

TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2026/27

Introduction

The Council is required to operate a balanced budget, which broadly means that cash raised during the year will meet cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operation is to ensure that this cash flow is adequately planned, with cash being available when it is needed. Surplus monies are invested in low-risk counterparties or instruments commensurate with the Council's low risk appetite, providing adequate liquidity initially before considering investment return.

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 economic, any debt previously drawn may be restructured to meet Council risk or cost objectives.

The contribution the treasury management function makes to the authority 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 will in effect result in a loss to the General Fund Balance.

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.”

This strategy covers the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003, the CIPFA Prudential Code, MHCLG MRP Guidance, the CIPFA Treasury Management Code and MHCLG Investment Guidance.

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

Treasury Management Reporting

The Council is currently required to receive and approve, as a minimum, three main treasury reports each year, which incorporate a variety of policies, estimates and actuals.

- a. Prudential and treasury indicators and treasury strategy** (this report) - The first, and most important report is forward looking and covers:
 - the capital forecast summary;
 - the treasury management strategy, (how the investments and borrowings are to be organised), including treasury indicators; and
 - an investment strategy, (the parameters on how treasury investments are to be managed).
- b. A mid-year treasury management report** – This is primarily a progress report and will update members on the treasury position, amending prudential indicators as necessary, and whether any policies require revision.
- c. An annual treasury report** – This is a backward looking review document and provides details of a selection of actual prudential and treasury indicators and actual treasury operations compared to the estimates within the strategy.

Scrutiny

The above reports and strategies are required to be adequately scrutinised before being recommended to the Council. This role is undertaken by the Audit and Accounts Committee.

Quarterly Reports

In addition to the three major reports detailed above, from 2024/25 quarterly reporting (end of June/end of December) is also required. However, these additional reports do not have to be reported to Full Council but are required to be adequately scrutinised. This role is undertaken by the Cabinet and the Prudential Indicators form part of the Quarterly Budget Monitoring Reports.

Training

The CIPFA 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. Treasury Management training has been undertaken by members on 11 February 2026 and further training will be arranged as required.

The training needs of treasury management officers are periodically reviewed.

A formal record of the training received by officers central to the Treasury function will be maintained by the finance department. Similarly, a formal record of the treasury

management/capital finance training received by members will also be maintained by democratic services.

Treasury Management Consultants

The Council uses MUFG Corporate Markets, formally known as Link Group, Treasury solutions as its external treasury management advisors.

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 the services of external service providers. All decisions will be undertaken with regards to all available information, including, but not solely, treasury advisers.

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 Summary and Liability Benchmark

On 31 December 2025, the Council held £109.213m of borrowing and £62.311m of investments. Forecast changes in these sums are shown in the balance sheet analysis table below.

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.

Capital expenditure and financing:

	2024/25 Actual £'000	2025/26 Forecast £'000	2026/27 Estimate £'000	2027/28 Estimate £'000	2028/29 Estimate £'000
General Fund services	15,060	19,826	40,047	15,623	4,965
Council housing (HRA)	17,876	18,821	29,942	24,674	14,341
Capital Loan (GF)	0	21,786	0	0	0
TOTAL	32,936	60,433	69,989	40,297	19,306
Capital Grants	6,230	4,855	16,470	9,637	2,465
Other Contributions	3,472	3,225	927	218	0
CIL	31	0	0	0	0
Capital Receipts	1,943	4,430	3,593	3,021	1,164
Revenue/ Major Repairs	6,438	14,963	20,160	6,054	1,728
Borrowing	14,822	32,960	28,839	21,367	13,949
TOTAL	32,936	60,433	69,989	40,297	19,306

The Council's borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement)

	2024/25 Actual £'000	2025/26 Forecast £'000	2026/27 Estimate £'000	2027/28 Estimate £'000	2028/29 Estimate £'000
General Fund CFR	37,071	64,910	74,942	74,907	74,023
HRA CFR	109,638	109,049	124,005	138,314	143,011
Total CFR	146,709	173,959	198,947	213,221	217,034
Less: External borrowing	-108,897	-103,857	-100,812	-94,766	-85,720
Internal (over) borrowing	37,812	70,102	98,135	118,455	131,314
Less: Usable reserves	-68,452	-54,475	-38,479	-36,589	-33,216
Less: Working capital	2,541	-10,500	-10,500	-10,500	-10,500
Investments / - New borrowing	28,099	-5,127	-49,156	-71,366	-87,598

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

The Council has an increasing CFR due to the proposed capital programme and diminishing investments and will therefore be required to borrow up to a minimum of an additional £43m over the forecast period.

CIPFA's *Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities* recommends that the Council's total debt should be lower than its highest forecast CFR over the next three years. The table above shows that the Council expects to comply with this recommendation during 2026/27.

Liability benchmark: A liability benchmark has been calculated showing the lowest level of borrowing required. This assumes the same forecasts as the table above, but that cash and investment balances are kept to a minimum level of £10m, as per MiFID II, at each year-end to maintain sufficient liquidity but minimise credit risk.

	2024/25 Actual £'000	2025/26 Forecast £'000	2026/27 Estimate £'000	2027/28 Estimate £'000	2028/29 Estimate £'000
Loans CFR	146,709	173,959	198,947	213,221	217,034
Less: Usable reserves	-68,452	-54,475	-38,479	-36,589	-33,216
Less: Working capital	2,541	-10,500	-10,500	-10,500	-10,500
Plus: Minimum investments	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Liability Benchmark	90,798	118,984	159,968	176,132	183,318

Borrowing Strategy

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.

