

Council

8 February 2022

Treasury Management Strategy and Investment Strategy

Recommendations

That Council approves the following:

1. The Treasury Management Strategy for 2022/23 (Appendix 2) be approved with effect from 1st April 2022.
2. The Investment Strategy for 2022/23 (Appendix 3) be approved with effect from 1 April 2022.
3. The revised lending limits for the Warwickshire Property Development Group come into immediate effect (Appendix 3 Annex 7).
4. Council requires the Strategic Director for Resources to ensure that gross borrowing does not exceed the prudential level specified (Appendix 2, Section 3.13, Table 10 "Authorised Borrowing Limit").
5. Council requires the Strategic Director for Resources to ensure that gross investment in non-Treasury investments does not exceed the prudential levels specified (Appendix 3, Annex 7).
6. Council delegates authority to the Strategic Director for Resources to undertake delegated responsibilities in respect of both strategies (Appendix 2, Annex 7, and Appendix 3, Section 2.5).
7. Council requires the Strategic Director for Resources to implement the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy (Appendix 2, Section 2.8-2.20).

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council is required to set a Treasury Management Strategy and Investment Strategy each year and these are set out at Appendix 2 and Appendix 3.
- 1.2 The Treasury Management Strategy, Investment Strategy, and Capital Strategy are all related. The features of these three strategies are summarised below, and the interrelationships are detailed in Appendix 1.

| Capital Strategy | Treasury Management strategy | Investment strategy |
|---|---|--|
| Sets out all Council expenditure that is capital in nature, i.e. expenditure on assets that provide benefits over more than one financial year. | Sets out how the Council manages its cash balances, and how capital financing (borrowing) requirements will be managed. | Sets out how the Council will manage non-treasury investments. |

1.3 Recent treasury management activity has seen the Council holding significant cash balances in relatively safe settings and not needing to take out new borrowing, with historic non-treasury investment activity having been on a small scale. 2021 has seen some significant new developments including:

- The creation of the Warwickshire Property and Development Group (WPDG) limited company and significant steps being made towards implementing the associated strategy.
- The implementation of the Warwickshire Recovery Investment Fund (WRIF), with the first investments expected to occur in Quarter 4.
- Sustained low interest rates for the majority of the year presenting challenges to maximising treasury returns.
- Continual volatility in the economy with developing inflation risk.

1.4 The Operational Boundary and Authorised Borrowing Limit have been updated from the report to Cabinet to reflect the level of capital spending as set out in the budget resolutions elsewhere on the agenda.

2. Treasury Management (Appendix 2) - Headlines

2.1 Treasury management is to do with the safe handling of cash (the priorities are ensuring security and liquidity, followed by the objective of earning an efficient return). Treasury cash balances are planned to reduce driven by “internal borrowing” whereby the Council makes use of temporarily available cash balances in order to reduce the amount of external borrowing required to support new investment. This approach is taken because internal borrowing is cheaper than external borrowing and because the opportunity cost or redirecting treasury investments to minimise debt instead is very low because interest rates are low. Appendix 2 Table 7 shows how the position will move in this direction and become “under borrowed” (i.e. the Council will be borrowing both externally and internally rather than just externally).

2.2 Borrowing, also referred to as the Capital Financing Requirement or CFR (Appendix 2 Table 4) is forecast to increase driven by the planned capital strategy including investments in WPDG and the WRIF.

Minimum Revenue Provision

- 2.3 A prudent provision will be set aside to repay debt (this is called the Minimum Revenue Provision or “MRP”). For mainstream capital expenditure making this provision is existing custom and established practice.
- 2.4 The MRP policy has explicit regard to the WPDG and WRIF:
- For WPDG capital loans a 4% MRP provision will be made.
 - For two elements of WPDG investment, no MRP will be made where: (1) land is transferred in as equity – because no borrowing is required, and (2) where working capital loans are made, because they are revenue rather than capital. For development loans to WPDG the loans are expected to be paid back however to be prudent MRP will still be provided for. The MRP policy is set out at Appendix 2 Section 2.8-2.20.
 - For capital elements of the WRIF (the BIG and PIF funds), MRP of 4% per year will be made.
 - For revenue elements of the WRIF (the LCE fund), no MRP will be required as MRP only applies to capital borrowing.

Interest Rates

- 2.5 Interest rates are very low. The outlook remains for rates to rise but to stay low compared to historic levels. The bank rate rose to 0.25% in December 2021 and our adviser forecast is for the rate to rise gradually to 1.25% by March 2025. The rates at which local authorities can borrow from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) are also very low, currently in the range 1.5% to 2.1% for durations from 5 years to 50 years, and are only expected to rise slowly over the medium term (Appendix 2, Section 3.14).
- 2.6 Interest returns received on treasury investments will be low over the medium term due to the low base rate. Some types of investment may involve negative interest rates as has been the case in 2021/22 but this will be less common going forward. However, actions will be taken to minimise the impact of low rates whilst prioritising security and liquidity.
- 2.7 The increase in non-treasury investments will provide a financial benefit through providing greater returns than treasury investments and greater returns than PWLB borrowing, but at greater risk.

