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TREASURY STRATEGY 2021/22

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1. Summary

1.1 The report proposes the Treasury Strategy for 2021/22 and recommends Prudential and Treasury Indicators for 2021/22 to 2023/24. The report is technical in nature but the key points to note are:-

- Borrowing is largely driven by the requirements of the approved Capital Programme. From 2011/12 the Council's borrowing requirement has been significantly reduced due to the Government changing the way in which it funds the Council's capital expenditure and providing capital grants rather than supported borrowing approval with on-going (as it was defined at the time) revenue support grant to meet the financing costs of the borrowing. Currently the approved borrowing requirement identified within the Capital Programme 2021/22 to 2023/24 is prudential borrowing of £118.909 million. In addition to this there is an anticipated prudential borrowing requirement for future prioritised schemes in the Capital Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24 of £113.670 million.
- In late December 2017, CIPFA issued revised Prudential and Treasury Management Codes. As from 2019/20 all local authorities are required to prepare an additional report, a Capital Strategy report. The Council is continuing to develop both the Capital Strategy report and business cases for a number of large schemes linked to proposals set out in the Council's Finance Strategy. Any updates required as a result of future decisions will be reported accordingly.
- The Council's lending continues to be restricted to highly credit rated Banks, three Building Societies, Money Market Funds and Part Nationalised Institutions which meet Link Asset Services creditworthiness policy, other Local Authorities and the UK Government.
- The internal Treasury Team will continue to look for opportunities to make savings by actively managing the cash and debt portfolio in accordance with the Treasury Strategy.

- The bank rate was decreased to 0.10% in March 2020 as a direct consequence to the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact on global financial markets. As a consequence, we have seen investment yields suppressed. We are unlikely to see any further bank rate increases from the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) in the next two financial years. This will have a major impact on the investment income that the Council will receive during this period.
- Long term borrowing rates are expected to be higher than investment rates during 2021/22 therefore long term borrowing may be postponed in order to maximise savings in the short term. Currently the approved borrowing requirement identified within the Capital Programme 2021/22 to 2023/24 is prudential borrowing of £118.909 million. In addition to this there is an anticipated prudential borrowing requirement for future prioritised schemes in the Capital Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24 of £113.670 million. Any changes to this requirement as a result of future decisions will be reported accordingly.
- The Council has agreed to offer to lend funds to Connexus Housing Ltd (which incorporates both South Shropshire Housing Association and the Meres & Mosses Housing Association) and Severnside Housing at an agreed rate. It has previously been agreed to offer to lend up to £10 million to each of these Housing Associations in order to support the building of affordable housing and shared office accommodation in Shropshire. For security purposes, each loan has been secured against existing assets held by or owned by the Housing Association. To date £9,770,000 has been drawn down by Connexus Housing Ltd and £10,000,000 by Severnside Housing.
- Following Council approval on 28th February 2019, Shropshire Council formed a Wholly Owned Local Housing Company, known as Cornovii Homes. An initial unsecured loan was approved and made to the Company of £1 million to provide funding for operating and set up costs. The Council has subsequently approved additional funding in the form of equity and a loan to facilitate land purchases and development costs. The loan element, totalling £14 million, is anticipated to be released to the Company over the financial years 2020/21 and 2021/22. In addition, a further £35 million revolving loan facility has been agreed.

2. Recommendations

2.1. Recommendations to Cabinet

Cabinet recommend that Council:-

- a) Approve, with any comments, the Treasury Strategy for 2021/22.
- b) Approve, with any comments, the Prudential Indicators, set out in Appendix 1, in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003.
- c) Approve, with any comments, the Investment Strategy, set out in Appendix 2 in accordance with the MHCLG Guidance on Local Government Investments.
- d) Approve, with any comments, the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement, set out in Appendix 3.

- e) Authorise the Section 151 Officer to exercise the borrowing powers contained in Section 3 of the Local Government Act 2003 and to manage the Council's debt portfolio in accordance with the Treasury Strategy.
- f) Authorise the Section 151 Officer to use other Foreign Banks which meet Link's creditworthiness policy as required.

2.2. Recommendations to Audit Committee

- g) Audit Committee are asked to consider and endorse, with appropriate comment, the Treasury Strategy 2021/22.