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

Current Borrowing portfolio position

The Council's treasury portfolio position, with forward projections are summarised below. The table shows the actual external debt (the treasury management operations), against the underlying capital borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement - CFR), highlighting any over or under borrowing.

	2024/25 Actual £'000	2025/26 Forecast £'000	2026/27 Estimate £'000	2027/28 Estimate £'000	2028/29 Estimate £'000
Debt at 1 April	105,432	108,897	103,857	100,812	94,766
Expected change in Debt	3,465	-5,040	-3,045	-6,046	-9,046
Actual gross debt at 31	108,897	103,857	100,812	94,766	85,720
The Capital Financing Requirement	146,709	173,959	198,947	213,221	217,034
Under / (over) borrowing	37,812	70,102	98,135	118,455	131,314

Within the 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 2026/27 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 purposes or speculative purposes.

The Director of Resources/Deputy Chief Executive reports that the Council complied with this prudential indicator in the current year and does not envisage difficulties for the future. This view takes account of current commitments, existing plans and the proposals in this budget report.

IFRS16 – Leasing

The CIPFA LASAAC Local Authority Accounting Code Board required implementation of IFRS 16 from 1 April 2024, applying to the 2024/25 financial year. In line with this requirement, the Council has now implemented IFRS 16, bringing previously off-balance-sheet leased assets onto the balance sheet. The Council has completed its assessment of the impact and incorporated the necessary amendments within its accounting policies. Prudent assumptions and forecasts have been embedded within the strategy limits to ensure compliance and maintain financial resilience.

Treasury Indicators: limits to borrowing activity

Prudential Indicator 1: Operational Boundary for External Debt: The operational boundary is based on the Council's estimate of most likely (i.e. prudent but not worst case) scenario for external debt. It links directly to the Council's estimates of capital expenditure, the capital financing requirement and cash flow requirements, and is a key management tool for in-year monitoring. Other long-term liabilities comprise of finance leases, Private Finance Initiatives and other liabilities that are not borrowing but form part of the Council's debt.

Operational Boundary	2025/26 Revised £'000	2026/27 Estimate £'000	2027/28 Estimate £'000	2028/29 Estimate £'000
Borrowing	178,954	203,947	218,221	222,034
Impact of IFRS16	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Total Debt	180,954	205,947	220,221	224,034

Prudential Indicator 2 and 3: Authorised Limit for External Debt: The authorised limit is the affordable borrowing limit determined in compliance with the Local Government Act 2003. It is the maximum amount of debt that the Council can legally owe. The authorised limit provides headroom over and above the operational boundary for unusual cash movements.

Authorised Limit	2025/26 Revised £'000	2026/27 Estimate £'000	2027/28 Estimate £'000	2028/29 Estimate £'000
Borrowing	183,954	208,947	223,221	227,034
Impact of IFRS16	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Total Debt	185,954	210,947	225,221	229,034

Separately, following the removal of the HRA Debt cap set by Government on 30 October 2018, the Council chose to use the Interest Cover Ratio (ICR) as its borrowing boundary for the HRA. The ICR represents the cover that the HRA has against its interest cost liabilities in any year. The ICR is

set to a minimum which provides comfort that if there were a sudden drop in income or increase in operating costs, there would be sufficient headroom to continue to cover debt interest payments. The typical lending covenants used with the ratio varies between 1.10 and 1.50, the lower rate represents less cover and higher rate represents more cover, the Council will use the most prudent approach and therefore use 1.50 within the ratio to provide the most comfort of interest costs cover. The ICR has been modelled into the current HRA 30 year business plan and the maximum additional debt capacity set is £2.308m in order to maintain affordability in each financial year:

HRA Debt Limit	2025/26 Revised £'000	2026/27 Estimate £'000	2027/28 Estimate £'000	2028/29 Estimate £'000
HRA CFR	109,049	124,005	138,314	143,011
Additional ICR Debt	8,535	2,705	3,496	2,308
HRA Authorised Limit	117,584	126,710	141,810	145,319

Prudential Indicator 4: Maturity structure of borrowing: This indicator is set to control the Council's exposure to refinancing risk. The upper and lower limits on the maturity structure of fixed and variable rate borrowing will be:

	Upper	Lower
Under 12 months	25%	0%
12 months and within 24 months	25%	0%
24 months and within 5 years	40%	0%
5 years and within 10 years	100%	0%
10 years and above	100%	0%

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

Strategy: The Council is currently maintaining an under-borrowed position. This means that the capital borrowing need, (the Capital Financing Requirement), has not been fully funded with loan debt. Instead, cash supporting the Authority's reserves, balances and cash flow has been used as a temporary measure. This strategy is prudent as medium and longer dated borrowing rates are expected to fall from their current levels once prevailing inflation concerns are addressed by tighter near-term monetary policy. That is, Bank Rate remains relatively elevated in 2026 even if some rate cuts occur

Against this background and the risks within the economic forecast, caution will be adopted with the 2026/27 treasury operations. The Director of Resources/Deputy Chief Executive will monitor interest rates in financial markets and adopt a pragmatic approach to changing circumstances.

