

## 1.1 Background

The Authority is required to operate a balanced revenue 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 Authority'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 Authority's capital plans. These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Authority, essentially the longer-term cash flow planning, to ensure that it 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 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, including 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."*

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.

## 1.2 Reporting Requirements

### 1.2.1 Capital Strategy

The CIPFA 2021 Prudential and Treasury Management Codes require 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

The aim of the strategy is to ensure that all the Authority's elected members fully understand the overall long-term policy objectives and resulting Capital Strategy requirements, governance procedures and risk appetite.

### 1.2.2 Treasury Management Reporting

The Authority 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 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 Annual Investment Strategy, (the parameters on how investments are to be managed)
- b. **A mid-year treasury management report** – This is primarily a progress report and will update members on the capital position, amending prudential indicators as necessary, and whether any policies require revision. In addition, this Authority will receive quarterly update reports.
- 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 are required to be adequately scrutinised before being recommended to the Full Council. This role is undertaken by the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee

**Quarterly reports** – In addition to the three major reports detailed above, from 2023/24 quarterly reporting are reported to Finance and Performance Committee.

## 1.3 Treasury Management Strategy for 2026/27

The strategy for 2026/27 covers two main areas:

### Capital issues

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

### Treasury management issues

- the current treasury position
- treasury indicators which limit the treasury risk and activities of the Authority
- 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

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

## 1.4 Training

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.

### **1.5 Treasury Management Consultants**

The Authority uses MUFG Corporate Markets as its external treasury management advisors.

The Authority 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 our external service providers. All decisions will be undertaken with regards to all available information, including, but not solely, our treasury advisers.

It also recognises that there is value in employing external providers of treasury management services to acquire access to specialist skills and resources. The Authority 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.

## 2. THE CAPITAL PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2026/27 – 2028/29

The Authority'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.

### 2.1 Capital Expenditure and Financing

This prudential indicator is a summary of the Authority's capital expenditure plans, both those agreed previously, and those forming part of this budget cycle. Members are asked to approve the capital expenditure forecasts: -

<b>Capital expenditure £000's</b>	<b>2024/25 Actual</b>	<b>2025/26 Estimate</b>	<b>2026/27 Estimate</b>	<b>2027/28 Estimate</b>	<b>2028/29 Estimate</b>
Non-HRA	5,049	10,314	9,969	1,948	1,835
HRA	12,823	15,655	18,015	12,407	12,232
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,872</b>	<b>25,969</b>	<b>27,984</b>	<b>14,355</b>	<b>14,067</b>

Other long-term liabilities - the above financing need excludes other long-term liabilities, such as PFI and leasing arrangements that already include borrowing instruments.

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.

<b>Financing of capital expenditure £m</b>	<b>2024/25 Actual</b>	<b>2025/26 Estimate</b>	<b>2026/27 Estimate</b>	<b>2027/28 Estimate</b>	<b>2028/29 Estimate</b>
Capital receipts	3,092	4,320	1,007	1,057	600
Capital grants	3,381	3,361	2,971	1,494	1,458
Capital reserves	5,887	6,554	7,160	5,839	5,739
Revenue	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Net financing need for the year</b>	<b>5,512</b>	<b>11,734</b>	<b>16,846</b>	<b>5,965</b>	<b>6,270</b>

### 2.2 The Authority's Borrowing Need (the Capital Financing Requirement)

The second prudential indicator is the Authority's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). 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 Authority's indebtedness and so its underlying borrowing need. Any capital expenditure above, which has not immediately been paid for through a revenue or capital resource, will increase the CFR.

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 each asset's life and so charges the economic consumption of capital assets as they are used.

The CFR includes any other long-term liabilities (e.g., PFI schemes, leases). Whilst these increase the CFR, and therefore the Authority's borrowing requirement, these types of schemes include a borrowing facility by the PFI, PPP lease provider and so the Authority is not required to separately borrow for these schemes. The Authority currently has £15.6m of such schemes within the CFR.

The Authority is asked to approve the CFR projections below:

<b>£m</b>	<b>2024/25 Actual</b>	<b>2025/26 Estimate</b>	<b>2026/27 Estimate</b>	<b>2027/28 Estimate</b>	<b>2028/29 Estimate</b>
<b>Capital Financing Requirement</b>					
Non-HRA	43,623	45,642	51,085	49,676	48,403
Housing	<b>70,320</b>	<b>74,885</b>	<b>84,526</b>	<b>89,891</b>	<b>95,485</b>

<b>Total CFR</b>	<b>113,943</b>	<b>120,527</b>	<b>135,611</b>	<b>139,567</b>	<b>143,888</b>
<b>Movement in CFR</b>	<b>3,243</b>	<b>6,584</b>	<b>15,084</b>	<b>3,956</b>	<b>4,321</b>
<b>Movement in CFR represented by</b>					
Net financing need for the year (above)	5,512	11,734	16,846	5,965	6,270
Less MRP/VRP and other financing movements	(2,269)	(5,150)	(1,762)	(2,009)	(1,949)
<b>Movement in CFR</b>	<b>3,243</b>	<b>6,584</b>	<b>15,084</b>	<b>3,956</b>	<b>4,321</b>

### 2.3 Liability Benchmark

The Authority is required to estimate and measure the Liability Benchmark (LB) for the forthcoming financial year and the following two financial years, as a minimum.