2.3. Recommendations to the Council

- h) Approve, with any comments, the Treasury Strategy for 2021/22.
- i) Approve, with any comments, the Prudential Indicators, set out in Appendix 1, in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003.
- j) Approve, with any comments, the Investment Strategy, set out in Appendix 2 in accordance with the MHCLG Guidance on Local Government Investments.
- k) Approve, with any comments, the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement, set out in Appendix 3.
- l) Authorise the Section 151 Officer to exercise the borrowing powers contained in Section 3 of the Local Government Act 2003 and to manage the Council's debt portfolio in accordance with the Treasury Strategy.
- m) Authorise the Section 151 Officer to use other Foreign Banks which meet Link's creditworthiness policy as required.

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 financial implications arising from the Treasury Strategy are detailed in this report. 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 the 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 As at 31 December 2020 the Council held £170 million in investments and borrowing of £304 million at fixed interest rates.

5. Climate Change Appraisal

- 5.1 The Council's Financial Strategy includes proposals to deliver a reduced carbon footprint for the Council, therefore the Treasury Team is working with the Council in order to achieve this. There are no climate change impacts arising from this report.

6. Background

- 6.1. The Council is required to operate a balanced budget, which broadly means that cash raised during the year will meet cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operation is to ensure that this cash flow is adequately planned, with cash being available when it is needed. Surplus monies are invested in low risk counterparties or instruments commensurate with the Council's risk appetite, providing adequate liquidity initially before considering investment return.
- 6.2. The second main function of the treasury management service is the funding of the Council's capital plans. These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Council, essentially the longer-term cash flow planning, to ensure that the Council can meet its capital spending obligations. This management of longer-term cash may involve arranging long or short-term loans or using longer-term cash flow surpluses. On occasion, when it is prudent and economic, any debt previously drawn may be restructured to meet Council risk or cost objectives.
- 6.3. 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.
- 6.4. 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.
- 6.5. The Council defines its treasury management activities as "the management of the authority's borrowing, investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions, the effective control of the risks associated with those activities, and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks".
- 6.6. Revised reporting was required for the 2019/20 reporting cycle due to revisions of the MHCLG Investment Guidance, the MHCLG Minimum Revenue Provision

(MRP) Guidance, the CIPFA Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code. The primary reporting changes include the introduction of a capital strategy, to provide a longer-term focus to the capital plans and greater reporting requirements surrounding any commercial activity undertaken under the Localism Act 2011. The capital strategy is being reported separately.

- 6.7. This strategy statement has been prepared in accordance with CIPFA's revised Code of Practice on Treasury Management. Accordingly, the Council's Treasury Strategy will be approved annually by full Council and there will also be a mid-year review report. In addition, treasury management update reports will be submitted quarterly to Directors and Cabinet. The aim of these reporting arrangements is to ensure that those with ultimate responsibility for the treasury management function appreciate fully the implications of policies and practices, and that those implementing policies and executing transactions have properly fulfilled their responsibilities with regard to delegation and reporting.
- 6.8. In late December 2017, CIPFA issued a revised Treasury Management Code of Practice and a revised Prudential Code. These revisions particularly focused on non-treasury investments and the requirement for all local authorities to produce a detailed Capital Strategy as from 2019/20. The majority of these requirements are already included in an appendix to the Council's Financial Strategy, but this will now be included as a separate Capital Strategy report. This report 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
- 6.9. The aim of this capital strategy is to ensure that all elected members on the full council fully understand the overall long-term policy objectives and resulting capital strategy requirements, governance procedures and risk appetite.
- 6.10. This capital strategy is reported separately from the Treasury Management Strategy Statement; non-treasury investments will be reported through the former. This ensures the separation of the core treasury function under security, liquidity and yield principles, and the policy and commercialism investments usually driven by expenditure on an asset. The capital strategy will show:
- The corporate governance arrangements for these types of activities;
 - Any service objectives relating to the investments;
 - The expected income, costs and resulting contribution;
 - The debt related to the activity and the associated interest costs;
 - The payback period (MRP policy);
 - For non-loan type investments, the cost against the current market value;
 - The risks associated with each activity.

Where a physical asset is being bought, details of market research, advisers used, (and their monitoring), ongoing costs and investment requirements and any credit information will be disclosed, including the ability to sell the asset and realise the investment cash.

- 6.11. Attached in appendix 2 is the Council's Annual Investment Strategy which includes a list of additional responsibilities for the Section 151 Officer role following the issue of the revised Treasury Management Code of Practice and Prudential Code.

6.12. The revised codes have clarified CIPFA's position that there is a clear separation between treasury and non-treasury investments and on the role of the treasury management team. Accordingly, periodic reporting by the treasury management team to members will focus solely on treasury investments. If non treasury investments are considered, a separate report will be presented for approval and any changes required to Prudential indicators incorporated within an updated Treasury Strategy if necessary.

