

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

25 February 2025

Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2025/26

Executive Summary

This report presents the Treasury Management Strategy for 2025/26 including:

- a) Prudential and Treasury Indicators for the next three years
- b) Debt management decisions required for 2025/26 that do not feature within the Prudential or Treasury Indicators (paragraphs 58 to 61)
- c) Minimum Revenue Provision Policy 2025/26
- d) Annual Investment Strategy for 2025/26

This report has been prepared in accordance with the updated CIPFA Codes of Practice (Treasury Management and Prudential) 2021 and relevant Guidance Notes. Any relevant changes within the code of practice have been reflected within the Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26.

Proposals

That Council:

- a) Adopt the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy (paragraph 26 – 28)
- b) Adopt the Prudential and Treasury Indicators (paragraphs 17 – 25, 41 – 47 and Appendix A)
- c) Adopt the Annual Investment Strategy (paragraph 64 onwards).
- d) Delegate to the Corporate Director of Resources (S151 Officer) the authority to vary the amount of borrowing and other long-term liabilities within the Treasury Indicators for the Authorised Limit and the Operational Boundary
- e) Authorise the Corporate Director of Resources (S151 Officer) to agree the restructuring of existing long-term loans where savings are achievable or to enhance the long-term portfolio
- f) Agree that short term cash surpluses and deficits continue to be managed through temporary loans, deposits and money market funds
- g) Agree that any surplus cash balances not required to cover borrowing are placed in the most appropriate specified or non-specified investments, particularly where this is more cost effective than short term deposits; and delegate to the Corporate

Director of Resources (S151 Officer) the authority to select such funds

- h) Agree the Investment Policy (paragraph 68)
- i) Agree the Creditworthiness Policy (paragraph 72)
- j) Agree the Loans Policy (appendix F)

Reasons for Proposals

To enable the Council to agree a Treasury Management Strategy for 2025/26 and set Prudential Indicators that comply with statutory guidance and reflect best practice.

Lucy Townsend - Chief Executive

Lizzie Watkin - Corporate Director of Resources (S151 Officer)

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

25 February 2025

Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2025/26

Purpose

1. This report recommends that Council approve the Prudential and Treasury Indicators, together with the Treasury Management Strategy for 2025/26.

Background

2. The Council is required to operate a balanced budget. Part of the treasury management operation is to ensure that cash flow is adequately planned, with cash being available when it is needed. Surplus monies are invested in appropriately risk assessed counterparties or instruments commensurate within the Council's risk appetite set out in the Strategy, providing adequate liquidity initially before considering investment return.
3. The second main function of the treasury management service is the funding of the Council's capital plans. These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Council, essentially the longer-term cash flow planning, to ensure that the Council can meet its capital spending obligations. This management of longer-term cash may involve arranging long or short-term loans or using longer-term cash flow surpluses. On occasion, when it is prudent and economically advantageous, any debt previously drawn may be restructured to meet Council risk or cost objectives.
4. The contribution that the treasury management function makes to the Council is critical, as the balance of debt and investment operations ensure liquidity or the ability to meet spending commitments as they fall due, either on day to day revenue or for larger capital projects. The treasury operations will see a balance of the interest costs of debt and the investment income arising from cash deposits affecting the available budget. Since cash balances generally result from reserves and balances, it is paramount to ensure adequate security of the sums invested, as a loss of principal value will result in a loss to the funding available to the council and the General Fund Reserve, set aside to mitigate financial shocks.
5. CIPFA defines treasury management as:

"The management of the local authority's borrowing, 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.”

6. Whilst any commercial initiatives or loans to third parties will impact on the treasury function, these activities are generally classed as non-treasury activities, (arising usually from capital expenditure), and are separate from the day to day treasury management activities. Further details on non-financial investments are given in the Capital Strategy 2025/26.

Reporting Requirements - Capital Strategy

7. The CIPFA 2021 Prudential and Treasury Management Codes require for all local authorities to prepare a Capital Strategy report, which will provide the following,
 - a high-level long term overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of services
 - an overview of how the associated risk is managed
 - the implications for future financial sustainability
8. The aim of the capital strategy is to ensure that members fully understand the overall long-term policy objectives and resulting capital strategy requirements, governance procedures and risk appetite. This report is included as part of the budget papers presented to Cabinet on 4 February 2025, and Full Council on 25 February 2025.

Reporting Requirements – Treasury Management Reporting

9. Each year, the Council is required to receive and approve, as a minimum, three main reports, which incorporate a variety of policies, estimates and actuals:
 - a) Treasury Management Strategy Statement including prudential and treasury indicators, which covers the following,
 - the capital plans (including prudential indicators);
 - a minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy (how residual capital expenditure is charged to revenue over time);
 - the treasury management strategy (how the investments and borrowings are to be organised) including treasury indicators; and
 - an investment strategy (the parameters on how investments are to be managed).
 - b) Mid-year Treasury Management Report, which will update members with the progress of the capital position, amending prudential indicators as necessary, and whether any policies require revision.

- c) Annual Treasury Report, which is an outturn position document that provides details of actual performance against a selection of prudential and treasury indicators and actual treasury operational performance compared to the estimates within the strategy for the financial year.

Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26

10. The strategy for 2025/26 covers two main areas:

a) Capital Issues

- the capital expenditure plans and the associated prudential indicators;
- the minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy.

b) Treasury Management Issues

- the current treasury position;
- treasury indicators which limit the treasury risk and activities of the Council;
- prospects for interest rates;
- the borrowing strategy;
- policy on borrowing in advance of need;
- debt rescheduling;
- the investment strategy;
- creditworthiness policy; and
- the policy on use of external service providers.

11. These elements cover the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003, DLUHC Investment Guidance, DLUHC MRP Guidance, the CIPFA Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code.

Training

12. The CIPFA Treasury Management Code requires the responsible officer to ensure that members with responsibility for treasury management receive adequate training in treasury management. This especially applies to members responsible for scrutiny.
13. The training needs of treasury management officers are periodically reviewed. General treasury, and subject specific training is provided by the Council's treasury managers, which is attended by members of the treasury team. Opportunities for further officer development is considered during the year.

Treasury Management Consultants

14. The Council uses Link Group, Link Treasury Services Limited, as its external treasury management advisors.

15. The Council recognises that responsibility for treasury management decisions remains with the organisation at all times and will ensure that undue reliance is not placed upon our external service providers. All decisions will be undertaken with regards to all available information, including, but not solely, our treasury advisers.
16. It also recognises that there is value in employing external providers of treasury management services in order to acquire access to specialist skills and resources. The Council will ensure that the terms of their appointment and the methods by which their value will be assessed are properly agreed and documented and subjected to regular review.

Capital Prudential Indicators (2025/26 – 2027/28)

17. The Council's capital expenditure plans are the key driver of treasury management activity. The output of the capital expenditure plans is reflected in the prudential indicators, which are designed to assist members' overview and confirm capital expenditure plans are prudent, affordable and sustainable.

Capital Expenditure and Financing

18. This prudential indicator is a summary of the Council's capital expenditure plans, both those agreed previously, and those forming part of this budget cycle. The Capital Programme 2025/26 will be submitted to Cabinet and Council in February 2025. The estimates for future years are based on indicative figures, as part of the Capital Programme, and are therefore subject to change, both during the year and in future years in line with the budget monitoring of the Capital Programme, annual setting of the Capital Programme Budget and as new schemes are considered and approved by Cabinet and Council.

