

East Cambridgeshire District Council



Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy

Mid-Year Review Report 2017-18

1 Background

The Council operates a balanced budget, which broadly means cash raised during the year will meet its cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operations ensure this cash flow is adequately planned, with surplus monies being invested in low risk counterparties, providing adequate liquidity initially before considering optimising investment return.

The second main purpose of the treasury management function is providing funding of the Council's capital plans. These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing needs of the Council, essentially the longer term cash flow planning to ensure the Council can meet its capital spending operations. This management of longer term cash may involve arranging long or short term loans, or using longer term cash flow surpluses to generate interest receipts.

Accordingly, treasury management is defined as:

"The management of the local authority's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks."

2 Introduction

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management (revised 2011) was adopted by the Council.

The primary requirements of the Code are as follows:

1. Creation and maintenance of a Treasury Management Policy Statement which sets out the policies and objectives of the Council's treasury management activities.
2. Creation and maintenance of Treasury Management Practices which set out the manner in which the Council will seek to achieve those policies and objectives.
3. Receipt by the full council of an annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement - including the Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy - for the year ahead, a Mid-year Review Report and an Annual Report (stewardship report) covering activities during the previous year.
4. Delegation by the Council of responsibilities for implementing and monitoring treasury management policies and practices and for the execution and administration of treasury management decisions.
5. Delegation by the Council of the role of scrutiny of treasury management strategy and policies to a specific named body. For this Council the delegated body is Finance and Governance Committee.

This mid-year report has been prepared in compliance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management, and covers the following:

- An economic update for the first part of the 2017/18 financial year;
 - A review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy;
 - The Council's capital expenditure (prudential indicators);
 - A review of the Council's investment portfolio for 2017/18;
 - A review of the Council's borrowing strategy for 2017/18;
 - A review of compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits for 2017/18.
-

3 Economics and interest rates

3.1 Economics update

UK. After the UK economy surprised on the upside with strong growth in 2016, growth in 2017 has been disappointingly weak; quarter 1 came in at only +0.3% (+1.7% y/y) and quarter 2 was +0.3% (+1.5% y/y) which meant that growth in the first half of 2017 was the slowest for the first half of any year since 2012. The main reason for this has been the sharp increase in inflation, caused by the devaluation of sterling after the referendum, feeding increases in the cost of imports into the economy. This has caused, in turn, a reduction in consumer disposable income and spending power and so the services sector of the economy, accounting for around 75% of GDP, has seen weak growth as consumers cut back on their expenditure. However, more recently there have been encouraging statistics from the manufacturing sector which is seeing strong growth, particularly as a result of increased demand for exports. It has helped that growth in the EU, our main trading partner, has improved significantly over the last year. However, this sector only accounts for around 11% of GDP so expansion in this sector will have a much more muted effect on the average total GDP growth figure for the UK economy as a whole.

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting of 14 September 2017 surprised markets and forecasters by suddenly switching to a much more aggressive tone in terms of its words around warning that Bank Rate will need to rise. The Bank of England Inflation Reports during 2017 have clearly flagged up that they expected CPI inflation to peak at just under 3% in 2017, before falling back to near to its target rate of 2% in two years time. Inflation actually came in at 2.9% in August, (this data was released on 12 September), and so the Bank revised its forecast for the peak to over 3% at the 14 September meeting MPC. This marginal revision can hardly justify why the MPC became so aggressive with its wording; rather, the focus was on an emerging view that with unemployment falling to only 4.3%, the lowest level since 1975, and improvements in productivity being so weak, that the amount of spare capacity in the economy was significantly diminishing towards a point at which they now needed to take action. In addition, the MPC took a more tolerant view of low wage inflation as this now looks like a common factor in nearly all western economies as a result of increasing globalisation. This effectively means that the UK labour faces competition from overseas labour e.g. in outsourcing work to third world countries, and this therefore depresses the negotiating power of UK labour. However, the Bank was also concerned that the withdrawal of the UK from the EU would effectively lead to a decrease in such globalisation pressures in the UK, and so would be inflationary over the next few years.

