

Appendix 2

Treasury Management (TM) Update Report

1 Changes in the external environment

Economic Outlook

- 1.1 The political backdrop to the UK remains uncertain and fragile as the Brexit negotiations continue ahead of Britain's planned withdrawal from the EU. In view of this uncertainty, the Council will continue to take a cautious approach in relation to its investments and borrowing.

2 Investment Strategy

- 2.1 Conventional bank deposits have become riskier because of a lower likelihood that the UK and other governments will support failing banks. As the Banking Reform Act 2014 was implemented in the UK from January 2015, banks were no longer able to rely on government bail-outs if they got into difficulty. They would be required instead to bail themselves out by taking a proportion of investors' deposits to build up their capital. This new risk has been termed 'bail-in' risk and is potentially a greater risk to investors than the 'bail-out' risk of the past.
- 2.2 Given the increasing risk and continued low returns from short-term unsecured bank investments, the Council has only held a minimal amount of investments for short-term cash flow purposes and has placed a far greater emphasis on investing with the UK Government's Debt Management Office and other local authorities in order to minimise these risks.

3 Borrowing Strategy

- 3.1 In line with its TM strategy and following advice from its treasury consultants, the Council has locked in a proportion of its debt at very low rates with the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) to fund the capital programme. A new loan for £10m was undertaken in May 2019 over a 15 year period on an Equal Instalment of Principal (EIP) basis at a rate of 1.73%.
- 3.2 The Council has previously raised all of its long-term borrowing from the PWLB but the government increased PWLB rates by 1% in October 2019 making it now a less attractive option. The Council will also now consider borrowing any 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.

- 3.3 The Council has also continued to undertake temporary borrowing from other local authorities as required to cover short-term cash flow requirements as this is a good source of readily available cash at historically low rates.
- 3.4 At the same time, the Council will also continue to monitor its cash position and interest rate levels to ensure that further long term borrowing is undertaken at the optimal time to fund on-going Capital commitments.

4 Controls

4.1 Prudential Indicators

The Council sets prudential indicators which set boundaries within which its treasury management activity operates. The indicators are calculated to demonstrate that the Council's borrowing is affordable and include measures that show the impact of capital and borrowing decisions over the medium term. The Council has remained within all of its borrowing and investment limits for 2019/20 as stated in the TM Strategy Statement and the Capital Strategy Report agreed by Council in February 2019. The Council has not deviated from the Capital related indicators either.

- 4.2 The Capital related Prudential Indicators are included in the Capital Strategy Report which gives a high level, concise and comprehensible overview to all elected members of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of the Council's services.

- 4.3 The Capital Strategy Report will be reported to Council in February alongside the Capital Plan and will include the following Capital related Prudential Indicators:

Estimates of Capital Expenditure and Financing
Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream
Capital Financing Requirement
Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary for External Debt

4.4 Audit Reviews

Following a positive internal audit review in February 2019, another annual audit review was undertaken in December 2019, the results of which are awaited.

4.5 Training

The Council's treasury consultants, Arlingclose Ltd, provided a training session to members and staff in November 2019 covering various aspects of Treasury Management such as investments and loans.

5 Future

5.1 TM Strategy for next six months

The Council has committed to various projects such as Flood defences, 21c Schools and HRA schemes so the Council will need to undertake further borrowing in order to finance these schemes. The Council will therefore continue to review its cash position to ensure that borrowing is undertaken as required. The Council will also monitor market conditions and interest rate levels to ensure that external borrowing is undertaken at the optimal time in line with the TM strategy.

5.2 Reports

The next reports will be the annual TM Review Report 2019/20 and the TM Update Report 2020/21 which will be reported to the Corporate Governance Committee in July.