

Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2020/21

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Treasury management is the management of the Council's cash flows, borrowing and investments, and the associated risks. The Council has borrowed and invested substantial sums of money and is therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of financial risk are therefore central to the Council's prudent financial management.
- 1.2 Treasury risk management at the Council is conducted within the framework of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's *Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2017 Edition* (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Council to approve a treasury management strategy before the start of each financial year. In addition, the Welsh Government (WG) issued revised Guidance on Local Authority Investments in November 2019 that requires the Council to approve an investment strategy before the start of each financial year. This report fulfils the Council's legal obligation under the *Local Government Act 2003* to have regard to both the CIPFA Code and the WG Guidance.
- 1.3 In accordance with the WG Guidance, the Council will be asked to approve a revised Treasury Management Strategy Statement should the assumptions on which this report is based change significantly. Such circumstances would include, for example, a large unexpected change in interest rates, change in the Council's capital programme or in the level of its investment balance, or a material loss in the fair value of a non-financial investment identified as part of the year end accounts preparation and audit process.

2. External Context

2.1 Economic background

The UK's progress negotiating its exit from the European Union, together with its future trading arrangements, will continue to be a major influence on the Council's treasury management strategy for 2020/21.

UK Consumer Price Inflation (CPI) for September registered 1.7% year on year, unchanged from the previous month. Core inflation, which excludes the more volatile components, rose to 1.7% from 1.5% in August. The most recent labour market data for the three months to August 2019 showed the unemployment rate increased to 3.9% while the employment rate was 75.9%, just below recent record-

breaking highs. The headline 3-month average annual growth rate for pay was 3.8% in August as wages continue to rise steadily. In real terms, after adjusting for inflation, pay growth increased 1.9%.

GDP growth rose by 0.3% in the third quarter of 2019 from -0.2% in the previous three months with the annual rate falling further below its trend rate to 1.0% from 1.2%. Services and construction added positively to growth, by 0.6% and 0.4% respectively, while production was flat and agriculture recorded a fall of 0.2%. Looking ahead, the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Report (formerly the Quarterly Inflation Report) forecasts economic growth to pick up during 2020 as Brexit-related uncertainties dissipate and provide a boost to business investment helping GDP reach 1.6% in Q4 2020, 1.8% in Q4 2021 and 2.1% in Q4 2022.

The Bank of England maintained Bank Rate to 0.75% in November following a 7-2 vote by the Monetary Policy Committee. Despite keeping rates on hold, MPC members did confirm that if Brexit uncertainty drags on or global growth fails to recover, they are prepared to cut interest rates as required. Moreover, the downward revisions to some of the growth projections in the Monetary Policy Report suggest the Committee may now be less convinced of the need to increase rates even if there is a Brexit deal.

Growth in Europe remains soft, driven by a weakening German economy which saw GDP fall -0.1% in Q2 and is expected to slip into a technical recession in Q3. Euro zone inflation was 0.8% year on year in September, well below the European Central Bank's target of 'below, but close to 2%' and leading to the central bank holding its main interest rate at 0% while cutting the deposit facility rate to -0.5%. In addition to maintaining interest rates at ultra-low levels, the ECB announced it would recommence its quantitative easing programme from November.

In the US, the Federal Reserve began easing monetary policy again in 2019 as a pre-emptive strike against slowing global and US economic growth on the back on of the ongoing trade war with China. At its last meeting the Fed cut rates to the range of 1.50-1.75% and financial markets expect further loosening of monetary policy in 2020. US GDP growth slowed to 1.9% annualised in Q3 from 2.0% in Q2.

2.2 Credit outlook

Credit conditions for larger UK banks have remained relatively benign over the past year. The UK's departure from the European Union was delayed three times in 2019 and while there remains some concern over a global economic slowdown, this has yet to manifest in any credit issues for banks. Meanwhile, the post financial crisis banking reform is now largely complete, with the new ringfenced banks embedded in the market.

Challenger banks hit the news headlines in 2019 with Metro Bank and TSB Bank both suffering adverse publicity and falling customer numbers.

Looking forward, the potential for a "no-deal" Brexit and/or a global recession remain the major risks facing banks and building societies in 2020/21 and a cautious approach to bank deposits remains advisable.