It therefore looks very likely that the MPC will increase Bank Rate to 0.5% in November or, if not, in February 2018. The big question after that will be whether this will be a one off increase or the start of a slow, but regular, increase in Bank Rate. As at the start of October, short sterling rates are indicating that financial markets do not expect a second increase until May 2018 with a third increase in November 2019. However, some forecasters are flagging up that they expect growth to improve significantly in 2017 and into 2018, as the fall in inflation will bring to an end the negative impact on consumer spending power while a strong export performance will compensate for weak services sector growth. If this scenario were to materialise, then the MPC would have added reason to embark on a series of slow but gradual increases in Bank Rate during 2018. While there is so much uncertainty around the Brexit negotiations, consumer confidence, and business confidence to spend on investing, it is far too early to be confident about how the next two years will pan out.

EU. Economic growth in the EU, (the UK's biggest trading partner), has been lack lustre for several years after the financial crisis despite the ECB eventually cutting its main rate to -0.4% and embarking on a massive programme of QE. However, growth picked up in 2016 and now looks to have gathered ongoing substantial strength and momentum thanks to this stimulus. GDP growth was 0.5% in quarter 1 (2.0% y/y) and 0.6% in quarter 2 (2.3% y/y). However, despite providing massive monetary stimulus, the

European Central Bank is still struggling to get inflation up to its 2% target and in August inflation was 1.5%. It is therefore unlikely to start on an upswing in rates until possibly 2019.

USA. Growth in the American economy has been volatile in 2015 and 2016. 2017 is following that path again with quarter 1 coming in at only 1.2% but quarter 2 rebounding to 3.1%, resulting in an overall annualised figure of 2.1% for the first half year. Unemployment in the US has also fallen to the lowest level for many years, reaching 4.4%, while wage inflation pressures, and inflationary pressures in general, have been building. The Fed has started on a gradual upswing in rates with three increases since December 2016; and there could be one more rate rise in 2017 which would then lift the central rate to 1.25 – 1.50%. There could then be another four more increases in 2018. At its June meeting, the Fed strongly hinted that it would soon begin to unwind its \$4.5 trillion balance sheet holdings of bonds and mortgage backed securities by reducing its reinvestment of maturing holdings.

Chinese economic growth has been weakening over successive years, despite repeated rounds of central bank stimulus; medium term risks are increasing. Major progress still needs to be made to eliminate excess industrial capacity and the stock of unsold property, and to address the level of non-performing loans in the banking and credit systems.

Japan is struggling to stimulate consistent significant growth and to get inflation up to its target of 2%, despite huge monetary and fiscal stimulus. It is also making little progress on fundamental reform of the economy.

3.2 Interest rate forecasts

The Council's treasury advisor, Capita Asset Services, has provided the following forecast:

	Dec-17	Mar-18	Jun-18	Sep-18	Dec-18	Mar-19	Jun-19	Sep-19	Dec-19	Mar-20
Bank rate	0.25%	0.25%	0.25%	0.25%	0.25%	0.25%	0.50%	0.50%	0.75%	0.75%
5yr PWLB rate	1.50%	1.60%	1.70%	1.70%	1.80%	1.80%	1.90%	1.90%	2.00%	2.00%
10yr PWLB rate	2.20%	2.30%	2.30%	2.40%	2.40%	2.50%	2.50%	2.60%	2.60%	2.70%
25yr PWLB rate	2.90%	2.90%	3.00%	3.00%	3.10%	3.10%	3.20%	3.20%	3.30%	3.30%
50yr PWLB rate	2.70%	2.70%	2.80%	2.80%	2.90%	2.90%	3.00%	3.00%	3.10%	3.10%

Capita Asset Services undertook its last review of interest rate forecasts on 9 August after the quarterly Bank of England Inflation Report. There was no change in MPC policy at that meeting. However, the MPC meeting of 14 September revealed a sharp change in sentiment whereby a majority of MPC members said they would be voting for an increase in Bank Rate "over the coming months". It is therefore possible that there will be an increase to 0.5% at the November MPC meeting. If that happens, the question will then be as to whether the MPC will stop at just withdrawing the emergency Bank Rate cut of 0.25% in August 2016, after the result of the EU withdrawal referendum, or whether they will embark on a series of further increases in Bank Rate during 2018.