Capital Expenditure	2023/24 Actual £m	2024/25 Forecast £m	2025/26 Estimate £m	2026/27 Estimate £m	2027/28 Estimate £m
General Fund	102.694	140.191	182.885	147.363	92.771
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	41.444	36.678	41.109	58.186	39.441
Commercial Activities/Non-financial investments*	19.583	17.567	16.518	4.119	0.141
Total	163.421	194.436	250.512	209.668	132.353

* Commercial activities/non-financial investments relate to loans to Stone Circle.

19. The table below summarises the above capital expenditure plans and how these plans are being financed by capital or revenue resources. Any shortfall of resources results in a funding borrowing need.

Financing of Capital Expenditure	2023/24 Actual £m	2024/25 Forecast £m	2025/26 Estimate £m	2026/27 Estimate £m	2027/28 Estimate £m
Capital Grants & Contributions	58.986	71.522	78.273	61.117	48.856
Capital Receipts	3.669	0.977	0.481	1.075	0.250
Revenue	2.217	5.559	9.280	0.597	0.000
Other (includes CIL/S106 contributions)	4.727	14.247	28.988	11.309	0.100
HRA	33.042	12.308	18.717	20.563	12.329
Total Financing (non-borrowing)	102.641	104.613	135.739	94.661	61.535
Net Financing Need – General Fund	60.781	65.453	92.381	77.384	43.706
Net Financing Need – HRA	15.902	24.370	22.392	37.623	27.112
Total Net Financing Need (Borrowing)	76.683	89.823	114.773	115.007	70.818
Total Capital Expenditure	163.421	194.436	250.512	209.668	132.353

The Council's Borrowing Need (the Capital Financing Requirement)

20. The second prudential indicator is the Council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). The CFR is the total historic outstanding capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for from either revenue or capital resources. It is essentially a measure of the Council's indebtedness and so its underlying borrowing need. Any capital expenditure which has not immediately been paid for, through a revenue or capital resources, will increase the CFR.
21. The CFR does not increase indefinitely, as the minimum revenue provision (MRP) is a statutory annual revenue charge which broadly reduces the indebtedness in line with the asset life, and so charges the economic consumption of capital assets as they are used.
22. The CFR includes any other long-term liabilities (e.g. PFI schemes, finance leases). While these increase the CFR, and therefore the Council's borrowing requirement, these types of schemes include a borrowing facility by the lease/PFI provider, and so the Council is not required to separately borrow for these schemes. The Council

currently has £49.309m of such schemes within the CFR. The CFR projections are summarised in the table below,

	2023/24 Actual £m	2024/25 Estimate £m	2025/26 Estimate £m	2026/27 Estimate £m	2027/28 Estimate £m
CFR – General Fund	562.736	603.871	668.416	713.491	720.899
CFR – HRA	114.767	131.137	153.529	191.151	218.264
Total CFR	677.503	753.007	821.945	904.642	939.163
Movement in CFR	57.174	57.505	86.937	82.697	34.521
Represented by					
Net Financing Need - GF	60.781	65.453	92.381	77.384	43.706
Net Financing Need – HRA	15.902	24.370	22.392	37.623	27.112
Less MRP/VRP	(15.795)	(20.260)	(23.778)	(28.252)	(32.239)
Less Other Long Term Liabilities (PFI)	(3.711)	(4.058)	(4.058)	(4.058)	(4.058)
Less Other Financing Movements (inc HRA)	0.000	(8.000)	0.000	0.000	0.000
Movement in CFR	57.174	57.505	86.937	82.697	34.521

Liability Benchmark

23. The council is required to estimate and measure the liability benchmark for the forthcoming financial year and the following two financial years, as a minimum.
24. There are four components to the Liability Benchmark.
 - I. Existing Loan Debt Outstanding – the Council’s existing loans that are still outstanding in future years
 - II. Loans CFR – this is 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.
 - III. Net Loans Requirement – this will show the Council’s gross loan debt less treasury management investments at the last financial year end, projected into the future and based on its approved prudential borrowing, planned MRP and any other major cashflows forecast.
 - IV. Liability Benchmark (or gross loans requirement) this equals net loans requirement plus short term liquidity allowance

	Opening Balances £m	2024/25 Estimate £m	2025/26 Estimate £m	2026/27 Estimate £m	2027/28 Estimate £m
PWLB Loans	322.123	312.123	302.000	292.000	262.000
LOBO Loans	36.000	36.000	36.000	36.000	36.000
Market Loans	25.172	23.541	22.014	21.000	21.000
Existing Loan Debt	383.295	371.664	360.014	351.000	319.000
Opening Loan Debt	383.295				
Less: Opening Treasury Investments	(112.056)				
Plus: Planned Borrowing		89.823	114.773	115.007	70.818
Less: MRP and Capital Receipt Set Aside		(20.260)	(23.778)	(28.252)	(32.239)
Adj: Other Forecast Cashflows		(4.058)	(4.058)	(4.058)	(4.058)
Net Loans Requirement	271.239	336.744	423.681	506.378	540.899
Opening Loans CFR	677.503				
Plus: Planned Borrowing		89.823	114.773	115.007	70.818
Less: MRP and Capital Receipts Set Aside		(20.260)	(23.778)	(28.252)	(32.239)
Loans CFR	677.503	747.066	838.061	924.816	963.395
Liquidity Allowance above Net Debt (Liquidity Buffer)	112.056	100.000	100.000	100.000	100.000
Liability Benchmark (Gross Loans Requirement)	383.295	436.744	523.681	606.378	640.899
Forecast Investments	112.056	100.000	100.000	100.000	100.000
(Over)/Under Liability Benchmark	0.000	65.080	163.667	255.378	321.899

25. Years where actual loans are less than the benchmark indicate a future borrowing requirement; any years where actual loans outstanding exceed the benchmark represent an overborrowed position, which will result in excess cash requiring investment.

Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement

26. The minimum revenue provision (MRP) is the amount set aside for the repayment of the debt as a result of borrowings made to finance capital expenditure.

27. The Council is required to calculate a prudent provision of MRP which ensures that the outstanding debt liability is repaid over a period that is reasonable commensurate with that over which the capital expenditure provides benefits. The Council is also allowed to undertake additional voluntary revenue payments (VRP) if appropriate.

28. Regulations have been issued which require full Council to approve an MRP statement in advance of each year. The following MRP policy (section a to d) was approved in October 2017 following a full review. It is recommended that Council approves the same MRP policy for 2025/26, as follows:

a) MRP for capital expenditure incurred wholly or partly by prudential borrowing or credit arrangements: equal Instalments to be determined by reference to the expected life of the asset. Asset life is deemed to begin once the asset becomes operational. MRP will commence from the financial year following the one in which the asset becomes operational.

b) MRP in respect of prudential borrowing: equal Instalments taken to meet expenditure, which is treated as capital expenditure by virtue of either a capitalisation direction or regulations, will be determined in accordance with the asset life method as recommended by the statutory guidance.

c) The Council retains the right to make additional voluntary payments to reduce the CFR if deemed prudent.

d) In general, where the Council issues capital loans to third parties (including to its own commercial companies), the expectation is that the funds lent will be repaid in full at a future date. Therefore, no MRP will set aside in respect of these loans.

e) MRP will however need to be applied as appropriate if it is determined at any point that any such loan will not be re-paid in full. The position of each loan will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Section 151 Officer.