2.3 Interest rate forecast

The Council's treasury management adviser Arlingclose is forecasting that Bank Rate will remain at 0.75% until the end of 2022. The risks to this forecast are deemed to be significantly weighted to the downside, particularly given the upcoming general election, the need for greater clarity on Brexit and the continuing global economic slowdown. The Bank of England, having previously indicated interest rates may need to rise if a Brexit agreement was reached, stated in its November Monetary Policy Report and its Bank Rate decision (7-2 vote to hold rates) that the MPC now believe this is less likely even in the event of a deal.

Gilt yields have risen but remain at low levels and only some very modest upward movement from current levels are expected based on Arlingclose's interest rate projections. The central case is for 10-year and 20-year gilt yields to rise to around 1.00% and 1.40% respectively over the time horizon, with broadly balanced risks to both the upside and downside. However, short-term volatility arising from both economic and political events over the period is a near certainty.

A more detailed economic and interest rate forecast provided by Arlingclose is attached at **Appendix 1**.

2.4 For the purpose of setting the budget, it has been assumed that new treasury management investments will be made at an average rate of 2.00%, and that the Council will not need any new long-term loans in 2020/21.

3. Local Context

3.1 On 31st December 2019, the Council held £104m of borrowing and £44m of investments. This is set out in further detail at **Appendix 2**. Forecast changes in these sums are shown in the balance sheet analysis in table 1 below.

Table 1: Balance sheet summary and forecast

	31.3.19 Actual £m	31.3.20 Forecast £m	31.3.21 Budget £m	31.3.22 Budget £m	31.3.23 Budget £m
CFR	177.8	176.7	180.7	178.9	174.6
Less: Other debt liabilities *	(3.2)	(2.9)	(7.0)	(6.1)	(5.2)
Loans CFR	174.6	173.8	173.7	172.8	169.4
Less: External borrowing **	(106.4)	(104.2)	(103.1)	(101.8)	(100.5)
Internal borrowing	68.2	69.6	70.6	71.0	68.9
Less: Usable reserves	(73.0)	(70.2)	(60.0)	(55.4)	(51.3)
Less: Working capital	(29.4)	(29.4)	(29.4)	(29.4)	(29.4)
Investments	(34.2)	(30.0)	(18.8)	(13.8)	(11.8)

*PFI liabilities

**shows only loans to which the Council is committed and excludes optional refinancing

3.2 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 Council's current strategy is to maintain borrowing and investments below their underlying levels, sometimes known as internal borrowing.

3.3 Table 1 shows that the Council will need to borrow during the next three years. If this is the case, short term borrowing will be used to reduce the interest rate.

3.4 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. Table 1 shows that the Council expects to comply with this recommendation during 2020/21.