The overall balance of risks to economic recovery in the UK is currently to the downside but huge variables over the coming few years include just what final form Brexit will take, when finally agreed with the EU, and when.

Downside risks to current forecasts for UK gilt yields and PWLB rates currently include:

- UK economic growth and increases in inflation are weaker than we currently anticipate.
- Weak growth or recession in the UK's main trading partners - the EU and US.
- Geopolitical risks in Europe, the Middle East and Asia, which could lead to increasing safe haven flows.
- A resurgence of the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis.
- Weak capitalisation of some European banks.
- Monetary policy action failing to stimulate sustainable growth and to get inflation up consistently to around monetary policy target levels.

The potential for upside risks to current forecasts for UK gilt yields and PWLB rates, especially for longer term PWLB rates include: -

- The pace and timing of increases in the Fed. Funds Rate causing a fundamental reassessment by investors of the relative risks of holding bonds as opposed to equities and leading to a major flight from bonds to equities.
- UK inflation returning to significantly higher levels causing an increase in the inflation premium inherent to gilt yields.

4 Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy update

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2017/18 was approved by this Council on 23rd February 2017.

There are no policy changes to the TMSS; the details in this report update the position in the light of the updated economic position and budgetary changes already approved.

5 The Council's Capital Position (Prudential Indicators)

This part of the report is structured to update:

- The Council's capital expenditure plans;
- How these plans are being financed;
- The impact of the changes in the capital expenditure plans on the prudential indicators and the underlying need to borrow; and
- Compliance with the limits in place for borrowing activity.

5.1 Prudential Indicator for Capital Expenditure

This table shows the revised estimates for capital expenditure and the changes since the capital programme was agreed at the Budget.

Capital Expenditure by Service	Original Estimate £000	Spend to Date £000	Revised Estimate £000
Regulatory Services	1,916	456	2,352
Community Services	13,443	4,861	15,455
Resources and Finance	75	21	75
Total Capital Expenditure	15,434	5,338	17,882

The increase in the revised estimate figure for capital expenditure in 2017/18 has been as a result of a number of factors including slippage from 2016/17, additional approvals to progress work on the commuter car parks in Ely and Littleport and a revised cashflow forecast for the loan from the Council to East Cambs Trading Company. Full details of the movements are included in the Budget Monitoring Report also included on the agenda.

5.2 Changes to the Financing of the Capital Programme

The table below draws together the main strategy elements of the capital expenditure plan (above), highlighting the original supported and unsupported elements of the capital programme, and the expected financing arrangements of this capital expenditure. The borrowing element of the table increases the underlying indebtedness of the Council by way of the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR).

Capital Expenditure	2017/18 Original Estimate £000	2017/18 Revised Estimate £000
Total capital expenditure	15,434	17,882
Financed by:		
Capital Receipts	1,431	2,383
Capital Grants	1,949	2,046
Section 106 / CIL	47	1,095
Revenue	189	273
Total financing	3,616	5,797
Borrowing Requirement	11,818	12,085

Funding for the Leisure Centre and the ECTC is currently being met from internal borrowing. This situation is being regularly monitored and there is the strong likelihood that the Council will need to borrow externally before the end of the financial year, not least to cover the cost of the new Waste equipment which needs to be purchased in advance of the new contract starting in April 2018.

It is almost certain that even if the Council avoids the need to borrow externally in 2017/18, that it will need to do so in 2018/19 and the budget for 2018/19 will be built to reflect this need.