The benefits of internal or short-term borrowing will be monitored regularly against the potential for incurring additional costs by deferring borrowing into future years when long-term borrowing rates are forecast to rise modestly. MUFG will assist the Council with this 'cost of carry' and breakeven analysis. Its output may determine whether the Council borrows additional sums at long-term fixed rates in 2026/27 with a view to keeping future interest costs low, even if this causes additional cost in the short-term.

Alternatively, the Council may arrange forward starting loans during 2026/27, where the interest rate is fixed in advance, but the cash is received in later years. This would enable certainty of cost to be achieved without suffering a cost of carry in the intervening period.

In addition, the Council may borrow (normally for up to one to six months) short-term loans to cover unplanned cash flow shortages. Any decisions will be reported to the appropriate decision-making body at the next available opportunity.

Sources of borrowing: Currently the PWLB Certainty Rate is set at gilts + 80 basis points for both HRA and non-HRA borrowing. However, consideration may still need to be given to sourcing funding from the following additional sources.

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

- Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) and any successor body
- UK Municipal Bonds Agency plc any institution approved for investments (see below)
- any other bank or building society authorised to operate in the UK
- any other UK public sector body
- UK public and private sector pension funds
- capital market bond investors
- Finance Leases

Our advisors will keep us informed as to the relative merits of each of these alternative funding sources.

LOBOs: The Council holds £3.5m of LOBO (Lender's Option Borrower's Option) loans where the lender has the option to propose an increase in the interest rate at set dates, following which the Council has the option to either accept the new rate or to repay the loan at no additional cost. £3.5m of these LOBOs have options during 2026/27, and although the Council understands that lenders are unlikely to exercise their options in the current interest rate environment, there remains an element of refinancing risk. The Council will take the option to repay LOBO loans at no cost if it has the opportunity to do so. Total borrowing via LOBO loans will be limited to £0m.

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

Debt rescheduling: The PWLB allows authorities to repay loans before maturity and either pay a premium or receive a discount according to a set formula based on current interest rates. Other lenders may also be prepared to negotiate premature redemption terms. Rescheduling of current borrowing in our debt portfolio is unlikely to occur. If rescheduling was done, it will be reported to Council, at the earliest meeting following its action.

Policy on borrowing in advance of need: 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.

Policy on internal borrowing interest to the HRA: On 1st April 2012, the Council notionally split each of its existing long-term loans into General Fund and HRA pools. In the future, new long-term loans borrowed will be assigned in their entirety to one pool or the other.

Interest payable and other costs/income arising from long-term loans (e.g. premiums and discounts on early redemption) will be charged/ credited to the respective revenue account. Differences between the value of the HRA loans pool and the HRA's underlying need to borrow (capital financing requirement) will result in an internal borrowing situation. The internal borrowing on the HRA will be charged at the 25 year fixed maturity interest rate for PWLB for the 31 March for the relevant financial year with the credit going to the General Fund balance.

Investment Strategy

Management of Risk

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and CIPFA have extended the meaning of 'investments' to include both financial and non-financial investments. This report deals solely with treasury (financial) investments, (as managed by the treasury management team). Non-financial investments, essentially the purchase of income yielding assets, are covered in the Capital Strategy and Investment Strategy.

The Council's investment policy has regard to the following: -

- MHCLG's 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

The Council's investment priorities will be security first, portfolio liquidity second and then yield, (return).

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.

The Council holds invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves held. In the past 9 months, the Council's investment balance has ranged between £41 and £63 million. Levels available for investment are affected by capital expenditure and use of reserves, both will continue to be monitored throughout the financial year.

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

Strategy: Given the continued risk and market volatility, the Council aims to continue investing into secure and/or higher yielding asset classes during 2026/27. This is especially the case for the estimated £15m that is potentially available for longer-term investment. The majority of the Council's surplus cash is currently invested in short-term unsecured bank deposits and money market funds.

Business models: The IFRS 9 Statutory Override was originally scheduled to end on 31 March 2025. However, following feedback received during the 2025 Local Government Finance Settlement consultation, the Government has introduced transitional arrangements for legacy pooled investment funds.

Key Points:

- The statutory override will remain in place for existing pooled fund investments held as at 1 April 2024, and will continue to apply to these investments until 1 April 2029.
- Any new pooled fund investments made on or after 1 April 2024 will not benefit from the override and must comply fully with IFRS 9. This means that fair value movements on these investments will be recognised directly in the General Fund.

The Government's intention is that this transitional period will provide councils with additional time to review and adjust their pooled fund investment strategies, ensuring a smoother alignment with industry accounting standards and mitigating the potential impact of volatility on local authority budgets.

Creditworthiness Policy: The primary principle governing the Council's investment criteria is the security of its investments, although the yield or return on the investment is also a key consideration. After this main principle, the Council will ensure that:

1. It maintains a policy covering both the categories of investment types it will invest in, criteria for choosing investment counterparties with adequate security, and monitoring their security; and
2. It has sufficient liquidity in its investments. For this purpose, it will set out procedures for determining the maximum periods for which funds may prudently be committed. These procedures also apply to the Council's prudential indicators covering the maximum principal sums invested.

The Director of Resources/Deputy Chief Executive will maintain a counterparty list in compliance with the following criteria in the table below and will revise the criteria and submit them to Council for approval as necessary.