There are four components to the LB: -

1. **Existing loan debt outstanding:** the Authority's existing loans that are still outstanding in future years.
2. **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.
3. **Net loans requirement:** this will show the Authority'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 cash flows forecast.
4. **Liability benchmark** (or gross loans requirement): this equals net loans requirement plus short-term liquidity allowance.

### 2.4 Core Funds and Expected Investment Balances

The application of resources (capital receipts, reserves etc.) to either finance capital expenditure or other budget decisions to support the revenue budget will have an ongoing impact on investments unless resources are supplemented each year from new sources (asset sales etc.). Detailed below are estimates of the year-end balances for each resource and anticipated day-to-day cash flow balances.

<b>Year End Resources £m</b>	<b>2024/25 Actual</b>	<b>2025/26 Estimate</b>	<b>2026/27 Estimate</b>	<b>2027/28 Estimate</b>	<b>2028/29 Estimate</b>
Fund balances / reserves	13,061	12,194	9,673	6,772	3,160
Capital receipts	8,998	4,595	5,413	4,781	4,606
Provisions	650	650	650	650	650
Other	3,128	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
<b>Total core funds</b>	<b>25,837</b>	<b>19,439</b>	<b>17,736</b>	<b>14,203</b>	<b>10,416</b>
Working capital*	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Under/over borrowing <sup>33</sup>	34,603	24,082	26,077	27,855	29,626
<b>Additional borrowing</b>	<b>(11,000)</b>	<b>(9,000)</b>	<b>(11,000)</b>	<b>(16,000)</b>	<b>(22,000)</b>
<b>Expected investments</b>	<b>734</b>	<b>2,857</b>	<b>1,159</b>	<b>848</b>	<b>1,290</b>

\*Working capital balances shown are estimated year-end; these may be higher mid-year

## 2.5 Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement

For expenditure incurred before 1 April 2008 which forms part of supported capital expenditure, the MRP policy will be:

- *Reducing balance over 40 years*

From 1 April 2008 for all unsupported borrowing the MRP policy will be (amend as appropriate):

- Asset life method (straight line)

Capital expenditure financed by borrowing in 2025/26 will not be subject to an MRP charge until 2026/27, or in the financial year following the one which the asset first becomes available for use.

The Authority will apply the asset life method for any expenditure capitalised under a Capitalisation Direction.

The Authority has determined that MRP is/is not required for borrowing or credit arrangements used to finance capital expenditure on housing assets and accounted for within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) as it has determined, through its duty to charge depreciation and hold a Major Repairs Reserve, that prudent provision has been made.

### Leases

Regarding MRP in respect of assets acquired either under leases where a right-of-use asset is on the balance sheet. A prudent charge to revenue will be measured as being equal to the element of the rent/charge that goes to write down the balance sheet liability.

Where a lease (or part of a lease) is brought onto the balance sheet, having previously been accounted for off-balance sheet, the MRP requirement is regarded as having been met by the inclusion in the charge for the year in which the restatement occurs, of an amount equal to the write-down for that year plus retrospective writing down of the balance sheet liability that arises from the restatement.

### Investment property

The Council does not hold any investment properties.

### Capital loans

The Authority has not issued capital loans that are categorised as commercial loans

### Capital receipts

For capital expenditure on loans to third parties where the principal element of the loan has been repaid in annual instalments, the capital receipts arising from the principal loan repayments will be used to reduce the CFR instead of MRP.

Where no principal repayment is made in a given year, MRP will be charged as follows:

### MRP Overpayments

Under the MRP guidance, charges made in excess of the statutory MRP can be made and are known as voluntary revenue provision (VRP).

VRP can be reclaimed in later years if deemed necessary or prudent. In order for these amounts to be reclaimed for use in the budget, this policy must disclose the cumulative overpayment made each year.

Cumulative VRP overpayments made to 31.03.25 are £0.117m.

### 3. BORROWING

The capital expenditure plans set out in Section 2 provide details of the service activity of the Authority. The treasury management function ensures that the Authority's cash is organised in accordance with the relevant professional codes, so that sufficient cash is available to meet this service activity and the Authority'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.

#### 3.1 Current Portfolio Position

The overall treasury management portfolio as at 31.3.25 and for the position as at 31.12.25 is shown below for both borrowing and investments.