5.3 Changes to the Prudential Indicators for the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), External Debt and the Operational Boundary

The table below shows the CFR, which is the underlying external need to incur borrowing for a capital purpose. It also shows the expected debt position over the period, which is termed the Operational Boundary.

Prudential Indicator – Capital Financing Requirement – 2017/18 Position

	Original Estimate £000	Revised Estimate £000
Prudential Indicator – Capital Financing Requirement		
Total CFR in Year	11,818	12,085
Net movement in CFR		
Borrowing	11,818	12,085
Other long term liabilities	0	0
Total borrowing (year end position)	11,818	12,085

5.4 Limits to Borrowing Activity

The first key control over the treasury activity is a prudential indicator to ensure that over the medium term, net borrowing (borrowings less investments) is only for capital purposes. Gross external borrowing should not, except in the short term, exceed the total of CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR in the current year and next two financial years. This allows some flexibility for limited early borrowing for future years. The Council has approved a policy for borrowing in advance of need which will be adhered to if this proves prudent.

	Original Estimate £000	Revised Estimate £000
Borrowing Carried Forward	1,858	2,447
Borrowing 2017/18	11,818	12,085
Other long term liabilities	0	0
Total debt	13,676	14,533
CFR (year end position)	13,676	14,533

The Finance Manager's view is that no difficulties are envisaged for the current or future years in complying with this prudential indicator.

A further prudential indicator controls the overall level of borrowing. This is the Authorised Limit which represents the limit beyond which external borrowing is prohibited, and needs to be set and revised by Members. It reflects the level of external borrowing which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable in the longer term. It is the expected maximum external borrowing need

with some headroom for unexpected movements. This is the statutory limit determined under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003.

Authorised limit for external debt	Original Indicator £000	Revised Estimate £000
Borrowing	5,000	10,000
Other long term liabilities	0	0
Total	5,000	10,000

6 Investment Portfolio 2017/18

In accordance with the Code, it is the Council's priority to ensure security of capital and liquidity, and to obtain an appropriate level of return which is consistent with the Council's risk appetite. As shown by forecasts in section 3.2, it is a very difficult investment market in terms of earning the level of interest rates commonly seen in previous decades as rates are very low and in line with the current 0.25% Bank Rate. The continuing potential for a re-emergence of a Eurozone sovereign debt crisis, and its impact on banks, prompts a low risk and short term strategy. Given this risk environment and the fact that increases in Bank Rate are likely to be gradual and unlikely to return to the levels seen in previous decades, investment returns are likely to remain low.

The Council held £17.2 million of cash investments as at 30th of September 2017 (£16.9m at 31 March 2017), with a further £1.9 million invested in ECTC (£1.0m at 31 March 2017). The investment portfolio yield for the first 6 months of the year is 0.37% against a benchmark of 0.32%.

A full list of investments held as at 30th September 2017 is in appendix 3:

The Finance Manager confirms that the approved limits within the Annual Investment Strategy were not breached during the first six months of 2017/18.

The Council's budgeted return on investment for 2017/18 is £100,000 with performance for the year to date slightly ahead of this, however with the ECTC expected to borrow more in the second half of the year, the forecast yearend position for interest received has been increased to £150,000.