Borrowing

- 2.8 PWLB borrowing rates remain low (Appendix 2 Section 3.14) and a key issue will be to ensure that the Council maintains access to these rates (although alternatives will also be considered when borrowing is required to ensure best value is achieved). There are two specific factors that will be managed to achieve this:
- By providing HM Treasury with a forward forecast of capital plans local authorities can maintain access to the lowest rates (referred to as the “certainty rates”).

- By making non-treasury investments that meet PWLB lending criteria (Appendix 3, Annex 1).
- 2.9 The current borrowing maturity profile includes a concentration of debt due to be repaid around 2050-2060 (Appendix 2 Annex 2). When new borrowing is taken out the opportunity will be taken to consider spreading out the maturity profile more evenly.
- 2.10 Limits for borrowing have been set based upon expected levels of investment, including an “Authorised Borrowing Limit” which cannot be exceeded (Appendix 2 Table 10).

Treasury Investments

- 2.11 Loans being made to other local authorities will be made on a smaller scale as internal borrowing reduces cash balances.

3 Investment Strategy (Non-Treasury Investments - Appendix 3) – Headlines

- 3.1 The significant non-treasury developments are that the WPDG and WRIF will be in full operation in 2022/23, their set up having been the focus of activity in 2021/22. Both initiatives have refreshed strategies and will create non-treasury investment on a significant scale that will be funded from internal and external borrowing.
- 3.2 An important feature of all non-treasury investments is that they are made with the primary purpose of delivering organisational objectives, and not purely or primarily to make a financial return (Appendix 3 Section 3). The objectives of the WPDG and WRIF are set out in their respective strategies.
- 3.3 The Council holds a small amount of other non-treasury investments, all related to the delivery of service objectives (Appendix 3 Section 14). These are already fully funded or otherwise paid for, for example:
- Holding shares in companies such as the ESPO Trading Ltd and Warwick Technology Park.
 - Issuing loans to Educaterers Ltd (a local authority controlled company).
 - On a small scale issuing loans to local businesses through the capital programme and the Coventry and Warwickshire Reinvestment Trust.
 - Holding a land bank of investment properties.

Risk

- 3.4 Any investment involves risk, with the risks depending upon the nature of the investment. A range of strategic governance and risk management standards are set out throughout the Investment Strategy which all non-treasury investments must adhere to (but refer to Appendix 3 Annex 2 – Annex 4 in particular). In addition, more detailed requirements may be determined for specific funds and incorporated into the approval of those funds.
- 3.5 Investment risk and return are linked, with higher risks typically being rewarded by higher returns. How financial risk manifests itself varies with the type of investment, for example equity risk manifests in the form of share price volatility, and lending risk manifests in the form of loan repayment default.
- 3.6 The financial risks and rewards involved in non-treasury investments are of a different nature to (and greater than) the financial risks relating to traditional capital expenditure and treasury investments (Appendix 3 Section 8).
- 3.7 The reasons for the differences are:
- Treasury investments prioritise security and liquidity to serve the primary objective of treasury management which is to ensure that cash is available when needed to serve the purpose for which that cash is held.
 - Traditional capital spending is basic expenditure by nature and is fully funded as such.
 - Non-Treasury investment risks are different in that although they are made with the primary purpose of delivering organisational objectives, and not purely or primarily to make a financial return, they are assumed to retain or increase their original asset value and are assumed to provide a more significant financial return than traditional treasury investments. Therefore, there is exposure to the risk of these assumptions not happening.
 - The objectives of non-treasury investments by their nature are not the same as treasury investments, and therefore they may not prioritise security and liquidity as highly as treasury investments do.
- 3.8 A key feature of managing risk will include having arrangements to manage the risk of losses. This will include a certain degree of expected losses built into business models (no investment is 100% guaranteed to pay back), the use of reserves to provide some cover, and hard limits on non-treasury investment levels to limit maximum exposure to losses.
- 3.9 Some risks are driven by the duration of an investment. The longer the investment is for, the greater the probability is of a default. In addition, very long-term investments introduce intergenerational risks that need to be considered.
- 3.10 Aside from the risks associated with any individual investments, another type of risk is addressed by the Investment Strategy called “proportionality”

(Appendix 3 Section 9). This is to do with the overall aggregate level of investment and exposure to loss, in comparison to the size and financial capacity of a local authority to bear the losses that it is exposed to. The issue of proportionality will be monitored, and proportionality measures may be used in the future to put limits on investment activity.