TREASURY PORTFOLIO				
	actual 31.3.25	actual 31.3.25	current 31.12.25	current 31.12.25
	£000	%	£000	%
<b>Treasury investments</b>				
Banks	2,418	100%	15,028	99%
Money Market Funds	0	0%	100	1%
<b>Total managed in house</b>	<b>2,418</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>15,128</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Total managed externally</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Total treasury investments</b>	<b>2,418</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>15,128</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Treasury external borrowing</b>				
PWLB	71,311	100%	70,896	100%
<b>Total external borrowing</b>	<b>71,311</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>70,896</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Net treasury investments / (borrowing)</b>	<b>-68,893</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-55,768</b>	<b>0</b>

The Authority's forward projections for borrowing are summarised below. The table shows the actual external debt, against the underlying capital borrowing need, (the Capital Financing Requirement - CFR), highlighting any over or under borrowing.

£m	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate	2027/28 Estimate	2028/29 Estimate
<b>External Debt</b>					
Debt at 1 April	82,295	79,340	96,445	109,534	111,712
Expected change in Debt	(3,346)	17,377	13,480	2,589	2,881
Other long-term liabilities (OLTL)	1,191	100	0	0	0

Expected change in OLTL	( 800)	( 372)	( 391)	( 411)	( 331)
Actual gross debt at 31 March	<b>79,340</b>	<b>96,445</b>	<b>109,534</b>	<b>111,712</b>	<b>114,262</b>
The Capital Financing Requirement	<b>113,943</b>	<b>120,527</b>	<b>135,611</b>	<b>139,567</b>	<b>143,888</b>
Under / (over) borrowing	<b>34,603</b>	<b>24,082</b>	<b>26,077</b>	<b>27,855</b>	<b>29,626</b>

Within the range of prudential indicators there are several key indicators to ensure that the Authority operates its activities within well-defined limits. One of these is that the Authority 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 or speculative purposes.

The Head of Finance reports that the Authority 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.

### 3.2 Treasury Indicators: Limits to Borrowing Activity

**The Operational Boundary.** This 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.

<b>Operational Boundary £m</b>	<b>2025/26 Estimate</b>	<b>2026/27 Estimate</b>	<b>2027/28 Estimate</b>	<b>2028/29 Estimate</b>
Debt	112,871	128,346	132,713	137,365
Other long-term liabilities	7,656	7,265	6,854	6,523
Total	120,527	135,611	139,567	143,888

**The Authorised Limit for external debt.** This is a key prudential indicator and 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 the 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.

- This 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 local authority plans, or those of a specific authority, although this power has not yet been exercised.
- The Authority is asked to approve the following Authorised Limit:

<b>Authorised Limit £m</b>	<b>2025/26 Estimate</b>	<b>2026/27 Estimate</b>	<b>2027/28 Estimate</b>	<b>2028/29 Estimate</b>
Debt	117,871	133,346	137,713	142,365
Other long-term liabilities	7,656	7,265	6,854	6,523
Total	125,527	140,611	144,567	148,888



### 3.3 Prospects for Interest Rates

The Authority has appointed MUFG Corporate Markets as its treasury advisor and part of their service is to assist the Authority to formulate a view on interest rates. MUFG Corporate Markets provided the following forecasts on 11 August 2025. These are forecasts for Bank Rate, average earnings and PWLB certainty rates, gilt yields plus 80 bps.

MUFG Corporate Markets Interest Rate View 11.08.25													
	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27	Jun-27	Sep-27	Dec-27	Mar-28	Jun-28	Sep-28
BANK RATE	4.00	4.00	3.75	3.75	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25
3 month ave earnings	4.00	4.00	3.80	3.80	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30
6 month ave earnings	4.00	3.90	3.70	3.70	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.30	3.30	3.40	3.40	3.40
12 month ave earnings	4.00	3.90	3.70	3.70	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.30	3.40	3.50	3.60	3.60
5 yr PWLB	4.80	4.70	4.50	4.40	4.30	4.30	4.30	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.10	4.10
10 yr PWLB	5.30	5.20	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.80	4.80	4.70	4.70	4.70	4.70	4.60	4.60
25 yr PWLB	6.10	5.90	5.70	5.70	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.40	5.40	5.30	5.30	5.30	5.20
50 yr PWLB	5.80	5.60	5.40	5.40	5.30	5.30	5.30	5.20	5.20	5.10	5.10	5.00	5.00

