

Denbighshire County Council
Capital Strategy Report 2020/21 to 2022/23

Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Capital Expenditure and Financing**
- 3. Treasury Management**
- 4. Revenue Budget Implications**
- 5. Knowledge and Skills**

Capital Strategy Report 2020/21 to 2022/23

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This capital strategy is a new report introduced in 2019/20, giving a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of local public services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability. It has been written in an accessible style to enhance members' understanding of these sometimes technical areas.

2 Capital Expenditure and Financing

- 2.1 Capital expenditure is where the Council spends money on assets, such as property or vehicles that will be used for more than one year. In local government this includes spending on assets owned by other bodies, and loans and grants to other bodies enabling them to buy assets.

In 2020/21, the Council is planning capital expenditure of £62.8m as summarised below:

Table 1: Prudential Indicator: Estimates of Capital Expenditure

Capital Expenditure	2019/20 Approved £000	2019/20 Revised £000	2020/21 Estimate £000	2021/22 Estimate £000	2022/23 Estimate £000
Council Fund	37,249	33,858	41,648	20,117	11,659
Band B – 21 C Schools	685	0	2,020	17,143	18,667
HRA	14,270	12,211	19,172	19,721	11,313
Total	52,204	46,069	62,840	56,981	41,639

- 2.2 For details of the capital projects please refer to Appendix 2-4 in the Capital Plan report. These give details of the capital plan by service, scheme estimates and major capital project updates.
- 2.3 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a ring-fenced account which ensures that council housing does not subsidise, or is itself subsidised, by other local services. HRA capital expenditure is therefore recorded separately. Details of the Housing Capital Budgets can be found in the Housing Rent Setting and Housing Revenue and Capital Budgets Report to Cabinet on 21 January 2020.
- 2.4 **Governance:**

The Strategic Investment Group (SIG) provides an independent review of all business case proposals for capital investment regardless of value and has delegated authority to approve bids to the value of £1 million. It will also recommend schemes to either Cabinet or the full Council if the value of the Application is above £1m or if for other reasons, it is more appropriate for Cabinet or the full Council to approve.

Capital Strategy Report 2020/21 to 2022/23

Annually SIG invite bids from the Heads of Service and meet to review the bids and recommend the proposed allocation of the funding to Cabinet and Council. The recommendations for 2020/21 are included in Appendix 5 of the Capital Plan Report.

A Summary of the Council's Capital Plan is included in the monthly Finance Report to Cabinet. It shows the approved Capital Plan against spend to date. Also an update on the major projects is included in the overall Capital Plan.

- 2.5 All capital expenditure must be financed, either from external sources (government grants and other contributions), the Council's own resources (revenue, reserves and capital receipts) or debt (borrowing, leasing). The planned financing of the above expenditure is as follows:

Table 2: Capital Financing

Capital Financing	2019/20 Approved £000	2019/20 Revised £000	2020/21 Estimate £000	2021/22 Estimate £000	2022/23 Estimate £000
Council Fund					
Capital Receipts	330	4,318	2,565	0	0
Grants & Contributions	12,345	13,064	10,572	1,814	1,814
Revenue Contributions & Reserves	1,601	2,318	1,309	0	0
Supported Borrowing	7,314	1,671	7,591	2,995	2,995
Prudential Borrowing	15,659	12,487	19,611	15,308	6,850
	37,249	33,858	41,648	20,117	11,659
Band B – 21 C Schools					
Grants & Contributions	229	0	1,477	12,880	14,530
Prudential Borrowing	456	0	543	4,263	4,137
	685	0	2,020	17,143	18,667
Total	37,934	33,358	43,668	37,260	30,326
HRA					
Capital Receipts	1,820	0	2,800	750	0
Grants & Contributions	2,412	3,544	2,888	2,420	2,420
Revenue Contributions & Reserves	1,944	2,798	2,411	2,230	1,880
Prudential Borrowing	8,094	5,869	11,073	14,321	7,013
Total	14,270	12,211	19,172	19,721	11,313

Capital Strategy Report 2020/21 to 2022/23

- 2.6 Debt is only a temporary source of finance, since loans and leases must be repaid, and this is therefore replaced over time by other financing, usually from revenue which is known as Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). Alternatively, proceeds from selling capital assets (known as capital receipts) may be used to replace debt finance. The Council's full MRP statement is included within the Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) 2020/21.
- 2.7 The Council's cumulative outstanding amount of debt finance is measured by the capital financing requirement (CFR). This increases with new debt-financed capital expenditure and reduces with MRP and capital receipts used to replace debt. The CFR is expected to increase by £27m during 2020/21. Based on the above figures for expenditure and financing, the Council's estimated CFR is as follows:

Table 3: Prudential Indicator: Estimates of Capital Financing Requirement

Capital Financing Requirement	31/03/20 Approved £000	31/03/20 Revised £000	31/03/21 Estimate £000	31/03/22 Estimate £000	31/03/23 Estimate £000
Council Fund	216,762	210,283	229,422	238,302	237,575
HRA	78,508	72,279	80,173	91,336	94,640
Total CFR	295,270	282,562	309,595	329,638	332,215

- 2.8 **Asset management:** To ensure that capital assets continue to be of long-term use, the Council has an asset management strategy in place. The Asset Management Group (AMG) meets quarterly and its purpose is to provide strategic direction for all matters relating to the effective use of Council owned land and building assets within the County, including (but not exclusively):

Land and Property disposal

Land and property acquisition

Strategic property planning (including consideration of Asset Management Plans)

Innovative land and property usage / utilisation.