Credit rating information is supplied by MUFG, our treasury advisors, on all active counterparties that comply with the criteria below. Any counterparty failing to meet the criteria would be omitted from the counterparty (dealing) list. Any rating changes, rating Watches (notification of a likely change), rating Outlooks (notification of the longer-term bias outside the central rating view) are provided to officers almost immediately after they occur and this information is considered before dealing. For instance, a negative rating Watch applying to counterparty at the minimum Council criteria will be suspended from use, with all others being reviewed in light of market conditions.

As part of our commitment to responsible and ethical investment practices, the Council will not knowingly invest in any funds, financial instruments, or counterparties that may, directly or indirectly, reinvest our funds into products, industries, or activities that are considered socially or ethically inappropriate. This includes, but is not limited to, sectors such as tobacco, arms manufacturing, gambling, fossil fuels, or any other areas that conflict with our values and public responsibilities. All investment decisions will be subject to rigorous due diligence to ensure alignment with our ethical standards and community expectations.

Use of additional information other than credit ratings. Additional requirements under the Code require the Council to supplement credit rating information. Whilst the below criteria relies primarily on the application of credit ratings to provide a pool of appropriate counterparties for officers to use, additional operational market information will be applied before making any investment decision from the agreed pool of counterparties. This additional market information (for example Credit Default Swaps, rating Watches/Outlooks) will be applied to compare the relative security of differing investment opportunities.

Time and monetary limits applying to investments. The time and monetary limits for institutions on the Council's counterparty list are as follows:

Credit rating	Banks unsecured	Banks secured	Government	Corporates	Registered Providers
UK Govt	n/a	n/a	£ Unlimited 50 years	n/a	n/a
AAA	£8m 5 years	£10m 20 years	£20m 50 years	£5m 20 years	£5m 20 years
AA+	£6m 5 years	£10m 10 years	£10m 25 years	£5m 10 years	£5m 10 years
AA	£6m 4 years	£10m 5 years	£10m 15 years	£5m 5 years	£5m 10 years
AA-	£6m 3 years	£10m 4 years		£5m 4 years	£5m 10 years
A+	£6m 2 years	£10m 3 years		£5m 3 years	£5m 5 years
A	£6m 13 months	£10m 2 years		£5m 2 years	£5m 5 years
A-	£5m 6 months	£10m 13 months		£5m 13 months	£5m 5 years
None		n/a			£5m 5 years
Pooled funds and real estate investment trusts		£15m per fund or trust			

This table must be read in conjunction with the notes below

Credit rating: Investment limits are set by reference to the lowest published long-term credit rating from a selection of external rating agencies. Where available, the credit rating relevant to the specific investment or class of investment is used, otherwise the counterparty credit rating is used. However, investment decisions are never made solely based on credit ratings, and all other relevant factors including external advice will be considered.

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

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

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

Corporates: Loans, bonds and commercial paper issued by companies other than banks and registered providers. These investments are not subject to bail-in but are exposed to the risk of the company going insolvent. Loans to unrated companies will only be made as part of a diversified pool in order to spread the risk widely.

Registered providers: Loans and bonds issued by, guaranteed by or secured on the assets of registered providers of social housing and registered social landlords, formerly known as housing associations. These bodies are tightly regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing (in England), the Scottish Housing Regulator, the Welsh Government and the Department for Communities (in Northern Ireland). As providers of public services, they retain the likelihood of receiving government support if needed.

Pooled funds: Shares or units in diversified investment vehicles consisting of any of the above investment types, plus equity shares and property. These funds have the advantage of providing wide diversification of investment risks, coupled with the services of a professional fund manager in return for a fee. Short-term Money Market Funds that offer same-day liquidity and very low or no volatility will be used as an alternative to instant access bank accounts, while pooled funds whose value changes with market prices and/or have a notice period will be used for longer investment periods.

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

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

Operational bank accounts: The Council will incur operational exposures through its current accounts, with Lloyds Bank. These are not classed as investments but are still subject to the risk of a bank bail-in, and balances will therefore be kept below £850,000 net in the bank with an overdraft facility of £100,000. The Bank of England has stated that in the event of failure, banks with assets greater than £25 billion are more likely to be bailed-in than made insolvent, increasing the chance of the Council maintaining operational continuity.

Country and sector limits: Due care will be taken to consider the country, group and sector exposure of the Council's investments.

The Council has determined that it will only use approved counterparties from countries with a minimum sovereign credit rating of AA (excluding UK) from Fitch (or equivalent). This list will be added to, or deducted from by officers should ratings change in accordance with this policy.

Investment limits: In order to limit the amount of reserves that will be potentially put at risk in the case of a single default, the maximum that will be lent to any one organisation (other than the UK Government) will be £15 million. A group of banks under the same ownership will be treated as a single organisation for limit purposes. Limits will also be placed on fund managers, investments in brokers' nominee accounts, foreign countries and industry sectors as below. Investments in pooled funds and multilateral development banks do not count against the limit for any single foreign country, since the risk is diversified over many countries.

Investment limits

	Cash limit
Any single organisation, except the UK Central Government	£15m each
UK Central Government	unlimited
Any group of organisations under the same ownership	£15m per group
Any group of pooled funds under the same management	£15m per manager
Negotiable instruments held in a broker's nominee account	£10m per broker
Foreign countries	£10m per country
Registered providers and registered social landlords	£10m in total
Unsecured investments with building societies	£10m in total
Loans to unrated corporates	£15m in total

Local Authorities	£15m each
Money market funds	£12m each
Real estate investment trusts	£10m in total

Liquidity management: The forecast is compiled on a prudent basis to minimise the risk of the Council being forced to borrow on unfavourable terms to meet its financial commitments. Limits on long-term investments are set by reference to the Council's medium-term financial plan and cash flow forecast.