Borrowing

29. The capital expenditure plans set out in paragraph 18 provide details of the service activity of the Council. The treasury management function ensures that the Council's cash is organised in accordance with the relevant professional codes, so that sufficient cash is available to meet this service activity and the Council's capital strategy. This will involve both the organisation of the cash flow and, where capital plans require, the organisation of appropriate borrowing facilities. The strategy covers the relevant treasury/prudential indicators, the current and projected debt positions and the annual investment strategy.

Current Portfolio Position

30. The overall treasury management portfolio as at 31 March 2024 and for the position as at 31 December 2024 are shown below for both borrowing and investments.

Treasury Portfolio				
	Actual 31/03/2024 £m	Actual 31/03/2024 %	Current 31/12/2024 £m	Current 31/12/2024 %
Treasury Investments				
Banks	10.000	8.92	9.980	18.17
Local Authorities	22.000	19.63	0.000	0.00
Money Market Funds	60.056	53.60	24.952	45.42
Property Fund	20.000	17.85	20.000	36.41
Total Treasury Investments	112.056	100.00	54.932	100.00
Treasury Borrowing				
PWLB	322.123	84.04	320.123	84.25
Market Loans	57.000	14.87	57.000	15.00
Salix	4.172	1.09	2.843	0.75
Total External Borrowing	383.295	100.00	379.966	100.00
Net Treasury Investments/ (Borrowing)	(271.239)		(325.034)	

31. The Council's forward projections for borrowing are summarised in the tables below. These tables show the actual external gross debt, against the underlying capital borrowing need (the CFR), highlighting any over or under borrowing, for both the general fund and the HRA.

External Debt General Fund	2023/24 Actual £m	2024/25 Estimate £m	2025/26 Estimate £m	2026/27 Estimate £m	2027/28 Estimate £m
Debt at 1 April	309.295	305.295	373.117	463.971	540.301

Actual/Estimated Change in Debt	(4.000)	63.822	90.854	76.330	43.706
Debt at 31 March	305.295	373.117	463.971	540.301	584.007
CFR	562.736	603.871	668.416	713.491	720.899
PFI Liability	54.817	49.309	45.251	41.193	37.134
Under/ (Over) Borrowing	202.624	181.445	159.194	131.997	99.758

External Debt HRA	2023/24 Actual £m	2024/25 Estimate £m	2025/26 Estimate £m	2026/27 Estimate £m	2027/28 Estimate £m
Debt at 1 April	86.000	78.000	94.370	116.762	154.385
Actual/Estimated Change in Debt	(8.000)	16.370	22.392	37.623	27.112
Debt at 31 March	78.000	94.370	116.762	154.385	181.497
CFR	114.767	131.137	153.529	191.151	218.264
Under/ (Over) Borrowing	36.767	36.767	36.767	36.767	36.767

32. Within the range of prudential indicators there are a number of key indicators to ensure that the Council operates its activities within well-defined limits. One of these is that 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 2025/26 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, in advance of need.
33. The Corporate Director of Resources (S151 Officer) confirms that the Council complied with this prudential indicator in the current year and does not envisage difficulties for the future. This takes into account current commitments, existing plans, and the proposals in this report.

Stone Circle

34. Included in the planned capital programme are loans made to Stone Circle. The amounts are as follows.

Loans to Stone Circle	2023/24 Actual £m	2024/25 Estimate £m	2025/26 Estimate £m	2026/27 Estimate £m	2027/28 Estimate £m
In year Capital	21.199	17.567	16.519	4.119	0.141

Expenditure					
Cumulative Year End Loan Balance	45.492	63.059	79.578	83.697	83.838

35. The Stone Circle loans have been funded entirely by borrowing, which will be funded by revenue savings generated through financial returns from the company, through mark up on the loans and through future dividends.
36. Borrowing undertaken to fund capital expenditure, including the loans to Stone Circle, is owned and financed by the Council, regardless of whether any income is received from third party investments. This creates additional credit risk for the Council.
37. The overall exposure from Stone Circle is limited to decisions already taken and agreed by full council (23 July 2019 – minute number 108 headed “Establishing local authority companies”), this includes the authority to borrow to support the programme.
38. As per the agreed policy, MRP is being applied to some of this capital expenditure, as the business plan could not give the assurance necessary that the loan would be repaid in full.
39. Some of the debt, however, is backed by the value of the Stone Circle assets. If the Stone Circle companies and the arrangement with them needs to be unwound, the Stone Circle assets would transfer to the Council; as assets of a wholly owned Council company, their value would be used to repay the remainder of outstanding debt.
40. Any changes will be reported to cabinet and full council at the earliest opportunity.

Treasury Indicators: Limits to Borrowing Activity

Operational Boundary

41. The operational boundary is the limit beyond which external debt is not normally expected to exceed. In most cases, this would be a similar figure to the CFR, but may be lower or higher depending on the levels of actual debt and the ability to fund under borrowing by other cash resources.
42. The operational boundary is based on a prudent estimate of the most likely maximum level of external borrowing for both capital expenditure and cash flow purposes, which is consistent with other budget proposals. The basis of the calculation for HRA borrowing 2025/26 is the HRA CFR.

Operational Boundary	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m
General Fund Debt	689.907	692.474	737.548	744.959
HRA Debt	114.322	153.528	191.151	218.263

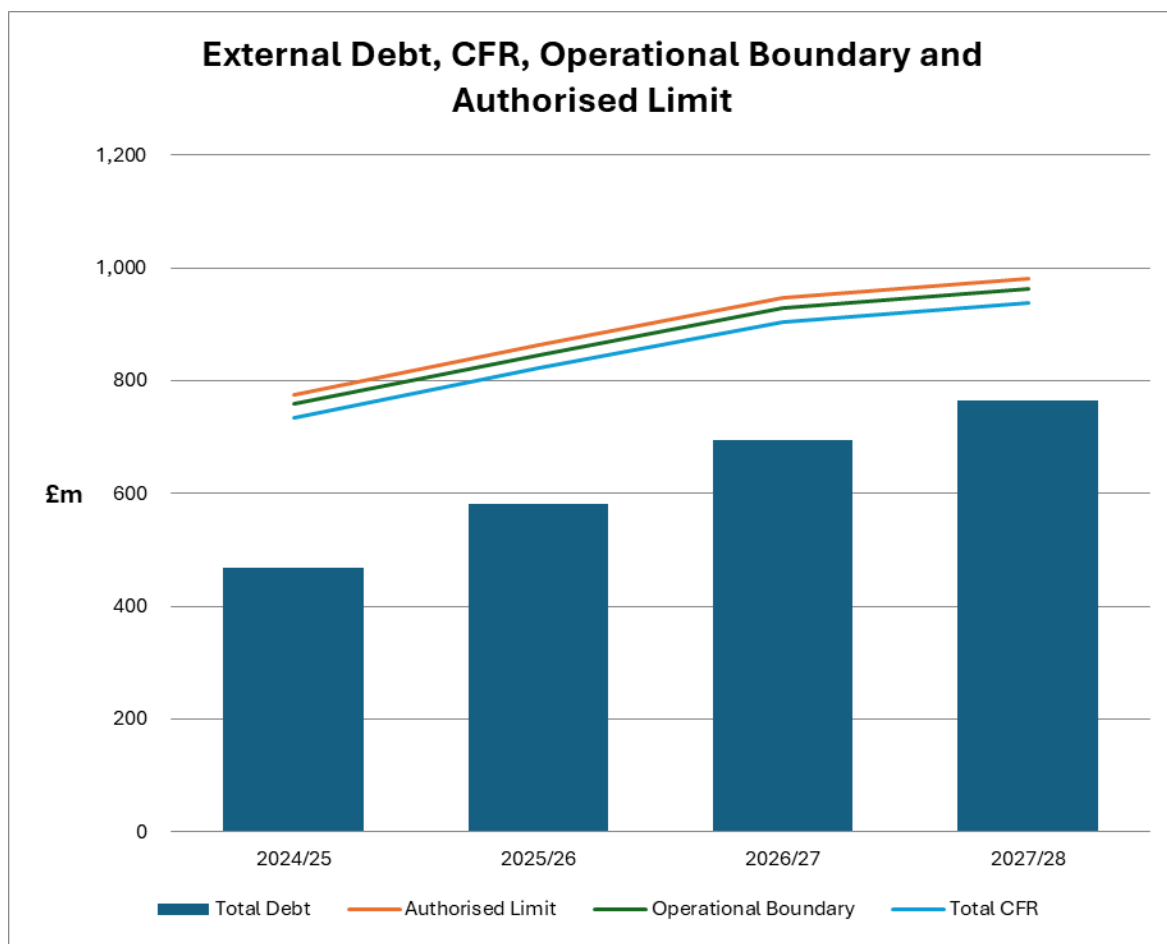
Operational Boundary	804.229	846.002	928.699	963.222
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Authorised Limit for External Debt