- 2.9 **Asset disposals:** When a capital asset is no longer needed, it may be sold so that the proceeds, known as capital receipts, can be spent on new assets or to repay debt. The Council has received £1.506m of capital receipts to date in 2019/20 and has a programme of potential disposals which is reported to the Asset Management Group.

Capital Strategy Report 2020/21 to 2022/23

3 Treasury Management

- 3.1 Treasury management is concerned with keeping sufficient but not excessive cash available to meet the Council's spending needs, while managing the risks. Surplus cash is invested until required, while a shortage of cash will be met by borrowing, to avoid excessive credit balances or overdrafts in the bank current account. The Council is typically cash rich in the short-term as revenue income is received before it is spent, but cash poor in the long-term as capital expenditure is incurred before being financed. The revenue cash surpluses are offset against capital cash shortfalls to reduce overall borrowing.
- 3.2 Due to decisions taken in the past, the Council currently has £232.4m borrowing at an average interest rate of 4.12% and £12.1m treasury investments at an average rate of 0.52%.
- 3.3 **Borrowing strategy:** The Council's main objectives when borrowing are to achieve a low but certain cost of finance while retaining flexibility should plans change in future. These objectives are often conflicting, and the Council therefore seeks to strike a balance between cheap short-term loans (currently available at around 1.00%) and long-term fixed rate loans where the future cost is known but higher (currently 2.5 to 3.0%).

Projected levels of the Council's total outstanding debt are shown below, compared with the capital financing requirement (see above).

Table 4: Prudential Indicator: Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement

Capital Financing Requirement	31/03/20 Approved £000	31/03/20 Revised £000	31/03/21 Estimate £000	31/03/22 Estimate £000	31/03/23 Estimate £000
CFR	295,270	282,562	309,595	329,638	332,215
Debt	248,763	243,097	266,506	287,705	301,642

- 3.4 Statutory guidance is that debt should remain below the capital financing requirement, except in the short-term. As can be seen from table 4, the Council expects to comply with this in the medium term.
- 3.5 **Affordable borrowing limit:** The Council is legally obliged to set an affordable borrowing limit (also termed the authorised limit for external debt) each year and to keep it under review. In line with statutory guidance, a lower "operational boundary" is also set as a warning level should debt approach the limit.

Capital Strategy Report 2020/21 to 2022/23

Table 5: Prudential Indicators: Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary for External Debt

	2019/20 Approved £000	2019/20 Revised £000	2020/21 Proposed £000	2021/22 Proposed £000	2022/23 Proposed £000
Authorised Limit	295,000	270,000	300,000	310,000	320,000
Operational Boundary	290,000	265,000	295,000	305,000	315,000

Further details on borrowing are included in the treasury management strategy.

- 3.6 **Investment strategy:** Treasury investments arise from receiving cash before it is paid out again. Investments made for service reasons or for pure financial gain are not generally considered to be part of treasury management.
- 3.7 The Council's policy on treasury investments is to prioritise security and liquidity over yield that is to focus on minimising risk rather than maximising returns. Cash that is likely to be spent in the near term is invested securely, for example with the government, other local authorities or selected high-quality banks, to minimise the risk of loss.

Table 6: Treasury Management Investments

	31/03/19 Actual £000	31/03/20 Estimate £000	31/03/21 Estimate £000	31/03/22 Estimate £000	31/03/23 Estimate £000
Investments	9,700	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000

Further details on treasury investments are included in the treasury management strategy.

- 3.8 **Governance:** Decisions on treasury management investment and borrowing are made daily and are therefore delegated to the Director of Finance and staff, who must act in line with the treasury management strategy approved by Council. Semi-annual reports on treasury management activity are presented to the Corporate Governance Committee. The Corporate Governance Committee is responsible for scrutinising treasury management decisions.

4 Revenue Budget Implications

- 4.1 Although capital expenditure is not charged directly to the revenue budget, interest payable on loans and MRP are charged to revenue, offset by any investment income receivable. The net annual charge is known as financing costs; this is compared to the net revenue stream i.e. the amount funded from Council Tax, business rates and general government grants.

Capital Strategy Report 2020/21 to 2022/23

Table 7: Prudential Indicator: Proportion of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream

Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream	2019/20 Approved £000	2019/20 Revised £000	2020/21 Estimate £000	2021/22 Estimate £000	2022/23 Estimate £000
Financing Costs	11,361	13,652	13,681	13,920	14,152
Net Revenue Stream	198,538	198,538	208,301	207,791	208,106
Council Fund Ratio	5.72%	6.88%	6.57%	6.70%	6.80%
Financing Costs	6,992	6,132	6,352	6,726	7,579
Net Revenue Stream	16,456	16,538	16,527	17,340	18,047
HRA Ratio	42.49%	37.08%	38.43%	38.79%	42.00%

- 4.2 **Sustainability:** Due to the very long-term nature of capital expenditure and financing, the revenue budget implications of expenditure incurred in the next few years will extend for up to 50 years into the future. The Head of Finance is satisfied that the proposed capital programme is prudent, affordable and sustainable.

5 Knowledge and Skills

- 5.1 The Council's approach to ensuring that the requisite knowledge and skills are held and demonstrated when making capital, borrowing and investment decisions is three fold.
- Employment of professionally qualified and experienced staff with responsibility for making decisions.
 - Continuous and extensive training for Council members to aid informed decision making and effective scrutiny.
 - Employment of Treasury Management advisors, Arlingclose to provide specialist advice in requisite areas.