- Our last interest rate forecast update was undertaken six months ago, in February 2025. Throughout the intervening period we have successfully forecast a gradual reduction in Bank Rate, although we were not overly persuaded that a cut in August was the correct policy, given even the Bank of England anticipates CPI inflation hitting 4% in the autumn. As it happened, 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 that future rate cuts would be undertaken “gradually and carefully”.
- UK GDP is expected to be in the region of 1.2% for Q3 2025, rising to 1.7% by Q3 2028. The Bank anticipates wage growth to moderate to a sustainable 3.75% and CPI inflation to return to 2% in around 18 months’ time.
- With the August rate cut now done, we are comfortable revising our previous forecast for a November rate cut, instead pushing that back to February 2026, on the basis that CPI inflation should have peaked by then and will be on a slow downwards trajectory back to 2% by 2027. Further gradual reductions in Bank Rate to 3.25% are then anticipated but, and it is a big BUT, only if inflation and employment data are supportive of such cuts.
- For threats to that central scenario abound. What if wage increases remain stubbornly high and in the region of 5% even as the economy stutters towards a position of flatlining or tepid growth? There are several sectors of the domestic economy, including social care provision, where staff shortages remain - even as unemployment ticks higher (currently 4.7%). And what about the hikes in general taxation likely to arise from the November (date still to be confirmed) Budget? There is an estimated £15bn - £25bn second “black hole” to fill, so will there be further borrowing announced by the Chancellor to add to taxation funding? If so, how will gilt markets react to these variables...and will there be additional geo-political factors to also bake in, particularly the Fed’s monetary policy decision in September (currently 85% prospect of a rate cut) and the ongoing tariff policies emanating from the White House. And, of course, how will the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and between Russia and Ukraine influence matters?
- Moreover, it looks likely that the Bank of England will reduce the pace of its Quantitative Tightening from an annual £100bn (October 2024 to September 2025) to a range between £60bn and £75bn from October 2025 (Market Participants Survey, August 2025). If that policy move also sees a shift in the gilts being sold to having shorter durations, this should prove supportive of the gilt market generally.
- Accordingly, our updated central forecast is made with several hefty caveats. We are confident, as we have been for some time, that our forecast for Bank Rate and the 5-year PWLB Certainty Rate is robust. But for the 10-, 25- and 50-years part of the curve,

*the aforementioned factors may all have a role to play in whether we end up above, close to or below our new forecasts. As it is, we have lifted our starting points and finishing points within the medium to longer dated forecasts. Clients will be aware from presentations at our Strategic Issues webinars that net annual gilt issuance of c£180bn is around a four-fold increase compared to recent annual issuance, and with pension fund and insurance company investment favouring shorter durations, it has been left to transient foreign investors and hedge funds to fill the investor vacuum. Whilst this backdrop prevails, we see no obvious reason why medium to longer gilt yields will not remain at elevated levels, even allowing for a gradual reduction in inflation over the course of the forecast. Consequently, our forecasts at Q3 2028 are 20 basis points higher than previously projected for the 10 years and 50 basis points higher for 25 to 50 years.*

- *Our revised PWLB rate forecasts below are based on the Certainty Rate (the standard rate minus 20 bps) which has been accessible to most authorities since 1 November 2012. Please note, the lower Housing Revenue Account (HRA) PWLB rate started on 15 June 2023 for those authorities with an HRA (standard rate minus 60 bps) and is set to prevail until at least the end of March 2026. Hopefully, there will be a further extension to this discounted rate announced in the Budget.*
- *The MUFG Corporate Markets forecast for average earnings are averages i.e., rates offered by individual entities may differ significantly from these averages, reflecting their different needs for borrowing short-term cash at any one point in time.*

### **Gilt yields and PWLB rates**

*The overall longer-run trend is for gilt yields and PWLB rates to fall back over the timeline of our forecasts, but the risks to our forecasts are generally to the upsides. Our target borrowing rates are set **two years forward** (as we expect rates to fall back) and the current PWLB (certainty) borrowing rates are set out below: -*

<i>PWLB borrowing</i>	<i>Current borrowing rates as at 11.08.25 p.m.</i>	<i>Target borrowing rate now (end of Q2 2027)</i>	<i>Target borrowing rate previous (end of Q2 2027)</i>
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>5 years</b>	4.78	4.20	4.20
<b>10 years</b>	5.36	4.70	4.50
<b>25 years</b>	6.10	5.40	5.00
<b>50 years</b>	5.87	5.20	4.70

**Borrowing advice:** *Our long-term (beyond 10 years) forecast for the neutral level of Bank Rate remains at 3.5%. As all PWLB certainty rates are currently significantly above this level, borrowing strategies will need to be reviewed in that context. Overall, better value can be obtained at the shorter end of the curve and short-dated fixed LA to LA monies should also be considered. Temporary borrowing rates will, generally, fall in line with Bank Rate cuts.*

### **3.4 Borrowing Strategy**

The Authority 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 as 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, albeit only once prevailing inflation concerns are addressed by restrictive near-term monetary policy. That is, Bank Rate remains relatively elevated in 2026 even if further rate cuts arise.

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

- *if it was felt that there was a significant risk of a sharp FALL in borrowing rates, then borrowing will be postponed.*
- *if it was felt that there was a significant risk of a much sharper RISE in borrowing rates than that currently forecast, fixed rate funding will be drawn whilst interest rates are lower than they are projected to be in the next few years.*

Any decisions will be reported in line with the Councils Financial Procedure rules

### 3.5 Policy on Borrowing in Advance of Need

The Authority 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 Authority can ensure the security of such funds.

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.

### 3.6 Rescheduling

Rescheduling of current borrowing in our 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. If rescheduling is to be undertaken, it will be reported to *Council* at the earliest meeting following its action.

