| Committee and Date |
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| Cabinet |
| 14 February 2018 |

# TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE – QUARTER 3 2017/18

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## 1. Summary

1.1. The report outlines the treasury management activities of the Council in the last quarter. It highlights the economic environment in which treasury management decisions have been made and the interest rate forecasts of the Council's Treasury Advisor, Link Asset Services (formerly known as Capita Asset Services). It also updates Members on the internal treasury team's performance.

1.2. During the third quarter of 2017/18 the internal treasury team achieved a return of 0.44% on the Council's cash balances, outperforming the benchmark by 0.16%. This amounts to additional income of £67,910 during the quarter which is included within the Council's projected outturn position in the monthly revenue monitor.

## 2. Recommendations

2.1. Members are asked to accept the position as set out in the report.

## REPORT

## 3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

3.1. The recommendations contained in this report are compatible with the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998.

3.2. There are no direct environmental, equalities or climate change consequences arising from this report.

3.3. Compliance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management, the Council's Treasury Policy Statement and Treasury Management Practices and the Prudential Code for Capital Finance together with the rigorous internal controls will enable the Council to manage the risk associated with Treasury Management activities and the potential for financial loss.

## 4. Financial Implications

4.1. The Council makes assumptions about the levels of borrowing and investment income over the financial year. Reduced borrowing as a result of capital receipt generation or delays in delivery of the capital programme will both have a positive impact of the council's cash position. Similarly, higher than benchmarked returns on available cash will also help the Council's financial position. For monitoring purposes, assumptions are made early in year about borrowing and returns based on the strategies agreed by Council in the preceding February. Performance outside of these assumptions results in increased or reduced income for the Council.

4.2. The Quarter 3 performance is above benchmark and has delivered additional income of £67,910 which will be reflected in the Period 9 Revenue Monitor.

4.3. As at 31 December 2017 the Council held £158 million held in investments as detailed in Appendix A and borrowing of £318 million at fixed interest rates.

## 5. Background

5.1. The Council defines its treasury management activities as "the management of the 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". The report informs Members of the treasury activities of the Council between 1 October 2017 and 31 December 2017.

## 6. Economic Background

6.1. UK economic growth was disappointingly weak in the first half of 2017; quarter 1 came in at only 0.3% and quarter 2 was 0.3%, 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.

6.2. However, growth picked up in quarter 3 to 0.4% and in quarter 4 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. Growth in quarter 4 is expected to be around 0.4% again which would see annual growth in 2017 coming in at around 1.7%.

6.3. Recent Bank of England Inflation Reports have flagged up that they expected CPI inflation to peak at just over 3% in late 2017, before falling back to near to its target rate of 2% in two years' time. Inflation actually came in at 3.1% in November. The reason why the MPC became so aggressive with its wording

in September and November around increasing Bank Rate was due to 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. 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.

6.4. It was therefore no surprise that the MPC increased Bank Rate by 0.25% to 0.5% in November. However, their forward guidance of two more increases of 0.25% by 2020 was viewed as being less than markets had expected. However, some forecasters are flagging up that they expect growth to improve significantly in 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 weaker services sector growth. If this scenario were to materialise, then the MPC would have added reason to embark on more than one increase 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.

6.5. Economic growth in the EU had been lack lustre for several years after the financial crisis despite the European Central Bank eventually cutting its main rate to minus 0.4% and embarking on a massive programme of Quantitative Easing. However, growth picked up in 2016 and now looks to have gathered ongoing substantial strength and momentum thanks to this stimulus. GDP growth was 0.6% in quarter 1, 0.7% in quarter 2 and 0.6% in quarter 3. However, despite providing massive monetary stimulus, the European Central Bank is still struggling to get inflation up to its 2% target and in November inflation was only 1.2%. It is therefore unlikely to start on an upswing in rates until possibly towards the end of 2019

6.6. Growth in the US economy had been volatile in 2015 and 2016. 2017 followed that path again with quarter 1 coming in at only 1.2% but quarter 2 rebounding to 3.1% and quarter 3 coming in at 3.2%, the first time since 2014 that two successive quarters have been over 3%. Unemployment in the US has also fallen to the lowest level for many years, reaching 4.1% in November, while wage inflation pressures, and inflationary pressures in general, have been building. The Federal Reserve has started on an upswing in rates with four increases since December 2016 to lift the central rate to 1.25 – 1.50%. There could then be another four more increases in 2018. In October, the Federal Reserve became the first major western central bank to make a start on unwinding quantitative easing by phasing in a start to a gradual reduction of reinvesting maturing debt.

6.7. Chinese economic growth has been weakening over successive years, despite repeated rounds of central bank stimulus and medium term risks are increasing. Major progress still needs to be made to eliminate excess industrial capacity and the stock of unsold property.

6.8. GDP growth in Japan has been gradually improving during 2017 to reach an annual figure of 2.1% in quarter 3. However, it is still struggling to get inflation anywhere near to its target of 2%, despite huge monetary and fiscal stimulus. It is also making little progress on fundamental reform of the economy.