43. The authorised limit for debt is a key indicator which represents a control on the maximum level of borrowing. This represents a legal limit beyond which external debt is prohibited, and this limit needs to be set or revised by Full Council. It reflects the level of external debt which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable in the longer term.
44. The authorised limit is the statutory limit determined under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003. The Government retains an option to control either the total of all councils' plans, or those of a specific council, although this power has not yet been exercised.
45. The authorised limit is the operational boundary, including an allowance for unplanned and irregular cash movements. It is proposed that an allowance of 2.5% is continued for General Fund borrowing for 2025/26 to 2027/28, but this will be kept under review. The allowance provides for the possibility of additional borrowing during the year as a result of Government support for further schemes and provides headroom where the projection proves too optimistic (payments made earlier or receipt of income delayed against that forecast).
46. There is no allowance in respect of HRA borrowing, so it has been decided that this borrowing should not exceed the CFR.

Authorised Limit	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m
General Fund Debt	707.155	709.786	755.987	763.583
HRA Debt	114.322	153.528	191.151	218.263
Authorised Limit	821.477	863.314	947.138	981.846

47. The following bar/line graph shows external debt against the CFR, operation boundary and authorised limit.



Monitoring and Reporting of the Prudential Indicators

48. Progress will be monitored throughout the year, particularly against the two borrowing limits (operational boundary and authorised limit) above. Cabinet will be kept informed of any issues that arise, including potential or actual breaches.

Borrowing Strategy

49. The Council is currently maintaining an under-borrowed position. This means that the capital borrowing need, (the CFR) has not been fully funded with loan debt as cash supporting the Council's reserves, balances and cash flow have been used as a temporary measure (internal borrowing).

50. This strategy is prudent, as medium and longer dated borrowing rates are expected to fall from their current levels once prevailing higher inflation rates are addressed by the Bank of England monetary policy.

51. Against this background and the risks within the economic forecast, caution will be adopted with the 2025/26 treasury operations. The Corporate Director of Resources (S151 Officer) will, through delegation and reporting, monitor interest rates in financial markets and adopt a pragmatic approach to changing circumstances:

a) if it was considered that there was a significant risk of a sharp fall in borrowing rates, then long-term borrowing will be postponed.

b) if it was considered that there was a significant risk of a much sharper rise in borrowing rates than that currently forecast, fixed rate funding may be drawn whilst interest rates are lower than they are projected to be in the next few years.

52. Any decisions will be reported to Cabinet within the next treasury report as part of the treasury management reporting cycle.

Rate and Timing of Borrowing

53. In 2025/26 two PWLB loans will mature and become repayable as follows:

- £0.123m in December 2025 (General Fund) at a rate of 4.875%
- £10m in March 2026 (HRA) at a rate of 2.92%

54. These loans may be refinanced depending on the Council's overall internal borrowing position, and the nature of the current economic climate.

55. The timing of any borrowing is crucial in terms of interest rates and the potential to minimise interest costs. Prior to any actual borrowing the treasury team will, in conjunction with our treasury advisers, proactively manage the interest rate position, using all information available to inform the borrowing decision.

56. It is not always possible to obtain the lowest rates of interest, as there is a risk that unforeseen events can significantly alter the level of rates, however, ongoing active monitoring of rates and forecasts will mitigate against this risk.

57. Temporary loans, where both the borrower and lender have the option to redeem the loan within twelve months, are used to offset short term revenue cash deficits. They may also be used to cover short term cashflow requirements until longer term loans become more cost effective. The majority of these loans will be at fixed interest rates, maturing on specific dates. The strategy is that the Council shall utilise temporary loans for any short-term cash deficits that arise in respect of revenue and/or capital.

Policy on Borrowing in Advance of Need

58. The Council 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 be within forward approved Capital Financing Requirement estimates and

will be considered carefully to ensure that value for money can be demonstrated and that the Council can ensure the security of such funds.

59. Risks associated with any borrowing in advance activity will be subject to prior appraisal and subsequent reporting through the mid-year or annual reporting mechanism.

Debt Rescheduling

60. Rescheduling of current borrowing within the current debt portfolio may be considered whilst premature redemption rates remain elevated, but only if there is surplus cash available to facilitate any repayment, or rebalancing of the portfolio to provide more certainty is considered appropriate.
61. Any rescheduling will be reported to members within the next treasury report as part of the treasury management reporting cycle.

Sources of Borrowing

62. Currently the PWLB certainty rate is set at gilts plus 80 basis points. However, consideration may still need to be given to funding from the following sources for the following reasons:
- a) Local Authorities – Primarily shorter dated maturities out to 3 years or so, as this is generally cheaper than the certainty rate
 - b) Financial Institutions – Primarily insurance companies and pension funds but also some banks, out of forward dates where the objective is to avoid the ‘cost of carry’ or to achieve refinancing certainty over the next few years
63. Our advisors will keep the Council informed as to the relative merits of each of these alternative funding sources.

Annual Investment Strategy

Investment Policy – Management of Risk

64. DLUHC and CIPFA have extended the meaning of investments to include both financial and non-financial investments. This report deals solely with financial investments, (managed by the treasury management team). Non-financial investments, i.e. the purchase of income yielding assets, are covered in the Capital Strategy.
65. Council’s investment policy has regard to the following:

- DLUHC Guidance on Local Government Investments (“the Guidance”)

- CIPFA Treasury Management in Public Services Code of Practice and Cross Sectoral Guidance Notes 2021 (“the Code”).
- CIPFA Treasury Management Guidance Notes 2021.