6.13. The Council will adopt the following reporting arrangements in accordance with the requirements of the Code:-

Area of Responsibility	Council/Committee/Officer	Frequency
Treasury Management Policy Statement	Full Council/Cabinet	As required
Treasury Strategy/Annual Investment Strategy/MRP Policy	Full Council/Cabinet	Annually before the start of the financial year
Capital Strategy	Full Council/Cabinet	Annually before the start of the financial year
Treasury Strategy/Annual Investment Strategy/MRP Policy – mid year report	Full Council/Cabinet	Mid year
Treasury Strategy/Annual Investment Strategy/MRP Policy – updates or revisions at other times	Full Council/Cabinet	As required
Annual Treasury Report	Full Council/Cabinet	Annually by 30 September after the end of the financial year
Quarterly Treasury Management Update Reports	Directors/Cabinet	Quarterly
Treasury Management Monitoring Reports	Reports prepared by Investment Officer to the Head of Treasury & Pensions who reports to the Section 151 Officer	Monthly
Treasury Management Practices	Section 151 Officer	As required
Scrutiny of Treasury Strategy	Audit Committee	Annually before the start of the financial year
Scrutiny of the treasury management performance	Audit Committee	Half yearly

7. Treasury Strategy 2021/22

- 7.1. The Local Government Act 2003 and supporting Regulations requires the Council to have regard to the CIPFA Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice to set Prudential and Treasury Indicators for the next three years to ensure that capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable. This report incorporates the indicators to which regard should be given when determining the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for the next financial year.
- 7.2. As the Council is responsible for housing, Prudential Indicators relating to Capital Expenditure, financing costs and the Capital Financing Requirement will be split between the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the General Fund.
- 7.3. The Act also requires the Council to set out its Treasury Strategy for borrowing and to prepare an Annual Investment Strategy. This sets out the Council's policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments.
- 7.4. The proposed Strategy for 2021/22 in respect of the following aspects of the treasury management function is based upon the Section 151 Officer's view on interest rates, supplemented with leading market forecasts provided by the Council's Treasury Advisor, Link Asset Services.
- 7.5. The proposed strategy will focus on the following areas of treasury activity:-
- Treasury limits in force which will limit the treasury risk and activities of the Council.
 - The determination of Prudential and Treasury Indicators.
 - The current treasury position.
 - Prospects for interest rates.
 - Capital borrowing strategy.
 - Policy on borrowing in advance of need.
 - Debt rescheduling.
 - Investment strategy.
 - Capital plans.
 - Creditworthiness policy.
 - Policy on use of external service providers.
 - The MRP strategy.
 - Leasing.
- 7.6. It is a statutory requirement under Section 33 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for the Council to produce a balanced budget. In particular, Section 32 requires a local authority to calculate its budget requirement for each financial year to include the revenue costs that flow from capital financing decisions. This therefore means that increases in capital expenditure must be limited to a level whereby increases in charges to revenue from:-
- increases in interest charges caused by increased borrowing to finance additional capital expenditure, and

- any increase in running costs from new capital projects

are limited to a level which is affordable within the projected income of the Council for the foreseeable future.

8. Treasury Limits for 2021/22 to 2023/24

- 8.1. It is a statutory requirement under Section 3 of the Local Government Act 2003 and supporting Regulations, for the Council to determine and keep under review how much it can afford to borrow. The amount so determined is termed the "Affordable Borrowing Limit". This authorised limit represents the legislative limit specified in section 3 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- 8.2. The Council must have regard to the Prudential Code when setting the Authorised Limit, which essentially requires it to ensure that total capital investment remains within sustainable limits.
- 8.3. Whilst termed an "Affordable Borrowing Limit", the capital plans to be considered for inclusion incorporate those planned to be financed by both internal/external borrowing and other forms of liability, such as credit arrangements. The Authorised Borrowing Limit is to be set, on a rolling basis, for the forthcoming financial year and two successive financial years and is the limit which the Council must not breach. All of the other Prudential Indicators are estimates only and can be breached temporarily but this is very rarely the case. If this did happen it would be reported to Members outlining the reasons for this temporary breach.
- 8.4. The Council are asked to approve these Prudential Indicators in Appendix 1.

