/or for longer times	Interest income will be higher	Increased risk of losses from credit related defaults, but any such losses may be smaller
Borrow additional sums at long-term fixed interest rates	Debt interest costs will rise; this is unlikely to be offset by higher investment income	Higher investment balance leading to a higher impact in the event of a default; however long-term interest costs may be more certain

Borrow short-term or variable loans instead of long-term fixed rates	Debt interest costs will initially be lower	Increases in debt interest costs will be broadly offset by rising investment income in the medium term, but long-term costs may be less certain
Reduce level of borrowing	Saving on debt interest is likely to exceed lost investment income	Reduced investment balance leading to a lower impact in the event of a default; however long-term interest costs may be less certain

Arlingclose Economic & Interest Rate Forecast December 2021

Underlying assumptions:

- The global recovery from the pandemic has entered a more challenging phase. The resurgence in demand has led to the expected rise in inflationary pressure, but disrupted factors of supply are amplifying the effects, increasing the likelihood of lower growth rates ahead. The advent of the Omicron variant of coronavirus is affecting activity and is also a reminder of the potential downside risks.
- Despite relatively buoyant activity survey data, official GDP data indicates that growth was weakening into Q4 2021. Other data, however, suggested continued momentum, particularly for November. Retail sales volumes rose 1.4%, PMIs increased, and the labour market continued to strengthen. The end of furlough did not appear to have had a significant impact on unemployment. Wage growth is elevated.
- The CPI inflation rate rose to 5.1% for November and will rise higher in the near term. While the transitory factors affecting inflation are expected to unwind over time, policymakers' concern is persistent medium term price pressure.
- These factors prompted the MPC to raise Bank Rate to 0.25% at the December meeting. Short term interest rate expectations remain elevated.
- The outlook, however, appears weaker. Household spending faces pressures from a combination of higher prices and tax rises. In the immediate term, the Omicron variant has already affected growth – Q4 and Q1 activity could be weak at best.
- Longer-term government bond yields remain relatively low despite the more hawkish signals from the BoE and the Federal Reserve. Investors are concerned that significant policy tightening in the near term will slow growth and prompt the need for looser policy later. Geo-political and coronavirus risks are also driving safe haven buying. The result is a much flatter yield curve, as short-term yields rise even as long-term yields fall.
- The rise in Bank Rate despite the Omicron variant signals that the MPC will act to bring inflation down whatever the environment. It has also made clear its intentions to tighten policy further. While the economic outlook will be challenging, the signals from policymakers suggest their preference is to tighten policy unless data indicates a more severe slowdown.

Forecast:

- The MPC will want to build on the strong message it delivered this month by tightening policy despite Omicron uncertainty.
- Arlingclose therefore expects Bank Rate to rise to 0.50% in Q1 2022, but then remain there. Risks to the forecast are initially weighted to the upside, but becoming more balanced over time. The Arlingclose central forecast remains below the market forward curve.
- Gilt yields will remain broadly flat from current levels. Yields have fallen sharply at the longer end of the yield curve, but expectations of a rise in Bank Rate have maintained short term gilt yields at higher levels.
- Easing expectations for Bank Rate over time could prompt the yield curve to steepen, as investors build in higher inflation expectations.
- The risks around the gilt yield forecasts vary. The risk for short and medium term yields is initially on the upside but shifts lower later. The risk for long-term yields is weighted to the upside.