### 3.7 New Financial Institutions as a Source of Borrowing and / or Types of Borrowing

**Currently the PWLB Certainty Rate is set at gilts + 80 basis points. However, consideration may still need to be given to sourcing funding from the following sources for the following reasons:**

- Local authorities (primarily shorter dated maturities out to 3 years or so – generally still cheaper than the Certainty Rate).
- Financial institutions (primarily insurance companies and pension funds but also some banks, and sometimes out of forward dates where the objective is to avoid a “cost of carry” or to achieve refinancing certainty over the next few years).

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

### 3.8 Approved Sources of Long and Short-term Borrowing

On Balance Sheet	Fixed	Variable
PWLB	●	●
Local Authorities	●	●
Banks	●	●
Pension Funds	●	●
Insurance Companies	●	●
UK National Wealth Fund	●	●
Market (long-term)	●	●

Market (temporary)	●	●
Market (LOBOs)	●	●
Stock Issues	●	●
Local Temporary	●	●
Local/Community Municipal Bonds	●	
Local Authority Bills	●	●
Overdraft		●
Negotiable Bonds	●	●
Internal (capital receipts & revenue balances)	●	●
Commercial Paper	●	
Medium Term Notes	●	
Leases	●	●

## 4 ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

### 4.1 Investment Policy – 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 and service investments, are covered in the Capital Programme and Capital Strategy report.

The Authority’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 Authority’s investment priorities will be security first, portfolio liquidity second and then yield (return). The Authority will aim to achieve the optimum return (yield) on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity and with regard to the Authority’s risk appetite.

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 for periods up to 12 months with high credit rated financial institutions, whilst investment rates remain elevated, as well as wider range fund options

The above guidance from MHCLG and CIPFA places a high priority on the management of risk. This Authority has adopted a prudent approach to managing risk and defines its risk appetite by the following means: -

1. 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.
2. **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 Authority 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.
3. **Other information sources** used will include the financial press, share price and other such information pertaining to the financial sector in order to establish the most robust scrutiny process on the suitability of potential investment counterparties.
4. This Authority has defined the list of **types of investment instruments** that the treasury management team are authorised to use. There are two lists in Appendix 5.4 under the categories of ‘specified’ and ‘non-specified’ investments.

**Specified investments** are those with a high level of credit quality and subject to a maturity limit of one year or have less than a year left to run to maturity, if originally, they were classified as being non-specified investments solely due to the maturity period exceeding one year.

**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.

5. **Non-specified and loan investment limits.** The Authority has determined that it will set a limit to the maximum exposure of the total treasury management investment portfolio to non-specified treasury management investments of 5%.
6. **Lending limits**, (amounts and maturity), for each counterparty will be set through applying the matrix table in paragraph 4.2.
7. **Transaction limits** are set for each type of investment in 4.2.
8. This Authority will set a limit for its investments which are invested for **longer than 365 days**, (see paragraph 4.4).
9. Investments will only be placed with counterparties from countries with a specified minimum **sovereign rating**, (see paragraph 4.3).
10. This Authority has engaged **external consultants**, (see paragraph 1.5), to provide expert advice on how to optimise an appropriate balance of security, liquidity and yield, given the risk appetite of this Authority in the context of the expected level of cash balances and need for liquidity throughout the year.
11. All investments will be denominated in **sterling**.
12. As a result of the change in accounting standards under IFRS 9, this Authority 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. (In November 2018, the MHCLG, concluded a consultation for a temporary override to allow English local authorities time to adjust their portfolio of pooled investments by announcing a statutory override to delay implementation of IFRS 9 for five years ending 31.3.23. Subsequently, a further extension to the override to **31.3.29** was agreed by Government but only for those pooled investments made before 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024

However, this Authority 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 4.5). Regular monitoring of investment performance will be carried out during the year.

#### **Changes in risk management policy from last year.**

The above criteria are unchanged from last year

## **4.2 Creditworthiness Policy**

The primary principle governing the Authority'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 Authority will ensure that: -

- 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. This is set out in the specified and non-specified investment sections below; and
- 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 Authority's prudential indicators covering the maximum principal sums invested.

The Head of Finance will maintain a counterparty list in compliance with the following criteria and will revise the criteria and submit them to Full Council for approval as necessary. These criteria are separate to that which determines which types of investment instrument are either specified or non-specified as it provides an overall pool of counterparties considered high quality which the Authority may use, rather than defining what types of investment instruments are to be used.