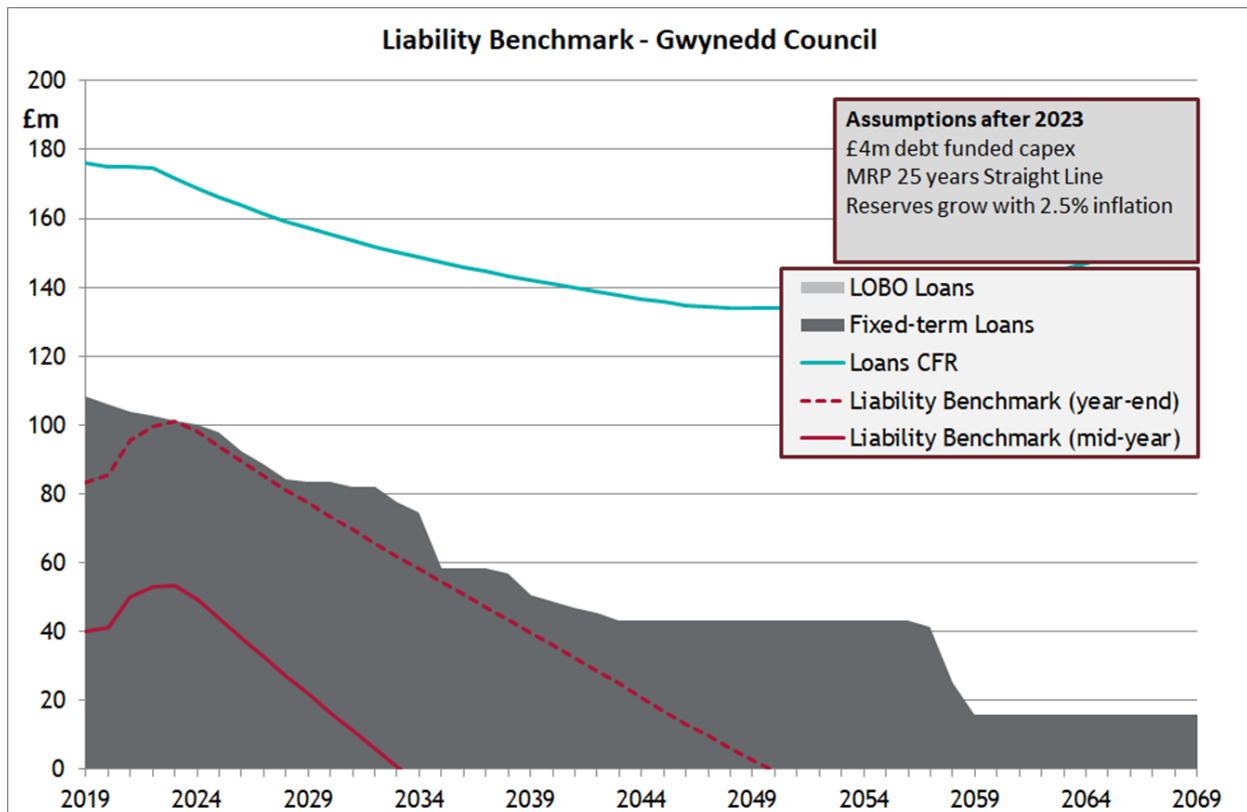
4. Liability benchmark

- 4.1 To compare the Council's actual borrowing against an alternative strategy, a liability benchmark has been calculated showing the lowest risk level of borrowing. This assumes the same forecasts as table 1 above, but that cash and investment balances are kept to a minimum level of £20m at each year-end to maintain sufficient liquidity but minimise credit risk.

Table 2: Liability Benchmark

	31.3.19 Actual £m	31.3.20 Forecast £m	31.3.21 Budget £m	31.3.22 Budget £m	31.3.23 Budget £m
CFR	177.8	176.7	180.7	178.9	174.6
Less: Usable reserves	(73.0)	(70.2)	(60.0)	(55.4)	(51.3)
Less: Working capital	(29.4)	(29.4)	(29.4)	(29.4)	(29.4)
Plus: Minimum investments	34.2	30.0	18.8	13.8	11.8
Liability Benchmark	109.6	107.1	110.1	107.9	105.7

- 4.2 Following on from the medium-term forecasts in table 2 above, the long-term liability benchmark assumes capital expenditure funded by borrowing of £4m a year, minimum revenue provision on new capital expenditure based on a 25 year asset life and income, expenditure and reserves all increasing by inflation of 2.5% a year. This is shown in the following chart:



The chart shows that borrowing is much lower than the CFR and that the Council has funds to invest. On the assumptions noted above this is likely to continue to be the position in the long term.

5. Borrowing Strategy

5.1 The Council currently holds £104 million of loans as part of its strategy for funding previous years' capital programmes. The balance sheet forecast in table 1 shows that the Council does not expect to need to borrow long term in 2020/21 but may need to borrow short term for cash flow reasons. The Council may also borrow additional sums to pre-fund future years' requirements, providing this does not exceed the authorised limit for borrowing of £200 million.

5.2 Objectives

The Council's main 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.

5.3 Strategy

Given the significant cuts to public expenditure and in particular to local government funding, the Council's borrowing strategy continues to address the key issue of affordability without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio. With short-term interest rates currently much lower than long-term rates, it is likely to be more cost effective in the short-term to either use internal resources, or to borrow short-term loans instead.

By doing so, the Council is able to reduce net borrowing costs (despite foregone investment income) and reduce overall treasury risk. The benefits of internal and/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. Arlingclose 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 2020/21 with a view to keeping future interest costs low, even if this causes additional cost in the short-term.

The Council has previously raised the majority of its long-term borrowing from the PWLB but the government increased PWLB rates by 1% in October 2019 making it now a relatively expensive option. The Council will now look to borrow any long-term loans from other sources including banks, pensions and local authorities, and will investigate the possibility of issuing bonds and similar instruments, in order to lower interest costs and reduce over-reliance on one source of funding in line with the CIPFA Code.