9. Prudential & Treasury Indicators for 2021/22 to 2023/24

- 9.1. The Prudential Code and CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management require the Council to set a number of Prudential and Treasury Indicators. Following the December 2017 publication of the revised CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice, there is no longer a requirement to include the prudential indicator showing the incremental impact on the Council tax / Housing rents of Capital Investment decisions, so this has been removed. In addition to the specified indicators, we have set further internal indicators for Treasury Management, regarding lower limits on interest rate exposure for both borrowing and investments.
- 9.2. It should be noted that these indicators should not be used for comparison with indicators from other local authorities. Use of them in this way would be likely to be misleading and counterproductive as other authorities Treasury Management policies and practices vary. The most important indicator is prudential indicator number 4 which specifies the authorised limit which cannot be breached under any circumstances. In the event that this indicator was breached a separate report would be brought to Council.
- 9.3. **Prudential Indicator 1** - The ratio of financing costs indicator shows the trend in the cost of financing capital expenditure as a proportion of the Authority's net revenue. This indicator also shows the ratio of the HRA financing costs to the HRA net revenue stream.

Prudential Indicator No. 1	2020/21 Estimate	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate	2023/24 Estimate
	%	%	%	%
Non HRA ratio of financing costs (gross of investment income) to net revenue stream	9.0	7.6	9.0	8.3
Non HRA ratio of financing costs (net of investment income) to net revenue stream	8.5	7.2	8.5	7.8
HRA Ratio of financing costs to HRA net revenue stream	38.2	39.9	39.3	38.7

9.4. **Prudential Indicator 2** - A key indicator of prudence is that gross external borrowing should not, except in the short term, exceed the capital financing requirement (CFR). The capital financing requirement is the maximum we would expect to borrow based on the current capital programme. Compliance with the indicator will mean that this limit has not been breached. Gross borrowing includes debt administered on behalf of Telford and Wrekin Council, Magistrates Courts and Probation Service. It also includes the debt transferred from Oswestry Borough Council and North Shropshire District Council on the 1st April 2009. In accordance with the Code the HRA Capital Financing requirement has been calculated separately and has been updated due to the HRA reform which took place on the 28 March 2012.

Prudential Indicator No. 2	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Estimate	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate	2023/24 Estimate
	£ m	£ m	£ m	£ m	£ m
Net Borrowing & Capital Financing Requirement:					
Non HRA Capital Financing Requirement	386	383	419	436	494
HRA Capital Financing Requirement	85	85	95	105	115
Commercial activities/non-financial investments Capital Financing Requirement	10	17	63	101	98
Total CFR	481	485	577	642	707
Movement in CFR	6	5	92	65	65
Movement in CFR represented by					
Net financing need for the year (above)	11	8	65	79	59
Less MRP/VRP and other financing movements	-5	-3	27	-14	6
Movement in CFR	6	5	92	65	65
Gross Borrowing including HRA	308	304	366	455	519
Investments	157	160	150	140	130
Net Borrowing	151	144	216	315	389

- 9.5. **Prudential Indicator 3** - The estimated capital expenditure has been split between Non HRA and HRA and represents commitments from previous years to complete ongoing schemes, the expenditure arising from the proposed new schemes within the capital programme for 2020/21, and the estimated expenditure for 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24. This indicator also includes details on the financing of capital expenditure.

Prudential Indicator No. 3	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Estimate	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate	2023/24 Estimate
	£ m	£ m	£ m	£ m	£ m
Non HRA Capital expenditure	46.5	63.2	114.2	112.4	72.8
HRA Capital expenditure	6.0	5.9	20.1	19.8	14.0
Commercial activities/non-financial investments	6.7	4.3	35.4	30.0	0.0
Total Capital expenditure	59.2	73.4	169.7	162.2	86.8
Financing of capital expenditure					
Capital receipts	2.2	8.3	15.9	5.0	0.0
Capital grants	37.0	47.8	56.7	61.9	3.0
Other Contributions	3.7	7.9	24.5	0.1	0.0
Major Repairs Allowance	3.7	3.5	1.0	3.8	0.0
Revenue	3.6	1.4	4.3	3.0	1.0
Net financing need for the year	9.0	4.5	67.3	88.4	82.8
Commercial activities/non-financial investments	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Estimate	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate	2023/24 Estimate
	£ m	£ m	£ m	£ m	£ m
Capital expenditure	6.7	4.3	35.4	30.0	0.0
Financing Costs	0.2	0.2	1.1	0.9	0.0
Net financing need for the year	6.5	4.1	34.3	29.1	0.0
Percentage of total net financing need	97%	96%	97%	97%	100%

- 9.6. **Prudential Indicator 4 which must not be breached** - The authorised limit is the borrowing limit set for Shropshire Council and includes the HRA borrowing. This indicator shows the maximum permitted amount of outstanding debt for all purposes. It includes three components:

1. The maximum amount for capital purposes;
2. The maximum amount for short term borrowing to meet possible temporary revenue shortfalls;
3. The maximum permitted for items other than long term borrowing i.e. PFI & leasing.