Credit rating information is supplied by MUFG Corporate Markets, 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 a counterparty at the minimum Authority criteria will be suspended from use, with all others being reviewed in light of market conditions

The criteria for providing a pool of high-quality investment counterparties, (both specified and non-specified investments) is:

- Banks 1 - good credit quality – the Authority will only use banks which:
  - i. are UK banks; and/or
  - ii. are non-UK and domiciled in a country which has a minimum sovereign Long-Term rating of AA-

and have, as a minimum, the following Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poor's credit ratings (where rated):

- i. Short Term – F1
  - ii. Long Term – A-
- Banks 2 – The Authority's own banker for transactional purposes if the bank falls below the above criteria, although in this case balances will be minimised in both monetary size and time invested.
- Bank subsidiary and treasury operation -. The Authority will use these where the parent bank has provided an appropriate guarantee or has the necessary ratings outlined above.
- Building societies - The Authority will use all societies which: -
  - i. Meet the ratings for banks outlined above.
  - or
  - ii. Have assets in excess of £500m
 or meet both criteria.
- Money Market Funds (MMFs) CNAV – £11m
- UK Government (including gilts, Treasury Bills and the DMADF)
- Local authorities, parish councils etc
- Housing associations
- Supranational institutions

**Use of additional information other than credit ratings.** Additional requirements under the Code require the Authority to supplement credit rating information. Whilst the above criteria rely 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 specific 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 Authority's counterparty list are as follows (these will cover both specified and non-specified investments): -

	Fitch long-term rating (or equivalent)	Money limit	Transaction limit	Time limit
<b>Banks 1 higher quality</b>	<b>AA-</b>	<b>£15m</b>	<b>£10m</b>	<b>2yrs</b>
<b>Banks 1 medium quality</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>£13m</b>	<b>£7m</b>	<b>2yrs</b>
<b>Banks 1 lower quality</b>	<b>BBB</b>	<b>£11m</b>	<b>£5m</b>	<b>1yr</b>
<b>Limit 3 category – Authority's banker (not meeting Banks 1)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>£13m</b>	<b>£10m</b>	<b>1yr</b>
<b>Building Societies</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>£12m</b>	<b>£2m</b>	<b>2yrs</b>
<b>Other institutions limit</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>£8m</b>	<b>£5m</b>	<b>1yr</b>
<b>DMADF</b>	<b>UK sovereign rating</b>	<b>unlimited</b>	<b>unlimited</b>	<b>1yr</b>
<b>Local authorities</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>£15m</b>	<b>£10m</b>	<b>5yrs</b>
<b>Housing associations</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>£6m</b>	<b>£3m</b>	<b>2yrs</b>
<b>Money Market Funds</b>	<b>AAA</b>	<b>£20m</b>	<b>£11m</b>	<b>liquid</b>

The proposed criteria for specified and non-specified investments are shown in Appendix 5.4 for approval.

### **Creditworthiness**

Significant levels of downgrades to Short and Long-Term credit ratings have not materialised since the crisis in March 2020. In the main, where they did change, any alterations were limited to Outlooks. Nonetheless, when setting minimum sovereign debt ratings, this Authority will not set a minimum rating for the UK

### **CDS prices**

Although bank CDS prices, (these are market indicators of credit risk), spiked upwards during the autumn of 2022, they have returned to more average levels since then. However, sentiment can easily shift, so it will remain important to undertake continual monitoring of all aspects of risk and return in the current circumstances. MUFG Corporate Markets monitor CDS prices as part of their creditworthiness service to local authorities and the Authority has access to this information via its MUFG Corporate Markets-provided Passport portal.



### 4.3 Limits

Due care will be taken to consider the exposure of the Authority's total investment portfolio to non-specified investments, countries, groups and sectors.

- a. **Non-specified treasury management investment limit.** The Authority has determined that it will limit the maximum total exposure of treasury management investments to non-specified treasury management investments as being \_% of the total treasury management investment portfolio.
- b. **Country limit.** The Authority has determined that it will only use approved counterparties from the UK and from 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 5.6. This list will be added to, or deducted from, by officers should ratings change in accordance with this policy.

**Other limits.** In addition: -

- no more than 20% will be placed with any non-UK country at any time.
- limits in place above will apply to a group of companies.
- sector limits will be monitored regularly for appropriateness.

### 4.4 Investment Strategy

**In-house funds.** Investments will be made with reference to the core balance and cashflow requirements and the outlook for short-term interest rates (i.e., rates for investments up to 12 months). Greater returns are usually obtainable by investing for longer periods. The current shape of the yield curve suggests that rates can be expected to fall throughout 2026, but only if the CPI measure of inflation maintains a downwards trend towards the Bank of England's 2% target. Rates may be cut quicker than expected if the economy stagnates.

Accordingly, while most cash balances are required in order to manage the ups and downs of cashflow, where cash sums can be identified that could be invested for longer periods, the value to be obtained from longer-term investments will be carefully assessed.

#### **Investment returns expectations.**

The current forecast shown in paragraph 3.3, includes a forecast for Bank Rate to fall to a low of 3.25% in 2027.

The suggested budgeted investment earnings rates for returns on investments placed for periods up to about three months during each financial year were updated on 11 August 2025 and are as follows:

-

<i>Average earnings in each year</i>	<i>Now</i> %	<i>Previously</i> %
<b>2025/26 (residual)</b>	3.90	4.10
<b>2026/27</b>	3.60	3.60
<b>2027/28</b>	3.30	3.50
<b>2028/29</b>	3.50	3.50
<b>2029/30</b>	3.50	3.50
<b>Years 6-10</b>	3.50	3.50
<b>Years 10+</b>	3.50	3.50

As there are so many variables caution must be exercised in respect of all interest rate forecasts.