66. The Council’s investment priorities will be security first, portfolio liquidity second, then yield (return). The Council will aim to achieve the optimum return on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity and with regard to the Council’s risk appetite.
67. In the current economic climate, it is considered appropriate to maintain a degree of liquidity to cover cash flow needs but to also consider ‘laddering’ investments (ie. staggering the maturity dates) for periods up to 12 months with high credit rated financial institutions, whilst investment rates remain elevated, as well as wider range fund options.
68. The above guidance from the MHCLG and CIPFA place a high priority on the management of risk. The Council has adopted a prudent approach to managing risk and defines its risk appetite by the following means,
- a) Minimum acceptable credit criteria are applied in order to generate a list of highly creditworthy counterparties. This also enables diversification and thus avoidance of concentration risk. The key ratings used to monitor counterparties are the short term and long-term ratings.
 - b) Other information ratings will not be the sole determinant of the quality of an institution; it is important to continually assess and monitor the financial sector on both a micro and macro basis and in relation to the economic and political environments in which institutions operate. The assessment will also take account of information that reflects the opinion of the markets. To achieve this consideration the Council will engage with its advisors to maintain a monitor on market pricing such as credit default swaps and overlay that information on top of the credit ratings.
 - c) Other information sources used will include the financial press, share price and other such information pertaining to the banking sector in order to establish the most robust scrutiny process on the suitability of potential investment counterparties.
 - d) The Council has defined the list of types of investment instruments that the treasury management team are authorised to use. There are two lists in Appendix B under the categories of ‘specified’ and ‘non-specified’ investments.
 - i. Specified Investments are those with a high level of credit quality and subject to a maturity limit of one year. Or have less than one year to run

until maturity, if originally they were classified as being non-specified investments solely due to the maturity period exceeding one year.

- ii. Non-specified investments are those with less high credit quality, may be for periods in excess of one year, and/or are more complex instruments which require greater consideration by members and officers before being authorised for use.
- e) Non-specified investments limit. The Council has determined that it will limit the maximum total exposure to non-specified investments to be £30m, in line with the limits for investments for longer than 365 days.
 - f) Lending Limits, (amounts and maturity) for each counterparty will be set through applying the matrix in paragraph 73 and 77.
 - g) The Council will set a limit for the amount of its investments which are invested for longer than 365 days (see paragraph 91)
 - h) Investments will only be placed with counterparties from countries with a specified minimum sovereign rating (see paragraph 79)
 - i) The Council has engaged external consultants (see paragraphs 14 - 16) to provide expert advice on how to optimise an appropriate balance on security, liquidity and yield, given the risk appetite of the Council in the context of the expected level of cash balances and need for liquidity throughout the year.
 - j) All investments will be denominated in sterling.
 - k) As a result of the change in accounting standards for 2023/24 under IFRS 9, the Council will consider the implications of investment instruments which could result in an adverse movement in the value of the amount invested and resultant charges at the end of the year to the General Fund. The temporary override to IFRS 9 has been extended until 31 March 2025.
69. The Council will also pursue value for money in treasury management and will monitor the yield from investment income against appropriate benchmarks for investment performance (see paragraph 92). Regular monitoring of investment performance will be carried out during the year.

Third Party Loans

70. The Council has the power to lend monies to third parties. Appendix F sets out the Council's framework within which it may consider advancing loans to third party organisations. The policy was revised, and agreed as part of the mid-year treasury

review, to include loans awarded from the Growing Place Infrastructure Fund. This revised policy has been reviewed by officers, who have concluded that it is still relevant and fit for purpose.

Changes in Investment Policy from 2024/25

71. No changes have been made to the investment policy from the previous year.

Creditworthiness Policy

72. The Council applies the creditworthiness service provided by Link. This service employs a sophisticated modelling approach, utilising credit ratings from the three main credit rating agencies - Fitch, Moodys and Standard & Poors. The credit ratings of counterparties are supplemented with the following overlays:

- Watches and outlooks from credit rating agencies;
- CDS spreads to give early warning of likely changes in credit ratings;
- Sovereign ratings to select counterparties from only the most creditworthy countries.

73. The above modelling approach combines credit ratings, credit watches and credit outlooks in a weighted scoring system which is then combined with an overlay of CDS spreads for which the end product is a series of colour coded bands which indicate the relative creditworthiness of counterparties. These colour codes are used by the Council to determine the suggested duration for investments. The Council will therefore use counterparties within the following durational bands:

Colour	Maximum Investment
Yellow	5 years
Dark Pink	5 years (for ultra-short dated bond funds with a credit score of 1.25)
Light Pink	5 years (for ultra-short dated bond funds with a credit score of 1.5)
Purple	2 years
Blue	1 year (only applies to nationalised or semi nationalised UK banks)
Orange	1 year
Red	6 months
Green	100 days
No colour	not to be used

74. The Link creditworthiness service uses a wider array of information other than just primary ratings. Furthermore, by using a risk weighted scoring system, it does not give undue preponderance to just one agency's ratings.

75. All credit ratings will be monitored daily. The Council is alerted to changes to ratings of all three agencies through its use of the Link creditworthiness service.

- If a downgrade results in the counterparty/investment scheme no longer meeting the Council’s minimum criteria, its further use as a new investment will be withdrawn immediately.
- In addition to the use of credit ratings the Council will be advised of information in movements in credit default swap spreads against the iTraxx benchmark and other market data on a daily basis via its Passport website, provided exclusively to it by Link Asset Services. Extreme market movements may result in downgrade of an institution or removal from the Council’s lending list.

76. Sole reliance will not be placed on the use of this external service. In addition, the Council will also use market data and market information, information on any external support for banks to help support its decision making process.

77. In addition to the above creditworthiness criteria, the following limits will be applied to the total cumulative investments placed with an individual institution (or group of institutions where there is common ownership):

Monetary Limit	Counterparties
Up to £30 m	Money Market Funds
Up to £15 m	Counterparties on the Link credit list with the following colour code, Orange – 12 months Blue – 12 months Purple – 24 months
	Multilateral development banks
	Local authorities and other public bodies
Up to £10 m	Counterparties on the Link credit list with the following colour code, Red – 6 months Green – 100 days
	UK Building societies
	Government backed overseas banks and their subsidiaries
	HSBC (for balances within the bank account, held on an overnight basis - to differentiate from above bank limit for fixed term deposits)

Changes in Creditworthiness Policy from 2024/25

78. No changes have been made to the creditworthiness policy from the previous year.

Other Limits

79. Due care will be taken to consider the exposure of the Council's total investment portfolio to non-specified investments, countries, groups and sectors.
- a. Non-specified investment limit. The Council has determined that it will limit the maximum total exposure to non-specified investments as being £30m.
 - b. Country limit. The Council has determined that it will only use approved counterparties from the UK and countries with a minimum sovereign credit rating of AA- from Fitch (or equivalent). The list of countries that qualify using this credit criteria as at the date of this report are shown in Appendix C. This list will be added to, or deducted from, by officers should ratings change in accordance with this policy.
 - c. Other limits. Limits in place above will apply to a group of counterparties.

Investment Strategy

80. Investments will be made with reference to the core balance and cash flow requirements and the outlook for short term interest rates (i.e. rates for investments up to 12 months)
81. Greater returns are usually obtainable by investing for longer periods, so while most cash balances are required to manage the ups and downs of cash flow, where cash sums can be identified that could be invested for longer periods, the potential value from longer term investments will be carefully assessed.