Alternatively, the Council may arrange forward starting loans during 2020/21, 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 further short-term loans to cover unplanned cash flow shortages.

5.4 Sources of borrowing

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

- Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) and any successor body
- 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 (except Gwynedd Pension Fund)
- Capital market investors
- UK Municipal Bonds Agency plc and other special purpose companies created to enable local authority bond issues

5.5 Other sources of debt finance

In addition, capital finance may be raised by the following methods that are not borrowing, but may be classed as other debt liabilities:

- Leasing
- Hire purchase
- Private Finance Initiative
- Sale and leaseback

The Council has previously raised the majority of its long-term borrowing from the PWLB but it continues to investigate other sources of finance, such as local authority loans and bank loans that may be available at more favourable rates.

Municipal Bonds Agency: UK Municipal Bonds Agency plc was established in 2014 by the Local Government Association as an alternative to the PWLB. It plans to issue bonds on the capital markets and lend the proceeds to local authorities. This will be a more complicated source of finance than the PWLB for two reasons: borrowing authorities will be required to provide bond investors with a guarantee to refund their investment in the event that the agency is unable to for any reason; and there will be a lead time of several months between committing to borrow and knowing the interest rate payable. Any decision to borrow from the Agency will therefore be the subject of a separate report to full Council.

5.6 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 below.

5.7 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. The Council may take advantage of this and replace some loans with new loans, or repay loans without replacement, where this is expected to lead to an overall cost saving or a reduction in risk.

6. Treasury Investment Strategy

- 6.1** The Council holds invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves held. In the past 12 months, the Council's investment balance has ranged between £30.9 and £71.2 million, and similar levels are expected to be maintained in the forthcoming year.

This includes the cash balances of Gwynedd Pension Fund which are pooled with the Council's funds for investment purposes. The Pension Fund requests this annually as the returns received are improved and the risks reduced by combining the cash with the Council's funds. The Pensions Committee will approve the relevant elements of this Strategy Statement and request the continuation of the pooling arrangements for 2020/21 at its meeting on 12 March 2020.

Loans to organisation providing local public services and purchases of investment property are not normally considered to be treasury investments, and therefore these are covered separately in Appendix 3.

6.2 Objectives

Both the CIPFA Code and the WG Guidance require the Council to invest its treasury 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.

6.3 Negative interest rates

If the UK enters into a recession in 2020/21, there is a small chance that the Bank of England could set its Bank Rate at or below zero, which is likely to feed through to negative interest rates on all low risk, short-term investment options. This situation already exists in many other European countries. In this event, security will be measured as receiving the contractually agreed amount at maturity, even though this may be less than the amount originally invested.

6.4 Strategy

Given the increasing risk and very low returns from short-term unsecured bank investments, the Council aims to further diversify into more secure and/or higher yielding asset classes during 2020/21. This is especially the case for the estimated £10m that is available for longer-term investment. The majority of the Council's surplus cash is currently invested in short-term unsecured bank deposits, certificates of deposit and money market funds. This diversification will represent a continuation of the strategy adopted in 2015/16.

6.5 Business models

Under the new IFRS 9 standard, the accounting for certain investments depends on the Council's "business model" for managing them. The Council aims to achieve value from its internally managed treasury investments by a business model of collecting the contractual cash flows and therefore, where other criteria are also met, these investments will continue to be accounted for at amortised cost.

6.6 Approved counterparties

The Council may invest its surplus funds with any of the counterparty types in table 3 below, subject to the cash limits (per counterparty) and the time limits shown.

Table 3: Approved investment counterparties and limits

Credit rating	Banks unsecured	Banks secured	Government	Corporates	Registered Providers
UK Govt	n/a	n/a	£ Unlimited 50 years	n/a	n/a
AAA	5% / £4m 5 years	10% / £8m 20 years	10% / £8m 50 years	5% / £4m 20 years	5% / £4m 20 years
AA+	5% / £4m 5 years	10% / £8m 10 years	10% / £8m 25 years	5% / £4m 10 years	5% / £4m 10 years
AA	5% / £4m 4 years	10% / £8m 5 years	10% / £8m 15 years	5% / £4m 5 years	5% / £4m 10 years
AA-	5% / £4m 3 years	10% / £8m 4 years	10% / £8m 10 years	5% / £4m 4 years	5% / £4m 10 years
A+	5% / £4m 2 years	10% / £8m 3 years	5% / £4m 5 years	5% / £4m 3 years	5% / £4m 5 years
A	5% / £4m 13 months	10% / £8m 2 years	5% / £4m 5 years	5% / £4m 2 years	5% / £4m 5 years
A-	5% / £4m 6 months	10% / £8m 13 months	5% / £4m 5 years	5% / £4m 13 months	5% / £4m 5 years
None	£1m 6 months	n/a	10% / £8m 25 years	£0.5m 5 years	5% / £4m 5 years
Pooled funds and real estate investment trusts	10% / £8m per fund or trust				