Policy on internal investment interest to the HRA: On 1st April 2012, the Council notionally split each of its existing long-term loans into General Fund and HRA pools. Interest receivable for HRA balance sheet resources available for investment will result in a notional cash balance. This balance will be measured at the end of the financial year and interest transferred from the General Fund to the HRA at the average investment rate for a DMO investment for the financial year due to the General Fund carrying all the credit risk per investment.

Investment returns expectations: The suggested budgeted investment earnings rates for returns on investments placed for periods up to about three months during each financial year are as follows:

Average earnings in each year	
2025/26 (residual)	3.80%
2026/27	3.40%
2027/28	3.30%
2028/29	3.30%
2029/30	3.50%

Treasury Indicators: limits to investing activity

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

Prudential Indicator 5: Security: The Council has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to credit risk by monitoring the value-weighted average credit rating of its investment portfolio. This is calculated by applying a score to each investment (AAA=1, AA+=2, etc.) and taking the arithmetic average, weighted by the size of each investment. Unrated investments are assigned a score based on their perceived risk.

Credit risk indicator	Target
Portfolio average credit rating	A

Prudential Indicator 6: Liquidity: The Council has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to liquidity risk by monitoring the amount of cash available to meet unexpected payments within a banding period, without additional borrowing.

Liquidity risk indicator	Target	Limit
Total cash available within;		
3 months	30%	100%
3 – 12 months	30%	80%
Over 12 months	40%	60%

Prudential Indicator 7: Interest rate exposures: This indicator is set to control the Council's exposure to interest rate risk. The upper limits on the one-year revenue impact of a 1% rise or fall in interest rates will be:

Interest rate risk indicator	Limit
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>rise</u> in interest rates	£400,000
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>fall</u> in interest rates	£400,000

The impact of a change in interest rates is calculated on the assumption that maturing loans and investments will be replaced at current rates.

Prudential Indicator 8: Principal sums invested for periods longer than a year: The purpose of this indicator is to control the Council's exposure to the risk of incurring losses by seeking early repayment of its investments. The limits on the long-term principal sum invested to final maturities beyond the period end will be:

Price risk indicator	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Limit on principal invested beyond year end	£15m	£15m	£15m

Treasury Management Practice (TMP1) – Credit and Counterparty Risk Management

The MHCLG issued Investment Guidance in 2018, and this forms the structure of the Council's policy below. These guidelines do not apply to either trust funds or pension funds which operate under a different regulatory regime.

The key intention of the Guidance is to maintain the current requirement for Councils to invest prudently, and that priority is given to security and liquidity before yield. In order to facilitate this objective the guidance requires this Council to have regard to the CIPFA publication Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes. This Council adopted the Code and will apply its principles to all investment activity. In accordance with the Code, the Director of Resources/Deputy Chief Executive has produced its treasury management practices (TMPs). This part, TMP 1, covering investment counterparty policy requires approval each year.

Annual investment strategy - The key requirements of both the Code and the investment guidance are to set an annual investment strategy, as part of its annual treasury strategy for the following year, covering the identification and approval of following:

- The strategy guidelines for choosing and placing investments.
- The principles to be used to determine the maximum periods for which funds can be committed.

Strategy guidelines – The main strategy guidelines are contained in the body of the treasury strategy statement and in accordance with the Code, the Council has set additional criteria to set the time and amount of monies which will be invested in institutions.

The monitoring of investment counterparties - The credit rating of counterparties will be monitored regularly. The Council receives credit rating information (changes, rating watches and rating outlooks) from MUFG 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 by the Director of Resources/Deputy Chief Executive, and if required new counterparties which meet the criteria will be added to the list.

Treasury Management Scheme of Delegation

(i) Full Council

- receiving and reviewing reports on treasury management policies, practices and activities;
- approval of annual strategy.
- approval of/amendments to the organisation's adopted clauses, treasury management policy statement and treasury management practices;
- budget consideration and approval;
- approval of the division of responsibilities;

(ii) Audit and Accounts Committee

- reviewing the treasury management policy and procedures and making recommendations to the responsible body;
- receiving and reviewing regular monitoring reports and acting on recommendations; and
- approving the selection of external service providers and agreeing terms of appointment.

The Treasury Management Role of the Section 151 Officer

The S151 (responsible) officer

- recommending clauses, treasury management policy/practices for approval, reviewing the same regularly, and monitoring compliance;
- submitting regular treasury management policy reports;
- submitting budgets and budget variations;
- receiving and reviewing management information reports;
- reviewing the performance of the treasury management function;
- ensuring the adequacy of treasury management resources and skills, and the effective division of responsibilities within the treasury management function;
- ensuring the adequacy of internal audit, and liaising with external audit;
- recommending the appointment of external service providers;
- preparation of a capital strategy to include capital expenditure, capital financing, and treasury management, with a long term timeframe;
- ensuring that the capital strategy is prudent, sustainable, affordable and prudent in the long term and provides value for money;
- ensuring that due diligence has been carried out on all treasury is in accordance with the risk appetite of the authority;
- ensure that the authority has appropriate legal powers to undertake expenditure on non-financial assets and their financing;
- ensuring the proportionality of all investments so that the authority does not undertake a level of investing which exposes the authority to an excessive level of risk compared to its financial resources;
- 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;
- provision to members of a schedule of all non-treasury investments including material investments in subsidiaries, joint ventures, loans and financial guarantees ;
- ensuring that members are adequately informed and understand the risk exposures taken on by an authority;
- ensuring that the authority has adequate expertise, either in house or externally provided, to carry out the above; and
- creation of Treasury Management Practices which specifically deal with how non treasury investments will be carried out and managed.