Investment Returns Expectations

82. The current expectation forecasts bank rate to fall to a low of 3.5%.
83. The suggested budgeted investment earnings rates for returns on investments places for periods up to about 3 months during each financial year are as follows,

Year	Budgeted Earnings Rate
2024/25	4.60%
2025/26	4.10%
2026/27	3.70%
2027/28	3.50%
2028/29	3.50%
Years 6 – 10	3.50%
Year 10 +	3.50%

84. As there are so many variables at this time, caution must be exercised in respect of all interest rate forecasts.

85. Given the above, for its cashflow generated balances, the treasury officers will seek to utilise the money market funds and short dated deposits (overnight to 100 days), in order to benefit from the compounding of interest.

Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Investments

86. ESG Investments are becoming more a commonplace discussion within the wider investment community, including Local Authorities.
87. Our treasury advisors have clarified that the most important issue is ensuring that there is a clear understanding of the ESG risks that the Council is exposed to and evaluating how well it manages these risks
88. In terms of ESG risks, Governance needs to be the most important one when considering treasury investments. This is because poor governance can have a more immediate impact on the financial circumstances of an entity and the potential for a default event that would impact the amount the local authorities receive back from their investments. Those financial institutions that are viewed as having poor/weak corporate governance are generally less well rated in the first instance or have a higher propensity for being subject to negative rating action. So, this element of ESG is of high importance to the Council, as we follow investment guidance with the security, liquidity and yield principle at the core.
89. As highlighted above, there are already touchpoints with the Council's investment strategy, including the incorporation of ESG metrics into credit rating agency assessments. There are also a small, but growing number of financial institutions and fund managers promoting "ESG" products (short term cash investments), which the Council may be able to utilise, whilst maintaining the critical principles of security, liquidity and yield.

Investment Treasury Indicator and Limit

90. This investment treasury indicator limits the total funds invested for greater than 365 days. These limits are set with regard to the Council's liquidity requirements and to reduce the need for any unnecessary borrowing. They are based on the availability of funds after each year end.
91. The Council is asked to approve the treasury indicator and limit:

Upper Limit for Principal Sums Invested for longer than 365 days			
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Limit for Principal sums invested for	£30m	£30m	£30m

longer than 365 days			
Current Investments as at 31/12/24 in excess of 365 days maturing in each year	£0m	£0m	£0m

Investment Risk Benchmarking

92. The Council will use an investment benchmark to assess the investment performance of its investment portfolio of the relevant SONIA (Sterling Overnight Index Average) rate dependant on the average duration of the fund.

End of Year Investment Report

93. At the end of the financial year, the Council will report on its investment activity as part of its Annual Treasury Report.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

94. The Financial Planning Task Group will consider this report on 30 January 2025, with any comments reported to the Cabinet meeting.

Safeguarding Implications

95. None have been identified as arising directly from this report.

Public Health Implications

96. None have been identified as arising directly from this report.

Procurement Implications

97. None have been identified as arising directly from this report.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

98. None have been identified as arising directly from this report.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

99. Wiltshire Council will not intentionally invest in any investment that is not ethical and would not be consistent with our environmental and social policy objectives.
100. Where appropriate, the Council will consider investments that deliver environmental and social benefits, whilst maintaining our Security, Liquidity and Yield criteria.

Workforce Implications

101. There are no workforce implications that have been identified as arising directly from this report. The staff who work in the Treasury Management function will all be required to undertake training to ensure their knowledge and experience remains relevant and up to date.

Risks Assessment

102. The primary treasury management risks to which the Council is exposed are adverse movements in interest rates and the credit risk of its investment counterparties.
103. The Prudential & Capital Indicators and the Annual Investment Strategy take account of the forecast movement in interest rates and allow sufficient flexibility to be varied if actual movements in interest rates are not in line with the forecast.
104. Link's long-term forecast (beyond 10 years) for Bank Rate stands at 3.50%. As all PWLB certainty rates are now above this level, borrowing strategies will need to be reviewed in that context. Better value can generally be obtained for shorter dates (both PWLB and local authority to local authority borrowing).
105. While the Council will not be able to avoid borrowing to finance new capital expenditure in the future, or to replace maturing debt, there will be a cost of carry (the difference between higher borrowing costs and lower investment returns), to any new short or medium term borrowing that causes a temporary increase in cash balances, and this position will, most likely, incur a revenue cost.

Financial Implications

106. Capital Programme figures included within this report are based on the Capital Programme budget that forms part of the overall budget setting for the council. The capital budget for 2025/26 is higher than the value of programme that has been delivered in previous years. If programme delivery is in line with previous years, using the capital programme figures has the effect of overstating some of the estimated figures in the report, such as the Capital Financing Requirement and the under-borrowed position of the council.
107. Other financial implications have been examined and are implicit throughout the report.

Legal Implications

108. None have been identified as arising directly from this report.

Options Considered

109. Future consideration will be given to alternative borrowing and investment options to improve the cost effectiveness of and return on treasury activities for the Council.
110. The options in relation to the revenue and capital budgets in these proposals are fully consistent with the figures included within the budget considerations.

Conclusions

111. This strategy statement supports effective decision making and ensures a sound financial framework and control environment.

Lizzie Watkin - Corporate Director of Resources (S151 Officer)

Report Author: Debbie Price, Principal Accountant, email:
debbie.price@wiltshire.gov.uk

Appendices

- Appendix A Prudential and Treasury Indicators 2023/24 - 2025/26
- Appendix B Specified and non-specified Investments
- Appendix C Approved countries for investments
- Appendix D Treasury Management Scheme of Delegation
- Appendix E Role of the Section 151 Officer
- Appendix F Third Party Loans Policy

Background Papers

None

Capital Prudential and Treasury Indicators for 2025/26 – 2027/28

1. The Prudential and Treasury Management Codes and Treasury Guidelines require the Council to set a number of Prudential and Treasury Indicators for the financial year ahead. This appendix sets out the indicators required by the latest code.

Affordability Prudential Indicators

2. The previous sections cover the overall capital and control of borrowing prudential indicators, but within this framework prudential indicators are required to assess the affordability of the capital investment plans. These provide an indication of the impact of the capital investment plans on the Council’s overall finances. The Council is asked to approve the following indicators,

Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream

3. This indicator identifies the trend in the cost of capital (borrowing and other long-term obligation costs net of investment income) against the net revenue stream.

	2023/24 Actual (%)	2024/25 Estimate (%)	2025/26 Estimate (%)	2026/27 Estimate (%)	2027/28 Estimate (%)
General Fund	4.07	5.10	6.05	6.89	7.14
HRA	10.00	8.32	11.68	15.05	19.51

4. The estimates in financing costs above include current commitments and the proposals in this budget report.

Maturity Structure of Borrowing

5. These gross limits are set to reduce the Council’s exposure to large fixed rate sums falling due for refinancing and are required for upper and lower limits.
6. In order to protect the Council from interest rate risk and to safeguard the continuity of treasury management financing costs, the following limits have been adopted. This sets out the structure of our debt portfolio and limits the exposure to changes in interest rates.