Prudential Indicators

- 3.11 The Investment Strategy has been updated to have regard to the new WPDG investments, including the introduction of Prudential Indicators (Appendix 3 Annex 7) that place limits on gross and net investment.
- 3.12 The gross amount that may be invested in each fund annually is controlled by a hard ceiling within each year. The net level of investment will be monitored (i.e. after accounting for repayment of previous investments). If the annual net position is lower than expected due to repayment defaults, this would trigger a review of future gross investment limits.
- 3.13 In addition, the following more detailed limits will be applied to manage risk (Appendix 3 Annex 7).
- The length of time that investments may be made for.
 - The amount of a fund that may be debt or equity investment.
- 3.14 The “Authorised Borrowing Limit” set within the Treasury Management Strategy (Appendix 2, Table 10) includes borrowing required to service these investments.
- 3.15 All non-treasury management investments will be required to demonstrate that they meet the following criteria:
- That they are primarily for the purpose of delivering organisational objectives and meeting service need.
 - That they meet the revised criteria recently set out by the Government that need to be met to retain access to PWLB lending. The Government has specified the kinds of investment that may be made (Appendix 3 Section 3.2). It is possible to invest in other initiatives but if that were the case, the local authority would have to find borrowing sources from elsewhere and would be considered a higher risk to lend to.
 - That whilst they may make a financial return, they must not be purely or primarily for the purpose of making a financial return.

Governance

- 3.16 High level requirements for the governance of non-treasury investments are specified in the Investment Strategy (Appendix 3). These are the minimum requirements that must be met. Where specific investments or funds are developed, they may prescribe more detail around their governance arrangements, but those arrangements must meet these strategic

requirements.

4 Financial Implications

4.1 The financial implications are detailed within the report and appendices.

5 Environmental Implications

5.1 Both strategies include an “Environmental Social and Governance” (ESG) policy. The primary objectives of treasury management will however remain security, liquidity, and yield, with non-treasury investments also including the delivery of organisational service objectives.

6 Timescales Associated with Next Steps

6.1 The Treasury Management Strategy and Investment Strategy will, subject to approval by full Council, come into effect on 1st April 2022.

6.2 The revised lending limits for WPDG would come into effect immediately after approval by full Council.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Explanation of Capital Expenditure, Treasury Investments, and Non-Treasury Investments
- Appendix 2 - Treasury Management Strategy
- Appendix 3 - Investment Strategy (for Non Treasury Investments)

Background Papers

None

| | Name | Contact Information |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Report Author | Chris Norton, Emily Reaney | chrisnorton@warwickshire.gov.uk, emilyreaney@warwickshire.gov.uk |
| Assistant Director | Andy Felton | andrewfelton@warwickshire.gov.uk |
| Lead Director | Rob Powell | robpowell@warwickshire.gov.uk |
| Lead Member | Peter Butlin | cllrbutlin@warwickshire.gov.uk |

The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s):

Other members: Chair and Party Spokes of the Resources and FRS Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Explanation of Capital Expenditure, Treasury Investments, and Non-Treasury Investments

| | Capital Expenditure | Treasury Investments | Non-Treasury Investments |
|---|--|--|--|
| Purpose | Traditional capital expenditure to meet service objectives | Maximising the security and liquidity of cash, and generating the most efficient returns without compromising the required security and liquidity | Investment in assets to meet service objectives and/or commercial objectives |
| Investment Timescales | Long term | Short-term (up to 1 year) | Short term through to exceptionally long term - dependent on objectives |
| Outcome for Asset Value | Assets are consumed through their working life and are assumed to have no remaining value at the end of their working life. New funding is then required to purchase or create a new asset. | The preservation of capital (security) is the top priority. Assets are only held until the cash is needed for its original purpose (for example a capital receipt that was held until it was spent). | Asset values are assumed to be maintained and repaid where investments are loans by nature. Where investments are equity in nature then either (1) asset values are assumed to be maintained and/or increase or (2) be replaced by other value (e.g. dividends, capital receipts). |
| Sources of Funding | Investment is permanent (i.e. the investment does not come back). Sources include capital receipts and grants and borrowing. Provision is made for replacement costs via the MTFS. | Investments are temporary (i.e. investments are assumed to come back eventually) Cash balances provide the funding. | Investments are temporary (i.e. investments are assumed to come back eventually). Primarily borrowing and cash balances |
| Risk | Assets are fully funded, so there is no risk of a loss of an assumed financial investment as such, however there are risks for example (1) cost over-run and (2) that an asset does not deliver its objectives, and that this has knock-on implications. | Credit and liquidity risk exist but are minimised, for example by restricting investments to counterparties with high credit ratings and restricting investments to shorter durations. | Risks are directly dependent upon the nature of the investments undertaken, and the governance and controls built around them. Risks relate to individual investments, and also emerge from the aggregate total amount of activity. |
| Primarily covered by which strategy document? | Capital Strategy Capital plans also feature in the Treasury Strategy as they drive borrowing and cash planning. | Treasury Management Strategy | Investment Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will also feature in the capital strategy where investment is capital in nature and must be accounted for as such. Will also feature in the Treasury Strategy where the investment drives borrowing or the use of cash balances. |
| Examples of what this covers in practice | Traditional capital expenditure, for example on roads, IT infrastructure, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loans to Banks, Building Societies, and other Local Authorities Investments in Money Market Funds Investment in the CCLA Property Fund | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-existing non-treasury investments (e.g. land bank, companies such as ESPO, loans to Educaterers, and loans made via CWRT). WPDG |