Economic Background and Interest Rate Forecast

- The first half of 2025/26 saw:
 - A 0.3% pick up in GDP for the period April to June 2025. More recently, the economy flatlined in July, with higher taxes for businesses restraining growth, but picked up to 0.1% m/m in August before falling back by 0.1% m/m in September.
 - The 3m/yy rate of average earnings growth excluding bonuses has fallen from 5.5% to 4.6% in September.
 - CPI inflation has ebbed and flowed but finished September at 3.8%, whilst core inflation eased to 3.5%.
 - The Bank of England cut interest rates from 4.50% to 4.25% in May, and then to 4% in August (and subsequently to 3.75% in December).
 - The 10-year gilt yield fluctuated between 4.4% and 4.8%, ending the half year at 4.70% (before falling back to 4.43% in early November).
- From a GDP perspective, the financial year got off to a bumpy start with the 0.3% m/m fall in real GDP in April as front-running of US tariffs in Q1 (when GDP grew 0.7% on the quarter) weighed on activity. Despite the underlying reasons for the drop, it was still the first fall since October 2024 and the largest fall since October 2023. However, the economy surprised to the upside in May and June so that quarterly growth ended up 0.3% q/q (subsequently revised down to 0.2% q/q). Nonetheless, the 0.0% m/m change in real GDP in July, followed by a 0.1% m/m increase in August and a 0.1% decrease in September will have caused some concern. GDP growth for 2025 - 2028 is currently forecast by the Office for Budget Responsibility to be in the region of 1.5%.
- Sticking with future economic sentiment, the composite Purchasing Manager Index (PMI) for the UK increased to 52.2 in October. The manufacturing PMI output balance improved to just below 50 but it is the services sector (52.2) that continues to drive the economy forward. Nonetheless, the PMIs suggest tepid growth is the best that can be expected in the second half of 2025 and the start of 2026. Indeed, on 13 November we heard that GDP for July to September was only 0.1% q/q.
- Turning to retail sales volumes, and the 1.5% year-on-year rise in September, accelerating from a 0.7% increase in August, marked the highest gain since April. On a monthly basis, retail sales volumes rose 0.5%, defying forecasts of a 0.2% fall, following an upwardly revised 0.6% gain in August. Household spending remains surprisingly resilient, but headwinds are gathering.
- Prior to the November Budget, the public finances position looked weak. The £20.2 billion borrowed in September was slightly above the £20.1 billion forecast by the OBR. For the year to date, the £99.8 billion borrowed is the second highest for the April to September period since records began in 1993, surpassed only by borrowing during the COVID-19 pandemic. The main drivers of the increased borrowing were higher debt interest costs, rising government running costs, and increased inflation-linked benefit payments, which outweighed the rise in tax and National Insurance contributions.