Prudential Indicator No. 4	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
External Debt	£ m	£ m	£ m
Authorised Limit for External Debt:			
Borrowing	615	630	689
Other long term liabilities	96	92	98
Commercial activities/ non-financial investments	46	39	0
Total	757	761	787

9.7. The HRA debit limit is as follows:

Prudential Indicator	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
	£ m	£ m	£ m	£ m
HRA CFR	85	95	105	115

9.8. **Prudential Indicator 5** – The more likely outcome for the level of external debt is shown in the operational boundary which the Council is required to set. This is calculated on the same basis as prudential indicator number 4, however, this is the limit which external debt is not normally expected to exceed.

Prudential Indicator No. 5	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
External Debt	£ m	£ m	£ m
Operational Boundary:			
Borrowing	500	559	622
Other long term liabilities	96	92	98
Commercial activities/ non-financial investments	46	39	0
Total	642	690	720

9.9. **Prudential Indicator 6** - The estimated external debt is based on the capital programme for 2020/21.

Prudential Indicator No. 6	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Estimate
Actual External Debt	£ m	£ m
Borrowing	308	304
Other long term liabilities	102	98
Total	410	402

9.10. **Prudential Indicator 7** - The Prudential Code requires the Council to set interest rate exposure limits for borrowing and investments.

Prudential Indicator No. 7* Internal Indicator No. 1 ** No. 7^ Internal Indicator No. 2 ^^	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Borrowing Limits			
	£ m	£ m	£ m
Upper Limit for Fixed Interest Rate Exposure *	615	630	689
Upper Limit for Variable Interest Rate Exposure ^	308	315	345
Lower Limit for Fixed Interest Rate Exposure **	307	315	344
Lower Limit on Variable Interest Rate Exposure ^^	0	0	0

These indicators seek to control the amount of debt exposed to fixed and variable interest rates. Variable rate debt carries the risk of unexpected increases in interest rates and consequently increases in cost. The upper limit for variable rate exposure has been set following advice from Link, however, this limit is never likely to be reached due to authority's objective to have no more than 25% of outstanding debt at variable interest rates.

Upper limit for fixed rate exposure

Calculation:

A maximum of 100% of the Authorised Limit (£615m in 2021/22) exposed to fixed rates is consistent with the Authority's objective to have a long term stable debt portfolio.

Upper limit for variable rate exposure

Calculation:

For efficient management of the debt portfolio it is considered prudent by Link to permit up to 50% (£308m in 2021/22) of the Authorised Limit to be borrowed at variable interest rates.

Lower limit for fixed rate exposure

Calculation:

Upper limit for fixed rate exposure less the maximum permitted borrowing at variable interest rates

Lower limit for variable rate exposure

Calculation:

To be consistent with the Authority's objective to have a long term stable portfolio all of the debt portfolio could be at a fixed rate therefore the lower limit for variable rate exposure should be nil.

Prudential Indicator No. 8*	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Internal Indicator No. 3 ** No. 8^			
Internal Indicator No. 4 ^^			
Investment Limits			
	£ m	£ m	£ m
Upper Limit for Fixed Interest Rate Exposure *	250	250	250
Upper Limit for Variable Interest Rate Exposure ^	250	250	250
Lower Limit for Fixed Interest Rate Exposure **	0	0	0
Lower Limit on Variable Interest Rate Exposure ^^	0	0	0

These indicators seek to control the amount of investments exposed to fixed and variable interest rates. Variable rate investments are subject to changes in interest rates, but have a higher degree of liquidity and action can be taken at short notice in response to interest rate changes.

Upper limit for fixed rate exposure

Calculation:

Maximum amount of fixed rate investments in order to maintain a stable investment portfolio.

Upper limit for variable rate exposure

Calculation:

For the purposes of efficient portfolio management in response to interest rate conditions a maximum potential exposure to variable rates of £250m in 2021/22 is recommended.

Lower limit for fixed rate exposure

Calculation:

A lower limit of zero is locally set so as to enable full advantage to be taken of market conditions.

Lower limit for variable rate exposure

Calculation:

A lower limit of zero is locally set so as to enable full advantage to be taken of market conditions.

9.11. **Prudential Indicator 9** - The upper and lower limit for the maturity structure of borrowings is detailed below.