## 7. Economic Forecast

7.1. The Council receives its treasury advice from Link Asset Services (formerly known as Capita Asset Services). Their latest interest rate forecasts to 31 March 2021 are shown below:

| Link Asset Services Interest Rate View | Mar-18 | Jun-18 | Sep-18 | Dec-18 | Mar-19 | Jun-19 | Sep-19 | Dec-19 | Mar-20 | Jun-20 | Sep-20 | Dec-20 | Mar-21 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bank Rate | 0.50% | 0.50% | 0.50% | 0.75% | 0.75% | 0.75% | 0.75% | 1.00% | 1.00% | 1.00% | 1.25% | 1.25% | 1.25% |
| 5yr PWLB rate | 1.60% | 1.60% | 1.70% | 1.80% | 1.80% | 1.90% | 1.90% | 2.00% | 2.10% | 2.10% | 2.20% | 2.30% | 2.30% |
| 10yr PWLB rate | 2.20% | 2.30% | 2.40% | 2.40% | 2.50% | 2.60% | 2.60% | 2.70% | 2.70% | 2.80% | 2.90% | 2.90% | 3.00% |
| 25yr PWLB rate | 2.90% | 3.00% | 3.00% | 3.10% | 3.10% | 3.20% | 3.20% | 3.30% | 3.40% | 3.50% | 3.50% | 3.60% | 3.60% |
| 50yr PWLB rate | 2.60% | 2.70% | 2.80% | 2.90% | 2.90% | 3.00% | 3.00% | 3.10% | 3.20% | 3.30% | 3.30% | 3.40% | 3.40% |

7.2. As expected, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) delivered a 0.25% increase in Base rate in November 2017. Link Asset Services undertook a review of its interest rate forecasts after the quarterly Bank of England Inflation Report and MPC meeting. It is felt that the bank rate will remain at its current level of 0.5% until December 2018 when it is expected to rise to 0.75%. The Bank rate is then expected to rise to 1.0% by December 2019.

7.3. Long term PWLB rates are expected to rise from 2.60% in March 2018 to 2.9% in December 2018 before steadily increasing over time to reach 3.4% by December 2020.

7.3. The overall balance of risks to economic recovery in the UK is probably currently to the downside due to the uncertainties around Brexit, however, given those uncertainties, there is a wide diversity of possible outcomes for the strength of economic growth and inflation, and the corresponding speed with which Bank Rate could go up.

## 8. Treasury Management Strategy

8.1. The Treasury Management Strategy (TMS) for 2017/18 was approved by Full Council on 23 February 2017. The Council's Annual Investment Strategy, which is incorporated in the TMS, outlines the Council's investment priorities as the security and liquidity of its capital.

8.2. The Council aims to achieve the optimum return on investments commensurate with the proper levels of security and liquidity. In the current economic climate it is considered appropriate to keep investments short term (up to 1 year), and only invest with highly credit rated financial institutions using Link's suggested creditworthiness approach, including sovereign credit rating and Credit Default Swap (CDS) overlay information provided by Link. The Treasury Team continue to take a prudent approach keeping

investments short term and with the most highly credit rated organisations. This approach has been endorsed by our external advisors, Link.

8.3. In the third quarter of 2017/18 the internal treasury team outperformed its benchmark by 0.16%. The investment return was 0.44% compared to the benchmark of 0.28%. This amounts to additional income of £67,910 during the quarter which is included in the Council's projected outturn position in the monthly revenue monitor.

7.4. A full list of investments held as at 31 December 2017, compared to Link's counterparty list, and changes to Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poor's credit ratings are shown in Appendix A. None of the approved limits within the Annual Investment Strategy were breached during the third quarter of 2017/18. Officers continue to monitor the credit ratings of institutions on a daily basis. Delegated authority has been put in place to make any amendments to the approved lending list.

7.5. As illustrated in the economic forecast section above, investment rates available in the market have marginally improved during the quarter following the 0.25% increase in bank base rate. The average level of funds available for investment purposes in the second quarter of 2017/18 was £169 million.

## 9. Borrowing

9.1. It is a statutory duty for the Council to determine and keep under review the "Affordable Borrowing Limits". The Council's approved Treasury and Prudential Indicators (affordability limits) are included in the approved Treasury Management Strategy. A list of the approved limits is shown in Appendix B. The Prudential Indicators were not breached during the third quarter of 2017/18 and have not been previously breached. The schedule at Appendix C details the Prudential Borrowing approved and utilised to date.

9.2. Link's target rate for new long term borrowing (50 years) for the third quarter of 2017/18 was 2.5%. No new external borrowing has currently been undertaken in 2017/18. The low and high points during the quarter can be seen in the table below.

| | 1 Year | 5 Year | 10 Year | 25 Year | 50 Year |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Low | 1.13% | 1.50% | 2.00% | 2.57% | 2.29% |
| Date | 02/10/2017 | 08/11/2017 | 18/12/2017 | 18/12/2017 | 15/12/2017 |
| High | 1.27% | 1.67% | 2.25% | 2.85% | 2.59% |
| Date | 08/12/2017 | 25/10/2017 | 25/10/2017 | 06/10/2017 | 06/10/2017 |
| Average | 1.18% | 1.58% | 2.13% | 2.73% | 2.44% |

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| **List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)**<br>Cabinet, 6 September 2017, Treasury Management Update Quarter 1 2017/18<br>Cabinet, 6 December 2017, Treasury Management Update Quarter 2 2017/18<br>Council, 23 February 2017, Treasury Strategy 2017/18. |
| **Cabinet Member:**<br>David Minnery, Portfolio Holder for Finance |
| **Local Member**<br>N/A |
| **Appendices**<br>A. Investment Report as at 31 December 2017<br>B. Prudential Limits<br>C. Prudential Borrowing Schedule |