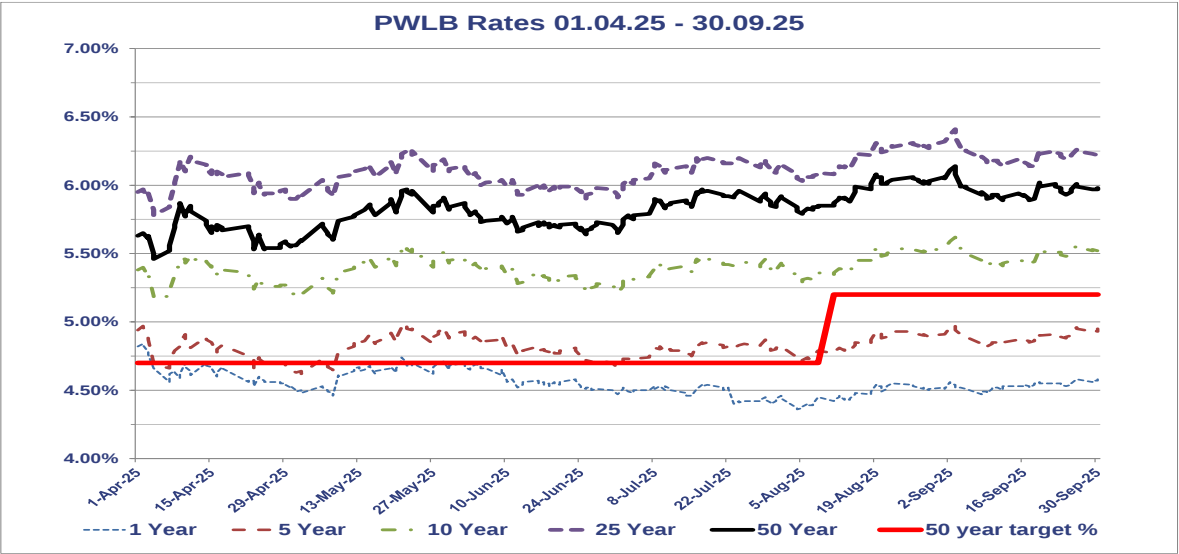
- Following the 26 November Budget, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) calculated the net tightening in fiscal policy as £11.7bn (0.3% of GDP) in 2029/30, smaller than the consensus forecast of £25bn. It did downgrade productivity growth by 0.3%, from 1.3% to 1.0%, but a lot of that influence was offset by upgrades to its near-term wage and inflation forecasts. Accordingly, the OBR judged the Chancellor was going to achieve her objectives with £4.2bn to spare. The Chancellor then chose to expand that headroom to £21.7bn, up from £9.9bn previously.
- Moreover, the Chancellor also chose to raise spending by a net £11.3bn in 2029/30. To pay for that and the increase in her headroom, she raised taxes by £26.1bn in 2029/30. The biggest revenue-raisers were the freeze in income tax thresholds from 2028/29 (+£7.8bn) and the rise in NICs on salary-sacrifice pension contributions (+£4.8bn). The increase in council tax for properties worth more than £2.0m will generate £0.4bn.
- The weakening in the jobs market looked clear in the spring. May's 109,000 m/m fall in the PAYE measure of employment was the largest decline (barring the pandemic) since the data began and the seventh in as many months. The monthly change was revised lower in five of the previous seven months too, with April's 33,000 fall revised down to a 55,000 drop. More recently, however, the monthly change was revised higher in seven of the previous nine months by a total of 22,000. So instead of falling by 165,000 in total since October, payroll employment is now thought to have declined by a smaller 153,000. Even so, payroll employment has still fallen in nearly all the months since the Chancellor announced the rises in National Insurance Contributions (NICs) for employers and the minimum wage in the October 2024 Budget. The number of job vacancies in the three months to November 2025 stood at 729,000 (the peak was 1.3 million in spring 2022). All this suggests the labour market continues to loosen, albeit at a slow pace.
- A looser labour market is driving softer wage pressures. The 3m/yy rate of average earnings growth excluding bonuses has fallen from 5.5% in April to 4.6% in September (still at that level in November). The rate for the private sector has slipped just below 4% as the year end approaches.
- CPI inflation remained at 3.8% in September but dropped to 3.2% by November. Core inflation also fell to 3.2% by November while services inflation fell to 4.4%. Nonetheless, a further loosening in the labour market and weaker wage growth may be a requisite to UK inflation coming in below 2.0% by 2027.
- An ever-present issue throughout recent months has been the pressure being exerted on medium and longer dated gilt yields. The yield on the 10-year gilt moved sideways in the second quarter of 2025, rising from 4.4% in early April to 4.8% in mid-April following wider global bond market volatility stemming from the "Liberation Day" tariff announcement, and then easing back as trade tensions began to de-escalate. By the end of April, the 10-year gilt yield had returned to 4.4%. In May, concerns about stickier inflation and shifting expectations about the path for interest rates led to another rise, with the 10-year gilt yield fluctuating between 4.6% and 4.75% for most of May. Thereafter, as trade tensions continued to ease and markets increasingly began to price in looser monetary policy, the 10-year yield edged lower, and ended June at 4.50%.

- More recently, the yield on the 10-year gilt rose from 4.46% to 4.60% in early July as rolled-back spending cuts and uncertainty over Chancellor Reeves' future raised fiscal concerns. Although the spike proved short lived, it highlighted the UK's fragile fiscal position. In an era of high debt, high interest rates and low GDP growth, the markets are now more sensitive to fiscal risks than before the pandemic. During August, long-dated gilts underwent a particularly pronounced sell-off, climbing 22 basis points and reaching a 27-year high of 5.6% by the end of the month. While yields have since eased back, the market sell-off was driven by investor concerns over growing supply-demand imbalances, stemming from unease over the lack of fiscal consolidation and reduced demand from traditional long-dated bond purchasers like pension funds. For 10-year gilts, by late September, sticky inflation, resilient activity data and a hawkish Bank of England kept yields elevated over 4.70% although by late December had fallen back again to a little over 4.50%.
- The FTSE 100 fell sharply following the "Liberation Day" tariff announcement, dropping by more than 10% in the first week of April - from 8,634 on 1 April to 7,702 on 7 April. However, the de-escalation of the trade war coupled with strong corporate earnings led to a rapid rebound starting in late April. As a result, the FTSE 100 ended June at 8,761, around 2% higher than its value at the end of March and more than 7% above its level at the start of 2025. Since then, the FTSE 100 has enjoyed a further 4% rise in July, its strongest monthly gain since January and outperforming the S&P 500. Strong corporate earnings and progress in trade talks (US-EU, UK-India) lifted share prices and the index hit a record 9,321 in mid-August, driven by hopes of peace in Ukraine and dovish signals from Fed Chair Powell. September proved more volatile and the FTSE 100 closed September at 9,350, 7% higher than at the end of Q1 and 14% higher since the start of 2025. Future performance will likely be impacted by the extent to which investors' global risk appetite remains intact, Fed rate cuts, resilience in the US economy, and AI optimism. A weaker pound will also boost the index as it inflates overseas earnings. In early November, the FTSE100 climbed to a record high just above 9,900. By late December, the index had clung on to most of those gains standing at 9,870 on 23 December.