This table must be read in conjunction with the notes below.

6.7 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 taken into account.

6.8 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.

6.9 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.

6.10 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.

6.11 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 either following an external credit assessment or to a maximum of £1 million per company as part of a diversified pool in order to spread the risk widely.

6.12 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.

6.13 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.

6.14 Operational bank accounts

The Council may incur operational exposures, for example through current accounts, collection accounts and merchant acquiring services, to any UK bank with credit ratings no lower than BBB- and with assets greater than £25 billion. 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 £900,000 per bank. 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.

6.15 Risk assessment and credit ratings

Credit ratings are obtained and monitored by the Council's treasury advisers, who will notify changes in ratings as they occur. Where an entity has its credit rating downgraded so that it fails to meet the approved investment criteria then:

- no new investments will be made,
- any existing investments that can be recalled or sold at no cost will be, and
- full consideration will be given to the recall or sale of all other existing investments with the affected counterparty.

Where a credit rating agency announces that a credit rating is on review for possible downgrade (also known as “rating watch negative” or “credit watch negative”) so that it may fall below the approved rating criteria, then only investments that can be withdrawn on the next working day will be made with that organisation until the outcome of the review is announced. This policy will not apply to negative outlooks, which indicate a long-term direction of travel rather than an imminent change of rating.

6.16 Other information on the security of investments

The Council understands that credit ratings are good, but not perfect, predictors of investment default. Full regard will therefore be given to other available information on the credit quality of the organisations in which it invests, including credit default swap prices, financial statements, information on potential government support, reports in the quality financial press and analysis and advice from the Council’s treasury management adviser. No investments will be made with an organisation if there are substantive doubts about its credit quality, even though it may otherwise meet the above criteria.

When deteriorating financial market conditions affect the creditworthiness of all organisations, as happened in 2008 and 2011, this is not generally reflected in credit ratings, but can be seen in other market measures. In these circumstances, the Council will restrict its investments to those organisations of higher credit quality and reduce the maximum duration of its investments to maintain the required level of security. The extent of these restrictions will be in line with prevailing financial market conditions. If these restrictions mean that insufficient commercial organisations of high credit quality are available to invest the Council’s cash balances, then the surplus will be deposited with the UK Government via the Debt Management Office or invested in government treasury bills for example, or with other local authorities. This will cause a reduction in the level of investment income earned, but will protect the principal sum invested.

6.17 Investment limits

The Council's revenue reserves available to cover investment losses are forecast to be £50 million on 31st March 2020. In order that no more than 16% of available reserves will be 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 £8 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.

Table 4: Investment limits

	Cash limit
Any single organisation, except the UK Central Government	£8m each
UK Central Government	unlimited
Any group of organisations under the same ownership	£8m per group
Any group of pooled funds under the same management	£20m per manager
Negotiable instruments held in a broker's nominee account	£40m per broker
Foreign countries	£8m per country
Registered providers and registered social landlords	£20m in total
Unsecured investments with building societies	£8m in total
Loans to unrated corporates	£8m in total
Money market funds	£40m in total
Real estate investment trusts	£20m in total

6.18 Liquidity management

The Council uses prudent cash flow forecasting techniques to determine the maximum period for which funds may prudently be committed. The forecast is compiled on the basis that short-term borrowing is used to cover its financial commitments if required. Limits on long-term investments are set by reference to the Council's medium-term financial plan and cash flow forecast.

7. Treasury Management Indicators

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

7.1 Security

The Council has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to credit risk by monitoring the value-weighted average credit score 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 score	6.0

7.2 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 rolling three month period, without additional borrowing.