Investment Counterparty criteria

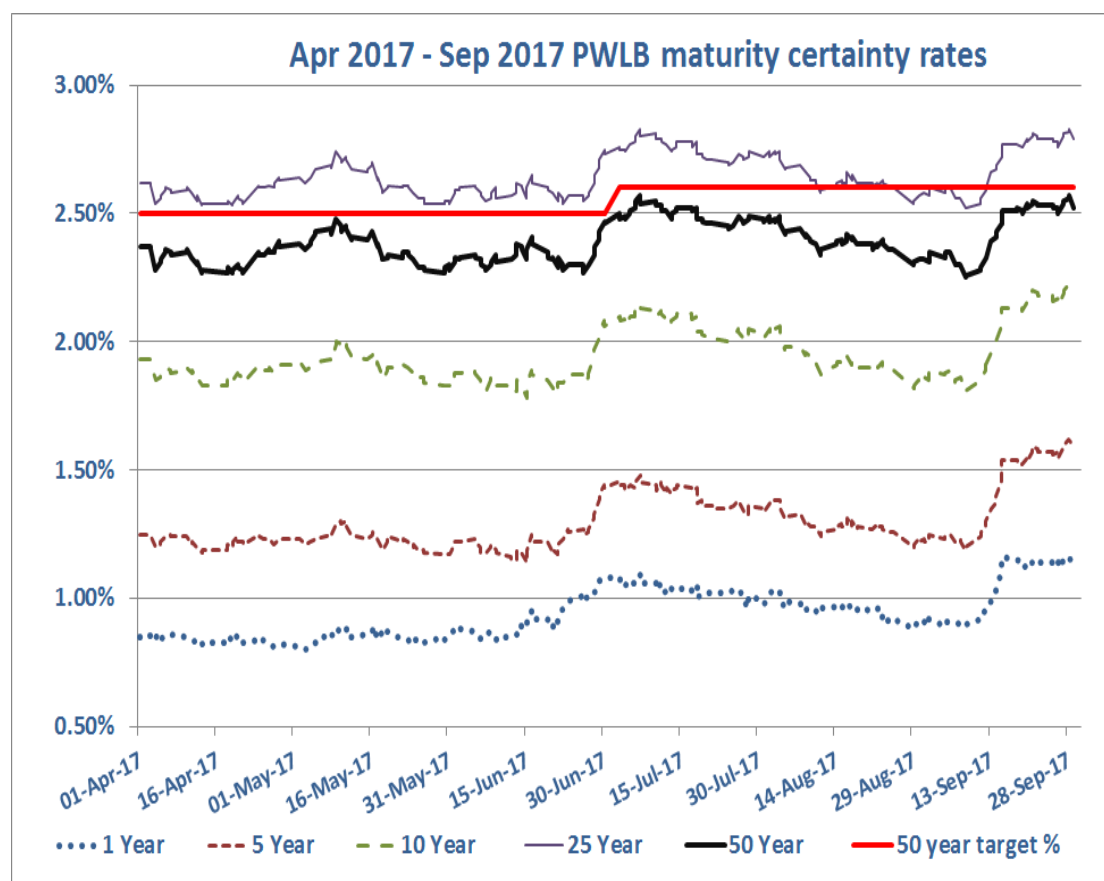
The current investment counterparty criteria selection approved in the TMSS is meeting the requirement of the treasury management function.

7 Borrowing

The Council's capital financing requirement (CFR) for 2017/18 is £12.1m. The CFR denotes the Council's underlying need to borrow for capital purposes. If the CFR is positive the Council may borrow from the PWLB or the market (external borrowing) or from internal balances on a temporary basis (internal borrowing). The balance of external and internal borrowing is generally driven by market conditions.

The graph and table below show the movement in PWLB certainty rates for the first six months of the year to date:

PWLB certainty rates 1 April 2017 to 30 September 2017



	1 Year	5 Year	10 Year	25 Year	50 Year
Low	0.8	1.14	1.78	2.52	2.25
Date	03/05/2017	15/06/2017	15/06/2017	08/09/2017	08/09/2017
High	1.16	1.62	2.22	2.83	2.57
Date	15/09/2017	28/09/2017	28/09/2017	07/07/2017	07/07/2017
Average	0.9408	1.2981	1.9470	2.6475	2.3917