Maturity Structure of Fixed Interest Rate Borrowing 2025/26		
	Lower (%)	Upper (%)
Under 12 months	0	25
12 months to 2 years	0	25
2 years to 5 years	0	45
5 years to 10 years	0	75
10 years and above	0	100

7. In addition to the indicators (above) it is considered prudent that, under normal circumstances, no more than 15% of long term loans, excluding LOBO loans, should fall due for repayment within any one financial year and 25% in the case of LOBO loans, where maturity is deemed to be the “next call option date”.

Treasury Management Practice (TMP) 1 Credit and Counterparty Risk Management

Specified Investments.

1. All such investments will be sterling denominated, with maturities up to a maximum of 1 year, meeting the minimum 'high' quality criteria.
2. Counterparty monetary limits are included in the table at paragraph 77 of the main report. Any not included here are detailed in the table below (paragraph 6)

Non-Specified Investments.

3. These are any investments which do not meet the specified investment criteria.
4. A maximum of £30 m will be held in aggregate non-specified investments.

Credit and Counterparty Risk

5. A variety of instruments will be used, subject to the credit quality of the institution, and depending on the type of investment made, it will fall into one of the above categories.
6. The criteria applying to institutions or investment vehicles are as follows,

	Minimum credit criteria/ colour band	Maximum maturity period	Individual Institution Counterparty Limit
Specified Investments			
DMADF – UK Government	Yellow	6 months (set by the DMO)	£30m
UK Government Gilts	Yellow	12 months	£30m
UK Government Treasury Bills	Yellow	364 days (set by the DMO)	£30m
Bonds issued by multilateral development banks	Yellow	6 months	Included in para 76
Money Market Funds CNAV	AAA	Liquid	Included in para 76
Money Market Funds LVNAV	AAA	Liquid	Included in para 76

Appendix B

Money Market Funds VNAV	AAA	Liquid	Included in para 76
Ultra Short Dated Bonds (1.25)	AAA		£10m
Ultra Short Dated Bonds (1.5)	AAA		£10m
Local Authorities	Yellow	12 months	Included in para 76
Term Deposits with Banks and Building Societies	Blue Orange Red Green No Colour	12 months 12 months 6 months 100 days Not for use	Included in para 76
Certificates of Deposit or Corporate Bonds	Blue Orange Red Green No Colour	12 months 12 months 6 months 100 days Not for use	£10m
Non-Specified Investments			
Term Deposits with Banks and Building Societies	Purple Yellow	2 years 5 years	Included in para 76
UK Government Gilts	UK sovereign rating	5 years	Up to aggregate value of non- specified investments (currently £30m)
Property Fund (CCLA)	N/A	N/A	
Property Funds	N/A	N/A	

7. The criteria in this appendix are intended to be the operational criteria in normal times. At times of heightened volatility, risk and concern in financial markets, this strategy may be amended by temporary operational criteria further limiting investments to counterparties of a higher creditworthiness and/or restricted time limits.

Accounting treatment of investments.

8. The accounting treatment may differ from the underlying cash transactions arising from investment decisions made by this Council. To ensure that the Council is protected from any adverse revenue impact, which may arise from these differences, we will review the accounting implications of new transactions before they are undertaken.

Monitoring of Investment Counterparties

9. The credit rating of counterparties will be monitored regularly. The Council receives credit rating information from Link as and when ratings change, and counterparties are checked promptly. On occasion, ratings may be downgraded when an investment has already been made. The criteria used are such that a minor downgrading should not affect the full receipt of the principal and interest. Any counterparty failing to meet the criteria will be removed from the list immediately, and if required new counterparties which meet the criteria will be added to the list.

Approved Countries for Investments

This list is based on those countries which have sovereign ratings of AA- or higher (the lowest rating from Fitch, Moody's and S&P is shown) and also, (except - at the time of writing - for Hong Kong and Luxembourg), have banks operating in sterling markets which have credit ratings of green or above in the Link credit worthiness service (based on ratings as at 25/11/24)

Rating	Country
AAA	Australia
	Denmark
	Germany
	Netherlands
	Norway
	Singapore
	Sweden
	Switzerland
AA+	Canada
	Finland
	U.S.A.
AA	Abu Dhabi (UAE)
	Qatar
AA-	Belgium
	France
	UK

Treasury Management Scheme of Delegation

Full Council

1. Receiving and reviewing reports on treasury management policies, practices and activities;
2. Budget consideration and approval;
3. Approval of annual strategy.

Cabinet

1. Approval of/amendments to the organisation's adopted clauses, treasury management policy statement and treasury management practices;
2. Budget consideration and proposal;
3. Approval of the division of responsibilities;
4. Receiving and reviewing regular monitoring reports and acting on recommendations;

Scrutiny – Finance Planning Task Group

1. Reviewing the treasury management policy and procedures and making recommendations to the responsible body.
2. Scrutinise the Treasury Management Mid-Year Reports and Outturn Reports that set out the financial performance against indicators set.

The Treasury Management Role of the Section 151 Officer

1. Recommending clauses, treasury management policy/practices for approval, reviewing the same regularly, and monitoring compliance;
2. Submitting regular treasury management policy reports;
3. Submitting budgets and budget variations;
4. Receiving and reviewing management information reports;
5. Reviewing the performance of the treasury management function;
6. Ensuring the adequacy of treasury management resources and skills, and the effective division of responsibilities within the treasury management function;
7. Ensuring the adequacy of internal audit, and liaising with external audit;
8. Approving the selection of external service providers and agreeing terms of the appointment.
9. Preparation of a capital strategy to include capital expenditure, capital financing, non-financial investments and treasury management, with a long term timeframe.
10. Ensuring that the capital strategy is sustainable, affordable and prudent in the long term and provides value for money
11. Ensuring that due diligence has been carried out on all treasury and non-financial investments and is in accordance with the risk appetite of the Council
12. Ensuring that the Council has appropriate legal powers to undertake expenditure on non-financial assets and their financing (with advice from the Monitoring officer)
13. Ensuring the proportionality of all investments so that the Council does not undertake a level of investing which exposes the Council to an excessive level of risk compared to its financial resources
14. Ensuring that an adequate governance process is in place for the approval, monitoring and ongoing risk management of all non-financial investments and long term liabilities

15. Provision to members of a schedule of all non-treasury investments including material investments in subsidiaries, joint ventures, loans and financial guarantees
16. Ensuring that members are adequately informed and understand the risk exposures taken on by the Council
17. Ensuring that the Council has adequate expertise, either in house or externally provided, to carry out the above
18. Creation of Treasury Management Practices which specifically deal with how non-treasury investments will be carried out and managed.

Appendix F - Third Party Loans Policy

1. Government changes in the way councils are funded has prompted local authorities to look at more innovative ways of supporting Business Plan priorities.
2. The primary aims of any investment, in order of priority, are the security of its capital, liquidity of its capital and to obtain a return on its capital commensurate with levels of security and liquidity. These aims are crucial in determining whether to proceed with a potential loan.
3. Whilst the Council does not wish to become a commercial lender in the market place it can use its ability to borrow, at relatively economic rates, to support the delivery of improved outcomes for the residents of Wiltshire. At the same time this will facilitate the creation of a relatively modest income stream to support the Council's overall financial resilience. All third party loans must demonstrate alignment to the Council's core objectives and priorities.
4. The intention of this policy is therefore to establish a framework within which the Council may consider advancing loans to third party organisations.