Liquidity risk indicator	Target
Total cash available within 3 months	£10m

7.3 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	£324,000
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>fall</u> in interest rates	£23,000

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

7.4 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 borrowing will be:

Refinancing rate risk indicator	Upper limit	Lower limit
Under 12 months	25%	0%
12 months and within 24 months	25%	0%
24 months and within 5 years	50%	0%
5 years and within 10 years	75%	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.

7.5 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	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Limit on principal invested beyond year end	£20m	£20m	£20m

8. Related Matters

8.1 The CIPFA Code requires the Council to include the following in its Treasury Management Strategy.

8.2 Financial Derivatives

In the absence of any explicit legal power to do so, the Council will not use standalone financial derivatives (such as swaps, forwards, futures and options). Derivatives embedded into loans and investments, including pooled funds and forward starting transactions, may be used, and the risks that they present will be managed in line with the overall treasury risk management strategy.

8.3 Markets in Financial Instruments Directive

The Council has opted up to professional client status with its providers of financial services, including advisers, banks, brokers and fund managers, allowing it access to a greater range of services but without the greater regulatory protections afforded to individuals and small companies. Given the size and range of the Council's treasury management activities, the Head of Finance believes this to be the most appropriate status.

9. Welsh Government Guidance

Further matter required by the Welsh Government Guidance are included in Appendix 3.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1** The budget for investment income in 2020/21 is £0.6 million based on an average investment portfolio of £30 million at an interest rate of 2.0%. The budget for debt interest paid in 2020/21 is £5.8 million, based on an average debt portfolio of £104.2 million at an average interest rate of 5.54%. If actual levels of investments and borrowing, or actual interest rates, differ from those forecast, performance against budget will be correspondingly different.

11. Other Options Considered

11.1 The WG Guidance and the CIPFA Code do not prescribe any particular treasury management strategy for local authorities to adopt. The Head of Finance, having consulted the Cabinet Member for Finance, believes that the above strategy represents an appropriate balance between risk management and cost effectiveness. Some alternative strategies, with their financial and risk management implications, are listed below.

Alternative	Impact on income and expenditure	Impact on risk management
Invest in a narrower range of counterparties and/or for shorter times	Interest income will be lower	Lower chance of losses from credit related defaults, but any such losses may be greater
Invest in a wider range of counterparties and/or for longer times	Interest income will be higher	Increased risk of losses from credit related defaults, but any such losses may be smaller
Borrow additional sums at long-term fixed interest rates	Debt interest costs will rise; this is unlikely to be offset by higher investment income	Higher investment balance leading to a higher impact in the event of a default; however long-term interest costs may be more certain
Borrow short-term or variable loans instead of long-term fixed rates	Debt interest costs will initially be lower	Increases in debt interest costs will be broadly offset by rising investment income in the medium term, but long-term costs may be less certain
Reduce level of borrowing	Saving on debt interest is likely to exceed lost investment income	Reduced investment balance leading to a lower impact in the event of a default; however long-term interest costs may be less certain

Appendix 1 – Arlingclose Economic & Interest Rate Forecast November 2019

Underlying assumptions:

- The global economy is entering a period of slower growth in response to political issues, primarily the trade policy stance of the US. The UK economy has displayed a marked slowdown in growth due to both Brexit uncertainty and the downturn in global activity. In response, global and UK interest rate expectations have eased.
- Some positivity on the trade negotiations between China and the US has prompted worst case economic scenarios to be pared back. However, information is limited, and upbeat expectations have been wrong before.
- Brexit has been delayed until 31 January 2020. While the General Election has maintained economic and political uncertainty, the opinion polls suggest the Conservative position in parliament may be strengthened, which reduces the chance of Brexit being further frustrated. A key concern is the limited transitional period following a January 2020 exit date, which will maintain and create additional uncertainty over the next few years.
- UK economic growth has stalled despite Q3 2019 GDP of 0.3%. Monthly figures indicate growth waned as the quarter progressed and survey data suggest falling household and business confidence. Both main political parties have promised substantial fiscal easing, which should help support growth.
- While the potential for divergent paths for UK monetary policy remain in the event of the General Election result, the weaker external environment severely limits potential upside movement in Bank Rate, while the slowing UK economy will place pressure on the MPC to loosen monetary policy. Indeed, two MPC members voted for an immediate cut in November 2019.
- Inflation is running below target at 1.7%. While the tight labour market risks medium-term domestically-driven inflationary pressure, slower global growth should reduce the prospect of externally driven pressure, although political turmoil could push up oil prices.
- Central bank actions and geopolitical risks will continue to produce significant volatility in financial markets, including bond markets.