	Dec-21	Mar-22	Jun-22	Sep-22	Dec-22	Mar-23	Jun-23	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24
Official Bank Rate													
Upside risk	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Arlingclose Central Case	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Downside risk	0.00	-0.25	-0.25	-0.25	-0.25	-0.25	-0.25	-0.25	-0.25	-0.25	-0.25	-0.25	-0.25
3-month money market rate													
Upside risk	0.05	0.05	0.25	0.35	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Arlingclose Central Case	0.25	0.55	0.55	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65
Downside risk	0.00	-0.25	-0.25	-0.30	-0.30	-0.30	-0.30	-0.35	-0.35	-0.35	-0.35	-0.35	-0.35
5yr gilt yield													
Upside risk	0.00	0.35	0.45	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.50	0.50	0.45	0.45
Arlingclose Central Case	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.65	0.70	0.75	0.75
Downside risk	-0.10	-0.20	-0.25	-0.25	-0.25	-0.25	-0.25	-0.25	-0.25	-0.30	-0.35	-0.40	-0.40
10yr gilt yield													
Upside risk	0.10	0.25	0.35	0.40	0.45	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.55	0.55	0.55
Arlingclose Central Case	0.80	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.90	0.90	0.95	0.95
Downside risk	-0.10	-0.25	-0.30	-0.35	-0.35	-0.35	-0.35	-0.35	-0.35	-0.40	-0.40	-0.40	-0.40
20yr gilt yield													
Upside risk	0.30	0.40	0.45	0.45	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Arlingclose Central Case	1.00	1.05	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.15	1.15	1.15	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20
Downside risk	-0.15	-0.30	-0.35	-0.40	-0.40	-0.40	-0.40	-0.40	-0.40	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45
50yr gilt yield													
Upside risk	0.25	0.30	0.40	0.45	0.45	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Arlingclose Central Case	0.70	0.75	0.80	0.85	0.90	0.95	1.00	1.05	1.05	1.10	1.10	1.15	1.15
Downside risk	-0.15	-0.30	-0.35	-0.40	-0.40	-0.40	-0.40	-0.40	-0.40	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45

PWLB Standard Rate (Maturity Loans) = Gilt yield + 1.00%

PWLB Certainty Rate (Maturity Loans) = Gilt yield + 0.80%

PWLB Infrastructure Rate (Maturity Loans) = Gilt yield + 0.60%

Local Context for Economic and Credit Environment

Economic Background

A reduction in economic activity could have an adverse effect on the Council's trading operations (e.g. CIS, Markets, Car Parks, Building Control, Development Control, leisure) as well as receipts from business rates and council tax.

In addition restricted economic growth will increase financial strain on household which may result in increased demand for Council services such as benefits, homelessness, and housing services.

Inflationary pressures could start to effect council spending. As a result there could be pressure on some budgets where costs are rising. There will also be increased pressure in the MTFS to mitigate this pressure through changes in spending and income generation.

Credit Outlook

The Council monitors credit ratings and credit default swaps, these are used to make decision about which institutions to invest with, based on the parameters set within the Treasury Management strategy

The council receives a monthly listing from its treasury management advisors (Arlingclose) showing the rates and durations for a range of financial institutions.

The Council's investments are in most of the short duration therefore, any adverse movements in credit ratings would be a signal to remove investments from those institutions.

The Council uses Natwest for its transactional banking, but keeps the investment balance held with Natwest to sufficient levels to meet operational needs.

Interest Rate Forecast

The increase in the Bank of England rate has had a small positive impact on all market rates e.g. Money Market Funds and deposit accounts rates. It is still difficult to place surplus cash balances for a reasonable yield, therefore any money held in any investment vehicle is mainly for diversification purposes in the short-term.

It now seems likely due to increasing inflationary pressures that the BOE rate will increase back up to 0.5% in the short-term and possibly in the range 0.75% - 1% by March 2023.

Existing Investment & Debt Portfolio Position

	31/12/21 Actual Portfolio £m	31/12/21 Average Rate %
External borrowing:		
Public Works Loan Board	39.1	2.8
Local authorities	0	
Other loans	0	
Total external borrowing	39.1	
Other long-term liabilities:		
Finance Leases	0.5	n/a
Total other long-term liabilities	0.5	
Total gross external debt	39.6	
Treasury investments:		
Banks & building societies (unsecured)	13.2	0.01
Government (incl. local authorities)	14.0	0.02
Money Market Funds	30.0	0.02
Pooled property fund	4.0	3.60
Total treasury investments	61.2	
Net investments	21.6	