Prudential Indicator No. 9	Upper Limit	Lower Limit
Maturity Structure of Fixed/Variable Rate Borrowing 2021/22*	%	%
Under 12 months	15	0
12 months & within 24 months	15	0
24 months & within 5 years	45	0
5 years to 10 years	75	0
10 years to 20 years	100	0
20 years to 30 years	100	0
30 years to 40 years	100	0
40 years to 50 years	100	0
50 years and above	100	0

- **The internal limit is to have no more than 15% of total outstanding debt maturing in any one financial year. This is to ensure that the risk of having to replace maturing debt at times of high interest rates is controlled.**

9.12. **Prudential Indicator 10** - The Council is required to set maximum levels for investments over 365 days for both the internal treasury team and an external fund manager if appointed.

Prudential Indicator No. 10	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Investment Limits			
	£m	£m	£m
Upper Limit for Total Principal Sums Invested for over 365 days:			
Externally Managed (if appointed)	30	30	30
Internally Managed	70	70	70
Shrewsbury Shopping Centres	60	70	80

Rationale: The limit for the external cash fund manager has been set at £30 million in the event that an external manager is appointed. The limit for the internal treasury team has been set in order for the authority to potentially take advantage of more stable returns going forward. This includes the lending to date to local housing associations and future lending to Cornovii Homes. A separate limit of £60 million is included for the investment in units held within the JPUT for the Shrewsbury Shopping Centres. This limit is higher than the gross capital investment cost of £53.1m as it includes headroom for any future capital investment requirements.

10. Current Treasury Position

10.1 The Council's treasury position at 31 December 2020 is set out below:-

Outstanding debt for capital purposes	Actual
	£m
Long-term fixed rate PWLB	254.4
Long term fixed rate – Market	49.2
Total	303.6
Investments	£m
Internally managed - long term (1 Year)	15.0
- short term cash flow	155.4
Total	170.4

11. Prospects for Interest Rates

11.1. The Council retains the services of Link Asset Services as adviser on treasury matters and part of the service provided is to help the Council to formulate a view on interest rates. The following table gives the latest Link central view:-

Link's interest rate forecast as at December 2020

Link Group Interest Rate View		9.11.20													
These Link forecasts have been amended for the reduction in PWLB margins by 1.0% from 26.11.20															
	Dec-20	Mar-21	Jun-21	Sep-21	Dec-21	Mar-22	Jun-22	Sep-22	Dec-22	Mar-23	Jun-23	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24	
BANK RATE	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	
3 month ave earnings	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	
6 month ave earnings	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	
12 month ave earnings	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	
5 yr PWLB	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	
10 yr PWLB	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30	
25 yr PWLB	1.50	1.50	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.70	1.70	1.70	1.70	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	
50 yr PWLB	1.30	1.30	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.60	1.60	1.60	1.60	

Link's current interest rate view is that Bank Rate will: -

- remain at its current level of 0.1% until March 2024.

The effect on interest rates for the UK is expected to be as follows:-

Short-term interest rates (investments)

11.2. The coronavirus outbreak has done huge economic damage to the UK and economies around the world. After the Bank of England took emergency action in March to cut Bank Rate to first 0.25%, and then to 0.10%, it has left Bank Rate unchanged at its subsequent meetings to date, although some forecasters had suggested that a cut into negative territory could happen. However, the Governor of the Bank of England has made it clear that he currently thinks that such a move would do more damage than good and that more quantitative easing is the favoured tool if further action becomes necessary. As shown in the forecast table above, no increase in Bank Rate is expected in the forecast table above as economic recovery is expected to be only gradual and, therefore, prolonged.

These forecasts were based on an assumption that a Brexit trade deal would be agreed by 31 December 2020, as this has now occurred these forecasts do not need to be revised. Investment returns are likely to remain exceptionally low during 2021/22 with little increase in the following two years.

Long-term interest rates (borrowing)

- 11.3. The 50 year PWLB rate is expected to rise gradually to reach 1.5% by the end of June 2022. It is expected to continue rising gradually to reach 1.6% by the end of June 2023. There is scope for it to move around the central forecast by + or – 0.25%. The 25 year PWLB rate is also expected to rise slightly to reach 1.7% by the end of June 2022 and 1.8% by the end of June 2023. The 10 year PWLB rate is expected to rise gradually to 1.1% by the end of March 2022. Again further gradual rises are expected in 2023/24. The 5 year PWLB rate is also expected to rise gradually from 0.8% to 0.9% by the end of March 2022 and to 1.0% by the end of June 2023. The PWLB rates and forecasts shown above take into account the review of PWLB margins over gilt yields. Subsequently, all forecasts have been reduced by 1%.
- 11.4. Borrowing interest rates fell to historically very low rates as a result of the COVID-19 crisis and the quantitative easing operations of the Bank of England. Gilt yields up to 6 years have been negative during most of the first half of 20/21.
- 11.5. In November, the Chancellor announced the conclusion to the review into PWLB rates; the rates offered by the PWLB were reduced by 1% but a prohibition was introduced to deny access to borrowing from the PWLB for any local authority which intended to purchase assets primarily for yield in its three year capital programme.