Forecast:

- Although we have maintained our Bank Rate forecast at 0.75% for the foreseeable future, there are substantial risks to this forecast, dependant on General Election outcomes and the evolution of the global economy.
- Arlingclose judges that the risks are weighted to the downside.
- Gilt yields have risen but remain low due to the soft UK and global economic outlooks. US monetary policy and UK government spending will be key influences alongside UK monetary policy.
- We expect gilt yields to remain at relatively low levels for the foreseeable future and judge the risks to be broadly balanced.

	Dec-19	Mar-20	Jun-20	Sep-20	Dec-20	Mar-21	Jun-21	Sep-21	Dec-21	Mar-22	Jun-22	Sep-22	Dec-22	Average
Official Bank Rate														
Upside risk	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.21
Arlingclose Central Case	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75
Downside risk	-0.50	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.73
3-month money market rate														
Upside risk	0.10	0.10	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.25
Arlingclose Central Case	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75
Downside risk	-0.50	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.73
1yr money market rate														
Upside risk	0.10	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.25	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.23
Arlingclose Central Case	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85
Downside risk	-0.30	-0.50	-0.55	-0.65	-0.65	-0.65	-0.65	-0.65	-0.65	-0.65	-0.65	-0.65	-0.65	-0.60
5yr gilt yield														
Upside risk	0.30	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.40	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.37
Arlingclose Central Case	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.55	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.57
Downside risk	-0.35	-0.50	-0.50	-0.55	-0.60	-0.60	-0.60	-0.60	-0.60	-0.60	-0.60	-0.60	-0.60	-0.56
10yr gilt yield														
Upside risk	0.30	0.30	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.40	0.40	0.45	0.45	0.37
Arlingclose Central Case	0.75	0.75	0.80	0.80	0.85	0.85	0.90	0.90	0.95	0.95	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.88
Downside risk	-0.40	-0.40	-0.40	-0.40	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.45
20yr gilt yield														
Upside risk	0.30	0.30	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.40	0.40	0.45	0.45	0.37
Arlingclose Central Case	1.20	1.20	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.35	1.35	1.35	1.40	1.40	1.30
Downside risk	-0.40	-0.40	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.50	-0.50	-0.45
50yr gilt yield														
Upside risk	0.30	0.30	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.40	0.40	0.45	0.45	0.37
Arlingclose Central Case	1.20	1.20	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.35	1.35	1.35	1.40	1.40	1.30
Downside risk	-0.40	-0.40	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.50	-0.50	-0.45

PWLB Certainty Rate (Maturity Loans) = Gilt yield + 1.80%

PWLB Local Infrastructure Rate (Maturity Loans) = Gilt yield + 0.60%

Appendix 2- Existing Investment & Debt Portfolio Position

	31.12.2019 Actual Portfolio £m	31.12.2019 Average Rate %
External Borrowing:		
Public Works Loan Board	88.2	5.91
Other loans	16.2	4.22
Total external borrowing	104.4	5.65
Other long- term liabilities:		
Leases	1.7	0.0
Total other long-term liabilities	1.7	0.0
Total gross external debt	106.1	5.65
Treasury investments:		
Banks and Building societies (unsecured)	7.3	0.77
Government (incl. Local authorities)	5.5	0.82
Money Market Fund	21.5	0.72
Pooled funds	10.0	3.46
Total treasure investments	44.3	1.36
Net debt	61.8	

Appendix 3 – Additional requirements of Welsh Government Investment Guidance

The Welsh Government (WG) published revised Investment Guidance in November 2019 which places additional reporting requirements upon local authorities that are not integral to this Council's treasury management processes. The guidance also covers investments that are not part of treasury management, for example investment property and loans to local organisations.

Contribution: The Council's investments contribute to its service delivery objectives and/or to promote wellbeing as follows:

- treasury management investments support effective treasury management activities,
- loans to local organisations provide financial support to those organisations to enable them to deliver local public services that would otherwise be provided directly by the Council, and
- investment property provides a net financial surplus that is reinvested into local public services.