**Investment treasury indicator and limit** - total principal funds invested for greater than 365 days. These limits are set with regard to the Authority's liquidity requirements and to reduce the need for early sale of an investment and are based on the availability of funds after each year-end.

The Authority is asked to approve the following treasury indicator and limit: -

<b>Upper limit for principal sums invested for longer than 365 days</b>			
<b>£m</b>	<b>2026/27</b>	<b>2027/28</b>	<b>2028/29</b>
Principal sums invested for longer than 365 days	£3m	£3m	£3m

#### **4.5 Investment Performance / Risk Benchmarking**

These benchmarks are simple guides to maximum risk, so they may be breached from time to time, depending on movements in interest rates and counterparty criteria. The purpose of the benchmark is that officers will monitor the current and trend position and amend the operational strategy to manage risk as conditions change. Any breach of the benchmarks will be reported, with supporting reasons in the mid-year or Annual Report.

Security - The Authority's maximum security risk benchmark for the current portfolio, when compared to these historic default tables, is:

- **0.5% historic risk of default when compared to the whole portfolio.**

Liquidity – in respect of this area the Authority seeks to maintain: -

- Bank overdraft - £3m if required
- Liquid short-term deposits of at least £0.5m available with a week's notice.
- Weighted average life benchmark is expected to be 1 month, with a maximum of 1 year.

Yield - local measures of yield benchmarks are

- Investments – internal returns above the 7-day SONIA compounded rate

#### **4.6 End of Year Investment Report**

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

## **5 APPENDICES**

(These can be appended to the report or omitted as required)

1. Prudential and treasury indicators
2. Interest rate forecasts
3. Economic background
4. Treasury management practice 1 – credit and counterparty risk management (option 1)
5. Treasury management practice 1 – credit and counterparty risk management (option 2)
6. Approved countries for investments
7. Treasury management scheme of delegation
8. The treasury management role of the section 151 officer

## 5.1 THE CAPITAL PRUDENTIAL AND TREASURY INDICATORS 2026/27 – 2028/29

The Authority'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.

### 5.1.1 Capital Expenditure

Capital expenditure £m	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate	2027/28 Estimate	2028/29 Estimate
Non-HRA	5,049	10,314	9,969	1,948	1,835
HRA	12,823	15,655	18,051	12,407	12,232
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,872</b>	<b>25,969</b>	<b>27,984</b>	<b>14,355</b>	<b>14,067</b>

### 5.1.2 Affordability Prudential Indicators

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 Authority's overall finances. The Authority is asked to approve the following indicators: -

#### Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream

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

%	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate	2027/28 Estimate	2028/29 Estimate
Non-HRA		11.64	14.80	16.87	17.25
HRA		32.17	29.09	28.99	28.02
<b>Total</b>		<b>43.81</b>	<b>43.89</b>	<b>45.86</b>	<b>45.27</b>

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

#### HRA Ratios

	2024/25 Actual	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate	2027/28 Estimate	2028/29 Estimate
HRA debt £m	50.0	51.6	58.3	60.8	63.4
HRA debt cap	70.3	74.9	84.5	89.9	95.4

### 5.1.3 Control of Interest Rate Exposure

Please see paragraphs 3.3 and 4.4.

## 5.2 INTEREST RATE FORECASTS 2025-2028

MUFG Corporate Markets Interest Rate View 11.08.25													
	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27	Jun-27	Sep-27	Dec-27	Mar-28	Jun-28	Sep-28
BANK RATE	4.00	4.00	3.75	3.75	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25
3 month ave earnings	4.00	4.00	3.80	3.80	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30
6 month ave earnings	4.00	3.90	3.70	3.70	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.30	3.30	3.40	3.40	3.40
12 month ave earnings	4.00	3.90	3.70	3.70	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.30	3.40	3.50	3.60	3.60
5 yr PWLB	4.80	4.70	4.50	4.40	4.30	4.30	4.30	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.10	4.10
10 yr PWLB	5.30	5.20	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.80	4.80	4.70	4.70	4.70	4.70	4.60	4.60
25 yr PWLB	6.10	5.90	5.70	5.70	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.40	5.40	5.30	5.30	5.30	5.20
50 yr PWLB	5.80	5.60	5.40	5.40	5.30	5.30	5.30	5.20	5.20	5.10	5.10	5.00	5.00

Please note, PWLB forecasts are based on PWLB certainty rates.

### 5.3 ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

- 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.
  - 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. 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 and 2026 is currently forecast by the Bank of England to be in the region of 1.4% before picking up in 2027.
- 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 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 the headwinds are gathering.
- With the November Budget edging nearer, the public finances position looks 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.
- 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 nine of the ten 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 October 2025 stood at 723,000 (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. The rate for the private sector slipped from 4.3% to 4.2%.
- CPI inflation remained at 3.8% in September, whilst core inflation fell to 3.5%. Services inflation stayed at 4.7%. 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 early November yields had fallen back again to a little over 4.40%.
- 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.