12. Borrowing Strategy

- 12.1. The Council is currently maintaining an under-borrowed position. This means that the capital borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement), has not been fully funded with loan debt as cash supporting the Council's reserves, balances and cash flow has been used as a temporary measure. This strategy is prudent as investment returns are low and counterparty risk is still an issue that needs to be considered.
- 12.2. The approved borrowing requirement identified within the Capital Programme 2021/22 to 2023/24 is prudential borrowing of £118.909 million. In addition to this there is an anticipated prudential borrowing requirement for future prioritised schemes in the Capital Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24 of £113.670 million. The Council will adopt a pragmatic approach to changing circumstances when considering new borrowing if required in the future. Consideration will be given to the following:-
- i) As long term borrowing rates are expected to be higher than investment rates and look likely to be for the next couple of years or so all new external borrowing may be deferred in order to maximise savings in the short term. The running down of investments also has the added benefit of reducing exposure to interest rate and credit risk. However, in view of the overall forecast for long term borrowing rates to increase over the next few years, consideration will also be given to weighing up the short term advantage of internal borrowing against potential long term costs if the opportunity is missed for taking loans at long term rates which will be higher in future years.

- ii) Temporary borrowing from the money markets or other local authorities.
- iii) PWLB variable rate loans for up to 10 years.
- iv) Long term fixed rate market loans (including loans offered by the Municipal Bond Agency) at rates below PWLB rates for the equivalent maturity period.
- v) Short term PWLB rates are expected to be cheaper than longer term borrowing therefore borrowing could be undertaken in the under 10 year period early on in the financial year when rates are expected to be at their lowest. This will also have the added benefit of spreading debt maturities away from a concentration in longer dated debt.
- vi) If it was felt that there was a significant risk in a sharp fall in long and short term rates then long term borrowings will be postponed. If it was felt there was a significant risk of a sharp rise in long and short term rates then the portfolio position would be re-appraised with the likely action that fixed rate funding will be drawn whilst interest rates were still relatively cheap.

12.3. Delegated authority is sought for the Section 151 Officer to exercise the borrowing powers contained in the Local Government Act 2003 to manage the debt portfolio.

13. External versus internal borrowing

13.1. The Prudential Code requires the Council to explain its policy on gross and net debt. The Council currently has gross debt of £304 million and net debt (after deducting cash balances) of £134 million. The next financial year is expected to see the Bank Rate remain at 0.10% and potentially remaining at this rate for next two financial years. As borrowing rates are expected to be higher than investment rates this would indicate that value could best be obtained by avoiding new external borrowing and using internal cash balances to finance new capital expenditure. The policy of avoiding new borrowing by running down spare cash balances has served well over the last few years. This is referred to as internal borrowing and maximises short term savings. This is subject to change as the country navigates its way through and out of the coronavirus pandemic.

13.2. However, this needs to be carefully reviewed to avoid incurring higher borrowing costs in the future when authorities may not be able to avoid new borrowing to finance capital expenditure and/or the refinancing of maturing debt.

13.3. The Council has examined the potential for undertaking early repayment of some external debt in order to reduce the difference between its gross and net debt positions. However, the introduction by the PWLB of significantly lower rates for repayments than for new borrowing means that large premiums would be incurred, and such levels of premiums cannot be justified on value for money grounds.

13.4. Against this background caution will be adopted with the 2021/22 treasury operations. The Section 151 Officer will monitor the interest rate market and adopt a pragmatic approach to changing circumstances, reporting any decisions to Members at the next available opportunity.

14. Policy on borrowing in advance of need

14.1. The Council will not borrow more than or in advance of its needs purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed. Any decision to borrow in advance will be within forward approved Capital Financing Requirement estimates

and will be considered carefully to ensure value for money can be demonstrated and that the Council can ensure the security of such funds.