Climate change: The Council's investment decisions consider long-term climate risks to support a low carbon economy to the extent that if a low carbon investment equivalent is available with the same return, then the low carbon investment would be preferred by the Council.

Specified investments: The WG Guidance defines specified investments as those:

- denominated in pound sterling,
- due to be repaid within 12 months of arrangement unless the counterparty is a local authority,
- not defined as capital expenditure by legislation, and
- invested with one of:
 - the UK Government,
 - a UK local authority, parish council or community council, or
 - a body or investment scheme of "high credit quality".

The Council defines "high credit quality" organisations and securities as those having a credit rating of A- or higher that are domiciled in the UK or a foreign country with a sovereign rating of AA+ or higher. For money market funds and other pooled funds "high credit quality" is defined as those having a credit rating of A- or higher.

Loans: The WG Guidance defines a loan as a written or oral agreement where the Council temporarily transfers cash to a third party, joint venture, subsidiary or associate who agrees a return according to the terms and conditions of receiving the loan, except where the third party is another local authority.

The Council can demonstrate that its financial exposure to loans to local enterprises, local charities, wholly owned companies and joint ventures is proportionate by setting the limits in table 3a. These ensure that the total exposure is no more than 20% of the Council's usable reserves. The Council's loan book is currently within these self-assessed limits.

Table 3a: Loan limits

Borrower	Cash limit
Local enterprises and local charities	£3m
Wholly owned companies and joint ventures	£3m
Car and bike loans to employees	£3m
Treasury management investments meeting the definition of a loan	Unlimited

The Council uses an allowed 'expected credit loss' model for loans and receivables as set out in International Financial Reporting Standard 9: Financial Instruments as adopted by proper practices to measure the credit risk of its loan portfolio. Appropriate consideration is given to state aid rules and competition law. The Council has appropriate credit control arrangements to recover overdue repayments in place.

Non-specified investments: Any financial investment not meeting the definition of a specified investment or a loan is classed as non-specified. Given the wide definition of a loan, this category only applies to units in pooled funds and shares in companies. Limits on non-specified investments are shown in table 3b; the Council confirms that its current non-specified investments remain within these limits.

Table 3b: Non-specified investment limits

	Cash limit
Units in pooled funds without credit ratings or rated below A-	£20m
Shares in real estate investment trusts	£10m
Total non-specified investments	£30m

Non-financial investments: This category covers non-financial assets held primarily or partially to generate a profit, primarily investment property. Security is determined by comparing each asset's purchase price to its fair value using the model in International Accounting Standard 40: Investment Property as adapted by proper practices. On an assessment as at 31st March 2019, the Council consider that the scale of its non-financial investments as not significant.

Liquidity: For financial investments that are not treasury management investments, or loans, the Council has procedures in place to ensure that the funds are prudently committed for a maximum period of time. Isio mwy fan hyn.

Investment advisers: The Council has appointed Arlingclose Limited as treasury management advisers and receives specific advice on investment, debt and capital finance issues. The quality of this service is monitored by the Head of Finance and the Investment Manager on a regular basis.

Borrow in advance of need: The Council may, from time to time, borrow in advance of need, where this is expected to provide the best long-term value for money. Since amounts borrowed will be invested until spent, the Council is aware that it will be exposed to the risk of loss of the borrowed sums, and the risk that investment and borrowing interest rates may change in the intervening period. These risks will be managed as part of the Council's overall management of its treasury risks.

The total amount borrowed will not exceed the authorised borrowing limit of £200 million. The maximum period between borrowing and expenditure is expected to be two years, although the Council is not required to link particular loans with particular items of expenditure.

Commercial deals: In the event of a commercial deal, the individuals making the deal are aware of the core principles of the prudential framework and of the regulatory regime within which the Council operates.

Capacity, skills and corporate governance: Elected members and officers were invited to a presentation by Arlingclose on 15th January 2020. The information and discussion at the presentation ensures that the members have the appropriate skills and information to enable them to:

- Take informed decisions as to whether to enter into a specific investment.
- To assess individual assessments in the context of the strategic objectives and risk profile of the Council
- Understand how the quantum of these decisions have changed the overall risk exposure of the local authority

Officers also regularly attend training courses, seminars and conferences provided by Arlingclose and CIPFA. Relevant staff are also encouraged to study professional qualifications from CIPFA, ACA and other appropriate organisations.