Types of Loan

Loans Defined as Capital Expenditure

5. The acquisition of share capital or loan capital in any corporate body is defined as capital expenditure under Regulation 25(1) (d) of the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003.
6. A loan, grant or financial assistance provided by this Council to another body will be treated as capital expenditure if the Council would define the other bodies use of those funds as capital had it undertaken the expenditure itself.
7. Loans of this nature will be included in the Council's approved capital programme.
8. The Council's Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy sets out the MRP requirements in respect of capital loans.

Other Loans

9. Other loans refers to loans that do not meet the definitions of capital expenditure but still support the delivery of the Council's core objectives and priorities. Examples of this type of loan include working capital loans to the Council's Local Authority Trading Companies (LATC's) and loans to Wiltshire Schools to enable Academy conversion.

Growing Place Infrastructure Fund Loans

10. The Growing Places Infrastructure Fund (GPIF) was established by government as a programme in 2012, providing Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) with funding to establish revolving investment funds.
11. In our area, GPIF loans have been issued by the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Partnership (SWLEP). In June 2024, Wiltshire Council took on the

functions and staff of the SWLEP, now the Swindon and Wiltshire Business Growth Unit (SWBGU), within the Economy and Regeneration department. This includes the operation of the GPIF revolving loan programme including the novation of loan agreements issued by SWLEP to Wiltshire Council. New loans may be issued by the council following the transfer of functions.

12. Wiltshire Council, as the accountable body for the SWBGU, holds the GPIF capital fund and interest payments in a ringfenced account on behalf of Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council for investment which contributes to the sustainable economic growth of the area under the LEP transition governance arrangements.
13. The GPIF loans provide funding to companies for capital projects that would otherwise not be deliverable, providing investments to companies in Swindon and Wiltshire to use towards capital elements of projects or to fund pre-revenue to companies.
14. These loans are issued and are expected to be repaid in full and may be offered with no security and as such are riskier than other loans the council would otherwise issue.
15. The governance for these loans is managed through a GPIF working group, which seeks to advise on the day-to-day operation of the GPIF fund to ensure it is well managed with a view to supporting on the on-going economic growth of the area whilst safeguarding the integrity of the loan capital and its revenue generation capability
16. The decisions and business of the GPIF Working Group are subject to the overview and scrutiny of the Joint Management Partnership and Joint Oversight Partnership which sits between Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council to manage these shared functions, and which reviews the programme's operation.
17. The S151 Officer may veto or pause the issue of a loan agreement if the due diligence work flags serious concerns or they believe that the governance processes have not been fully implemented by the GPIF Working Group. The S151 Officer will also have oversight of new GPIF loans to be awarded and the interest rate to be set, amendments to repayment schedules which may arise from-time-to-time, and enforcement of the terms of the GPIF loan agreement terms to reclaim funds.

Loan Framework

18. All loans, with the exception of loans to Wiltshire Schools to enable Academy conversion and the GPIF loans described in the above paragraphs, must be secured against an asset or guaranteed by a public sector organisation with tax raising powers.
19. The maximum loan to value will not exceed 80% of the security.
20. The maximum duration of the loan will be 25 years, but the loan period must not exceed the useful life of the asset.

21. An independent valuation of the asset upon which the loan is secured will be undertaken by the Council.
22. A robust business case must be developed that demonstrates that the loan repayments are affordable.
23. The on-going value of the asset(s) that the loan has been secured against will be valued on a 5 year basis. A charge to revenue may be required if the equity value falls below the debt outstanding or if it becomes clear that the borrowing organisation is unable to service the debt.
24. Guarantees will be called upon if the lending organisation falls into arrears in line with the clauses set out in the signed loan agreements.
25. Given the administrative costs incurred in both establishing and managing loans of this nature an administration/arrangement fee will be applied to each loan made. The arrangement fee will be no more than 1.0% of the value of the loan value.
26. All loan proposals (including any loan re-scheduling) must be agreed with the Corporate Director of Resources (S151 Officer) in conjunction with the Council's Treasury Management team.

Limits

27. No specific maximum limits are proposed but all loans must be approved as set out above.
28. Loans less than £0.250m will not be considered.

Subsidy Control and Interest Rates

29. Following the UK exit from the EU the State Aid Rules ceased to have effect. The UK then became subject to the subsidy control provisions of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), existing Free Trade Arrangements (FTA), and those of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA). This change came into effect on 1 January 2021. These three set of controls have different definitions and provisions. However, it is unlikely that Wiltshire Council will be in breach of WTO and FTA arrangements if it observes the TCA Subsidy Control Provisions. It is expected that the control regime will be monitored and enforced by a body established by HM Government similar to the Competition and Markets Authority. HM Government's Technical Note on Subsidy Control observes that there may be a consultation in early 2021 to determine a "bespoke approach" with secondary legislation to follow. Nonetheless the TCA subsidy controls are enforceable now through the UK Courts.
30. The principles and terminology contained in the TCA subsidy control reflect State Aid legislation. It is to be expected that the new regulator and the Courts when implementing TCA subsidy control will have in mind the previous State Aid procedures and that there will be analogous reasoning. In general, the parameters of the new scheme will not permit subsidies from state bodies that amount to "financial assistance" to be made which confers an economic advantage on one or more economic actors not available on market terms. This, the TCA specifically identifies, includes a direct or contingent transfer of funds such as direct grants,

loans or loan guarantees. Not for profit organisations often undertake commercial activities in order to support the delivery of non-commercial activities and so can be classified as “economic actors” falling into this control regime. An economic advantage given to an actor will not be a subsidy if the state is acting in a way that a rational private investor would, for example in providing loans or capital on terms that would be acceptable to a genuine private investor who is motivated by return and not policy objectives. This is because the beneficiary is not considered to be obtaining an advantage from the State but on the same terms that it could have obtained on the open market.

31. Until further certainty is given by proposed legislation and regulators the actual interest rate charged on third party loans will be set with reference to the minimum permitted within State Aid rules operational in the EU at the time of fund advance and the Council’s cost of borrowing plus an appropriate credit risk margin, whichever is higher.
32. If there is any doubt as to whether Subsidy Control may be an issue, Legal advice must be sought.

Governance Arrangements

33. Loans Defined as Capital Expenditure require Cabinet approval in order to be added to the Capital Programme and will be supported by a full business case.
34. The Corporate Director of Resources (S151 Officer) has delegated authority for awarding loans to schools, in order to assist with their conversion process to become an academy. Specific delegation was awarded by Cabinet at their meeting of 17 May 2016, minute number 63.
35. Growing Places Infrastructure Fund loans are given within the governance framework set out in paragraph 13.
36. All other loans must be approved by Cabinet supported by a full business case. Specific details in relation to drawdown of approved loan facilities must be specified as part of each business case.
37. Due-diligence checks will be undertaken to test the underlying assumptions set out in each business case. These checks will include but are not limited to independent credit checks and future cashflow forecasts.

Financial Risk

38. Where the Council issues capital loans to third parties (including to its own commercial companies), the expectation is that the funds lent will be re-paid in full at a future date.
39. However, the Council is required to consider the potential impairment of all loans that it issues to third parties on an annual basis to comply with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS 9). Where it is considered that there is a risk that any loan will not be re-paid, the Council will need to consider the level of any impairment, in full or in part) as appropriate. Impairments represent a real financial cost to the Council and are charged to the Council’s General Fund revenue budget.

Exemptions

40. Exemptions to this policy may be considered but any exemption will need to be approved by Full Council.