8 Other

1. Revised CIPFA Codes

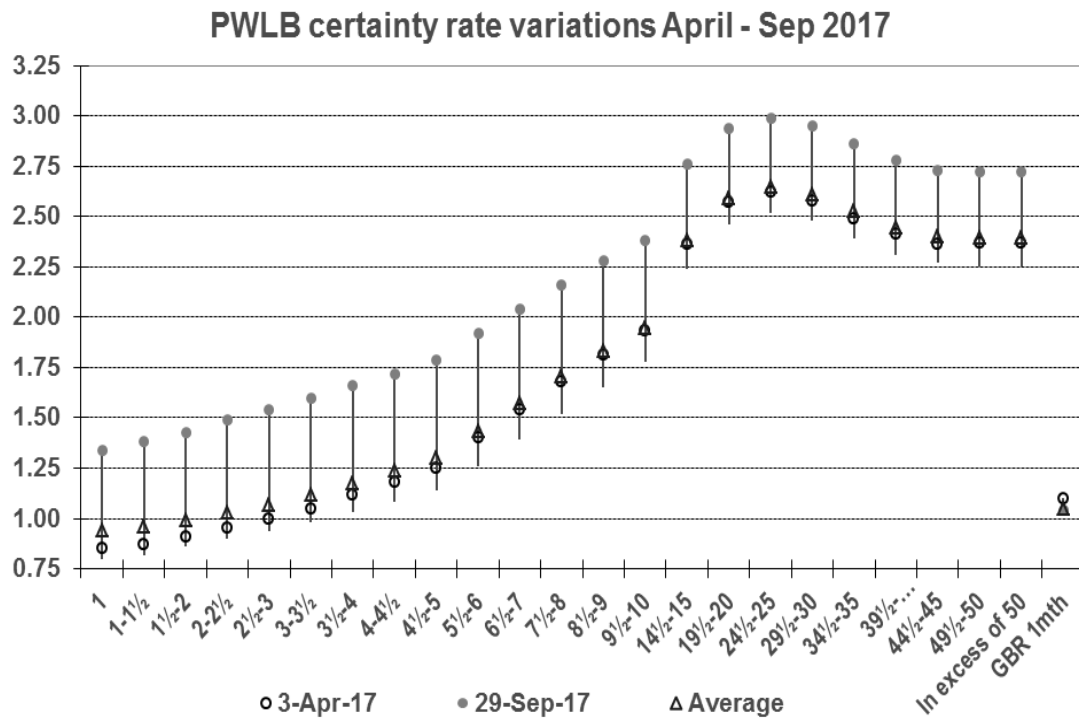
The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, (CIPFA), is currently conducting an exercise to consult local authorities on revising the Treasury Management Code and Cross Sectoral Guidance Notes, and the Prudential Code. CIPFA is aiming to issue the revised codes during November.

A particular focus of this exercise is how to deal with local authority investments which are not treasury type investments e.g. by investing in purchasing property in order to generate income for the authority at a much higher level than can be attained by treasury investments. One recommendation is that local authorities should produce a new report to members to give a high level summary of the overall capital strategy and to enable members to see how the cash resources of the authority have been apportioned between treasury and non treasury investments. Officers are monitoring developments and will report to members when the new codes have been agreed and issued and on the likely impact on this authority.

2. MIFID II

The EU has now set a deadline of 3 January 2018 for the introduction of regulations under MIFID II. These regulations will govern the relationship that financial institutions conducting lending and borrowing transactions will have with local authorities from that date. This will have little effect on this authority apart from having to fill in forms sent by each institution dealing with this authority and for each type of investment instrument we use apart from for cash deposits with banks and building societies.

APPENDIX 1: Borrowing



APPENDIX 2: Investments

Investment performance year to date as at 30 September 2017

Benchmark	Benchmark Return	Council Performance	Investment Interest Earned
6 month	0.32%	0.37%	£68,957

	Bank Rate	7 day	1 mth	3 mth	6 mth	12 mth
High	0.25	0.12	0.13	0.21	0.37	0.61
High Date	01/04/2017	02/08/2017	19/04/2017	11/04/2017	28/09/2017	28/09/2017
Low	0.25	0.10	0.12	0.14	0.27	0.46
Low Date	01/04/2017	04/07/2017	10/08/2017	07/08/2017	07/09/2017	06/09/2017
Average	0.25	0.11	0.13	0.18	0.32	0.53
Spread	0.00	0.02	0.01	0.08	0.09	0.15