## 5.4 TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRACTICE (TMP1) – CREDIT AND COUNTERPARTY RISK MANAGEMENT

The MHCLG issued Investment Guidance in 2018, and this forms the structure of the Authority'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 local authorities to invest prudently, and that priority is given to security and liquidity before yield. In order to facilitate this objective, the Guidance requires this Authority 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 Head of Finance has produced its treasury management practices (TMPs). This part, TMP 1(1), covering investment counterparty policy requires approval each year.

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

- The strategy guidelines for choosing and placing investments, particularly non-specified investments.
- The principles to be used to determine the maximum periods for which funds can be committed.
- Specified investments that the Authority will use. These are high security and high liquidity investments in sterling and with a maturity of no more than a year.
- Non-specified investments, clarifying the greater risk implications, identifying the general types of investment that may be used and a limit to the overall amount of various categories that can be held at any time.

The investment policy proposed for the Authority is:

**Strategy guidelines** – The main strategy guidelines are contained in the body of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement.

**Specified investments** – These investments are sterling investments of not more than one-year maturity, or those which could be for a longer period, but where the Authority has the right to be repaid within 12 months if it wishes. They also include investments which were originally classed as being non-specified investments, but which would have been classified as specified investments apart from originally being for a period longer than 12 months once the remaining period to maturity falls to under 12 months.

These are considered low risk assets where the possibility of loss of principal or investment income is small. These would include sterling investments which would not be defined as capital expenditure with: -

- The UK Government (such as the Debt Management Account deposit facility, UK Treasury Bills or a Gilt with less than one year to maturity).
- Supranational Bonds of less than one year's duration.
- A Local Authority, Housing Association, Parish Council or Community Council.
- Pooled investment vehicles (such as Money Market Funds) that have been awarded a high credit rating by a credit rating agency e.g., Standard and Poor's, Moody's and/or Fitch rating agencies.
- A body that is considered of a high credit quality (such as a bank or building This category covers bodies with a minimum Short-Term rating of F1 (or the equivalent) as rated by Standard and Poor's, Moody's and / or Fitch rating agencies.

In accordance with the Code, the Authority has set out additional criteria to limit the time and the amount of monies which will be invested in these bodies

**Non-specified investments** – are any other type of investment (i.e., not defined as specified above). The identification and rationale supporting the selection of these other investments and the maximum limits to be applied are set out below. Non-specified investments would include any sterling investments with: -

	<b>Non-Specified Investment Category</b>	<b>Limit (£ or %)</b>
a.	<b>The Authority's own banker</b> if it fails to meet the basic credit criteria. In this instance balances will be minimised as far as is possible.	£11m
b.	<b>Building Societies not meeting the basic security requirements under the specified investments.</b> The operation of some building societies does not require a credit rating, although in every other respect the security of the society would match similarly sized societies with ratings. The Authority may use such building societies which have a minimum asset size of £0.5m, but will restrict these types of investments	£12m
c.	Any <b>Bank or Building Society</b> that has a minimum long-term credit rating of A-, for deposits with a maturity of greater than one year (including forward deals in excess of one year from inception to repayment).	11m
d.	Any <b>Non-Rated Subsidiary</b> of a credit rated institution included in the specified investment category. These institutions will be included as an investment category subject to of £5m for 6 months.	£9m

NOTE 1. This Authority will seek further advice on the appropriateness and associated risks with investments in these categories.

**The monitoring of investment counterparties** - The credit rating of counterparties will be monitored regularly. The Authority receives credit rating information (changes, rating watches and rating outlooks) from MUFG Corporate Markets 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 Head of Finance, and if required new counterparties which meet the criteria will be added to the list.



## 5.5 APPROVED COUNTRIES FOR INVESTMENTS

This list is based on those countries which have sovereign ratings of AA- or higher, (we show the lowest rating from Fitch, Moody's and S&P) 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 MUFG Corporate Markets creditworthiness service.

***Based on lowest available rating (as at 13.11.25)***

### **AAA**

- Australia
- Denmark
- Germany
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Singapore
- Sweden
- Switzerland

### **AA+**

- Canada
- U.S.A.

### **AA**

- Abu Dhabi (UAE)
- Finland
- Qatar

### **AA-**

- U.K.

### **A+**

- Belgium
- France

## **5.6 TREASURY MANAGEMENT SCHEME OF DELEGATION**

### **(i) 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.

### **(ii) Finance & Performance Committee**

- approval of division of responsibilities.
- receiving and reviewing regular monitoring reports and acting on recommendations.
- reviewing the treasury management policy and procedures and making recommendations to Council .

### **(iii) SLT/ Head of Finance**

- reviewing the treasury management policy and procedures and making recommendations to the responsible body.

## 5.7 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.