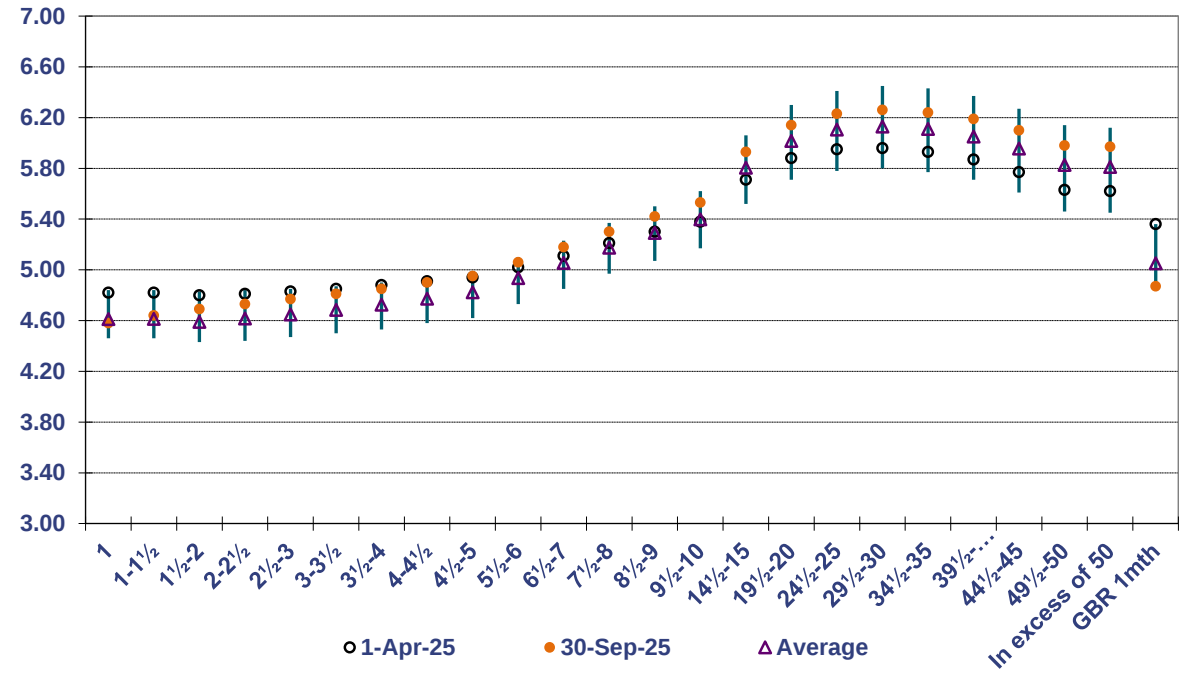
MPC meetings: 8 May, 19 June, 7 August, 18 September, 6 November, 18 December 2025

- There were six Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meetings held between April and December. In May, the Committee cut Bank Rate from 4.50% to 4.25%, while in June policy was left unchanged. In June's vote, three MPC members (Dhingra, Ramsden and Taylor) voted for an immediate cut to 4.00%, citing loosening labour market conditions. The other six members were more cautious, as they highlighted the need to monitor for "signs of weak demand", "supply-side constraints" and higher "inflation expectations", mainly from rising food prices. By repeating the well-used phrase "gradual and careful", the MPC continued to suggest that rates would be reduced further.
- In August, a further rate cut was implemented. However, a 5-4 split vote for a rate cut to 4% laid bare the different views within the Monetary Policy Committee, with the accompanying commentary noting the decision was "finely balanced" and reiterating that future rate cuts would be undertaken "gradually and carefully". Ultimately, Governor Bailey was the casting vote for a rate cut but with the CPI measure of inflation expected to reach at least 4% later this year, the MPC was wary of making any further rate cuts until inflation begins its slow downwards trajectory back towards 2%.
- With wages still rising by just below 5%, it was no surprise that the September meeting saw the MPC vote 7-2 for keeping rates at 4% (Dhingra and Taylor voted for a further 25bps reduction). Moreover, the Bank also took the opportunity to announce that they would only shrink its balance sheet by £70bn over the next 12 months, rather than £100bn. The repetition of the phrase that "a gradual and careful" approach to rate cuts is appropriate suggested the Bank still thought interest rates will fall further.
- At the 6 November meeting, Governor Bailey was once again the deciding vote, keeping Bank Rate at 4% but hinting strongly that a further rate cut was imminent if data supported such a move. By 18 December, with November CPI inflation having fallen to 3.2%, and with Q2 GDP revised down from 0.3% q/q to only 0.2% q/q, and Q3 GDP stalling at 0.1%, the MPC voted by 5-4 to cut rates further to 3.75%. However, Governor Bailey made it clear that any further reductions would require strong supporting data, and the pace of any further decreases would be slow compared to recent months. The markets expect Bank Rate to next be cut in April.

PWLB Rates 01.04.25 - 30.09.25



PWLB Certainty Rate Variations 01.04.25 to 30.09.25



High/Low/Average PWLB Rates for 01.04.25 – 30.09.25

	1 Year	5 Year	10 Year	25 Year	50 Year
01/04/2025	4.82%	4.94%	5.38%	5.95%	5.63%
30/09/2025	4.58%	4.95%	5.53%	6.23%	5.98%
Low	4.36%	4.62%	5.17%	5.78%	5.46%
Low date	04/08/2025	02/05/2025	02/05/2025	04/04/2025	04/04/2025
High	4.84%	4.99%	5.62%	6.41%	6.14%
High date	02/04/2025	21/05/2025	03/09/2025	03/09/2025	03/09/2025
Average	4.55%	4.82%	5.40%	6.11%	5.83%
Spread	0.48%	0.37%	0.45%	0.63%	0.68%