14.2. In determining whether borrowing will be undertaken in advance of need the Council will:-

- Ensure that there is a clear link between the capital programme and maturity profile of the existing debt portfolio which supports the need to take funding in advance of need.
- Ensure the ongoing revenue liabilities created, and the implications for the future plans and budgets have been considered.
- Evaluate the economic and market factors that might influence the manner and timing of any decision to borrow.
- Consider the merits and demerits of alternative forms of funding.
- Consider the alternative interest rate bases available, the most appropriate periods to fund and repayment profiles to use.
- Consider the impact of borrowing in advance on temporarily (until required to finance capital expenditure) increasing investment cash balance and the consequent increase in exposure to counterparty risk, and other risks, and the level of such risks given the controls in place to minimise them.

15. Debt Rescheduling

15.1. Consideration will be given to the potential for making savings by running down investment balances to repay debt prematurely as short-term rates on investments are likely to be lower than rates currently paid on debt. However, this will need careful consideration in the light of premiums that may be incurred by such a course of action. The proposals for debt rescheduling are a continuation of the existing policy and such transactions will only be undertaken:-

- in order to generate cash savings at minimum risk.
- to help fulfil the strategy set out above.
- in order to enhance the balance of the long-term portfolio by amending the maturity profile and/or volatility of the portfolio.

15. Investment Strategy

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

15.2. The Council is required, under CIPFA's Treasury Management Code of Practice, to formulate an Annual Investment Strategy (Appendix 2). This outlines the Council's approach to:-

- Security of capital
- Creditworthiness policy
- Monitoring of credit ratings
- Specified and Non Specified Investments
- Temporary Investments

15.3 The Council's investment priorities are the security of capital and the liquidity of its investments. The Council will also aim to achieve the optimum return on its

investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity. The above guidance from the MHCLG and CIPFA place a high priority on the management of risk. This authority has adopted a prudent approach to managing risk as outlined in the Annual Investment Strategy.

15.4 The Council are asked to approve the Investment Strategy set out in Appendix 2.

16. Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement

16.1 The Council is required to pay off an element of the accumulated general fund capital spend each year (the CFR) through a revenue charge (the Minimum Revenue Provision - MRP) although it is also allowed to undertake additional voluntary payments if required. MHCLG regulations have been issued which require the full Council to approve an MRP Statement in advance of each year. Council are asked to approve the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement set out in Appendix 3.

17. Leasing

17.1. In the past the Council has used operating leases to finance the purchase of vehicles and equipment. The Section 151 Officer will assess the relative merits of operating and finance leases on a case by case basis and enter into the most advantageous. Schools I.T equipment will continue to be internally financed by borrowing against a small fund set against school balances with schools repaying their borrowing over a period of 3 years.

18. Lending to Housing Associations

18.1. As previously approved by full Council, the Council has offered to lend funds to Connexus Housing Ltd (which incorporates South Shropshire Housing Association and the Meres & Mosses Housing Association) and Severnside Housing at an agreed rate.

18.2. It has been agreed that the interest rate charged will depend on the period over which the loan is to be taken and that it will be linked to the applicable PWLB rate plus an administration fee. It has been agreed to offer to lend up to £10 million to each of these Housing Associations in order to support the building of affordable housing and shared office accommodation in Shropshire. For security purposes, each loan has been secured against existing assets held by or owned by the Housing Association. Officers have sought advice from Wragge & Co who have confirmed that the Council has the power to lend funds to Housing Associations under the Housing Act 1996 and have drawn up the legal documentation relating to the loan agreement. To date £9,770,000 has been drawn down by Connexus Housing Ltd and £10,000,000 by Severnside Housing.

18.3. Following Council approval on 28th February 2019, Shropshire Council formed a Wholly Owned Local Housing Company, known as Cornovii Homes. An initial unsecured loan to the Company of £1 million was also approved to provide funding for operating and set up costs. The Council has subsequently approved funding in the form of equity and a loan to facilitate land purchases and development costs. The loan element, totalling £49 million broken down in two agreements of £14 million and £35 million; is anticipated to be released to the Company over the next few financial years.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Treasury Management Practices

Treasury Strategy 2020/21 (Council 27 February 2020)

Treasury Strategy 2020/21 Mid-Year Review (Council 17 December 2020)

Financial Strategy Report 2021/22 to 2025/26 (Cabinet 14 December 2020)

Shrewsbury Shopping Centres Report (Council 14 December 2017)

Cornovii Initial loan approval paper, (Council 28 February 2019)

Cabinet Member : David Minnery, Portfolio Holder for Finance

Local Member

N/A

Appendices:

1 – Prudential Indicators

2 – Council’s Annual Investment Strategy

3 – Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement