Treasury Management Outturn Report 2017/18

1. Introduction

In February 2011 the Authority adopted the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's *Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice* (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Authority to approve a treasury management annual report after the end of each financial year.

This report fulfils the Authority's legal obligation to have regard to the CIPFA Code.

The Authority's treasury management strategy for 2017/18 was approved at a meeting on 10th February 2017. The Authority has 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 risk are therefore central to the Authority's treasury management strategy.

2. Economic commentary

2017-18 was characterised by the push-pull from expectations of tapering of Quantitative Easing (QE) and the potential for increased policy rates in the US and Europe and from geopolitical tensions, which also had an impact.

The UK economy showed signs of slowing with latest estimates showing GDP, helped by an improving global economy, grew by 1.8% in calendar 2017, the same level as in 2016. This was a far better outcome than the majority of forecasts following the EU Referendum in June 2016, but it also reflected the international growth momentum generated by the increasingly buoyant US economy and the re-emergence of the Eurozone economies.

The inflationary impact of rising import prices, a consequence of the fall in sterling associated with the EU referendum result, resulted in year-on-year CPI rising to 3.1% in November before falling back to 2.7% in February 2018. Consumers felt the squeeze as real average earnings growth, i.e. after inflation, turned negative before slowly recovering. The labour market showed resilience as the unemployment rate fell back to 4.3% in January 2018. The inherent weakness in UK business investment was not helped by political uncertainty following the surprise General Election in June and by the lack of clarity on Brexit, the UK and the EU only reaching an agreement in March 2018 on a transition which will now be span Q2 2019 to Q4 2020. The Withdrawal Treaty is yet to be ratified by the UK parliament and those of the other 27 EU member states and new international trading arrangements are yet to be negotiated and agreed.

The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) increased Bank Rate by 0.25% in November 2017. It was significant in that it was the first rate hike in ten years, although in essence the MPC reversed its August 2016 cut following the referendum result. The February *Inflation Report* indicated the MPC was keen to return inflation to the 2% target over a more conventional (18-24 month) horizon with 'gradual' and 'limited' policy tightening. Although in March two MPC members voted to increase policy rates immediately and the MPC itself stopped short of committing itself to the timing of the next increase in rates, the minutes of the meeting suggested that an increase in May 2018 was highly likely.

In contrast, economic activity in the Eurozone gained momentum and although the European Central Bank removed reference to an 'easing bias' in its market communications and had yet to confirm its QE intention when asset purchases end in September 2018, the central bank appeared some way off normalising interest rates. The US economy grew steadily and, with its policy objectives of price stability and maximising employment remaining on track, the Federal Reserve Open Market Committee (FOMC) increased interest rates in December 2017 by 0.25% and again in March, raising the policy rate target range to 1.50% - 1.75%. The Fed is expected to deliver two more increases in 2018 and a further two in 2019. However, the imposition of tariffs on a broadening range of goods initiated by the US, which has led to retaliation by China, could escalate into a deep-rooted trade war having broader economic consequences including inflation rising rapidly, warranting more interest rate hikes.

3. Financial markets

The increase in Bank Rate resulted in higher money markets rates: 1-month, 3-month and 12-month LIBID rates averaged 0.32%, 0.39% and 0.69% and at 31st March 2018 were 0.43%, 0.72% and 1.12% respectively.

Gilt yields displayed significant volatility over the twelve-month period with the change in sentiment in the Bank of England's outlook for interest rates. The yield on the 5-year gilts which had fallen to 0.35% in mid-June rose to 1.65% by the end of March. 10-year gilt yields also rose from their lows of 0.93% in June to 1.65% by mid-February before falling back to 1.35% at year-end. 20-year gilt yields followed an even more erratic path with lows of 1.62% in June, and highs of 2.03% in February, only to plummet back down to 1.70% by the end of the financial year.

The FTSE 100 had a strong finish to calendar 2017, reaching yet another record high of 7688, before plummeting below 7000 at the beginning of 2018 in the global equity correction and sell-off.

4. Credit background

In the first quarter of the financial year, UK bank credit default swaps reached three-year lows on the announcement that the Funding for Lending Scheme, which gave banks access to cheaper funding, was being extended to 2018. For the rest of the year, CDS prices remained broadly flat.

The rules for UK banks' ring-fencing were finalised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and banks began the complex implementation process ahead of the statutory deadline of 1st January 2019. The rating agencies had slightly varying views on the creditworthiness of the restructured entities.

5. Money Market Fund regulation

The new EU regulations for Money Market Funds (MMFs) were finally approved and published in July and existing funds will have to be compliant by no later than 21st January 2019. The key features include Low Volatility Net Asset Value (LVNAV) Money Market Funds which will be permitted to maintain a constant dealing NAV, providing they meet strict new criteria and minimum liquidity requirements. MMFs will not be prohibited from having an external fund rating (as had been suggested in draft regulations). Arlingclose expects most of the short-term MMFs it recommends to convert to the LVNAV structure and awaits confirmation from each fund.

6. Local Authority Regulatory Changes

6.1 Revised CIPFA Codes

CIPFA published revised editions of the Treasury Management and Prudential Codes in December 2017. The required changes from the 2011 Code are being incorporated into Treasury Management Strategies and monitoring reports.

The 2017 Prudential Code introduces the requirement for a Capital Strategy which provides a high-level overview of the long-term context of capital expenditure and investment decisions and their associated risks and rewards along with an overview of how risk is managed for future financial sustainability. Where this strategy is produced and approved by full Council, the determination of the Treasury Management Strategy can be delegated to a committee. The Code also expands on the process and governance issues of capital expenditure and investment decisions.

The Council has prepared the Capital Strategy for 2018/19 as part of the Treasury Management Strategy, and was approved by full Council.

In the 2017 Treasury Management Code the definition of 'investments' has been widened to include financial assets as well as non-financial assets held primarily for financial returns such as investment property. These, along with other investments made for non-treasury management purposes such as loans supporting service outcomes and investments in subsidiaries, must be discussed in the Capital Strategy or Investment Strategy. Additional risks of such investments are to be set out clearly and the impact on financial sustainability is be identified and reported.

6.2 MiFID II

As a result of the second Markets in Financial Instruments Directive (MiFID II), from 3rd January 2018 local authorities were automatically treated as retail clients but could "opt up" to professional client status, providing certain criteria was met which includes having an investment balance of at least £10 million and the person(s) authorised to make investment decisions on behalf of the council have at least a year's relevant professional experience. In addition, the regulated financial services firms to whom this directive applies have had to assess that that person(s) have the expertise, experience and knowledge to make investment decisions and understand the risks involved.

The Council has met the conditions to opt up to professional status and has done so in order to maintain its erstwhile MiFID II status prior to January 2018. The Authority will continue to have access to products including money market funds, pooled funds, treasury bills, bonds, shares and to financial advice.

7. Local Context

On 31st March 2018, the Authority had net borrowing of £53.569m arising from its revenue and capital income and expenditure, an increase on 2016/17 of £10.45m. 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. These factors and the year-on-year change are summarised in table 1 below.

Table 1: Balance Sheet Summary

	31.3.17 Actual £m	2017/18 Movement £m	31.3.18 Actual £m
General Fund CFR	39.310	3.341	42.651
HRA CFR	44.750	-	44.750
Total CFR	**84.060**	**3.341**	**87.401**
Less: Usable reserves	30.150	(1.968)	32.118
Less: Working capital	10.791	(9.077)	1.714
Net borrowing	**43.119**	**10.450**	**53.569**

The Council's strategy was to maintain borrowing and investments below their underlying levels, sometimes known as internal borrowing, in order to reduce risk and keep interest costs low. The treasury management position as at 31st March 2018 and the year-on-year change in show in table 2 below.

Table 2: Treasury Management Summary

	31.3.17 Balance £m	2017/18 Movement £m	31.3.18 Balance £m	31.3.18 Rate %
Long-term borrowing	64.830	(0.544)	64.286	3.76
Short-term borrowing	0	7.80	7.80	0.63
Total borrowing	**64.830**	**7.256**	**72.086**	**3.42**
Long-term investments	-	3.000	3.000	4.14
Short-term investments	21.000	(9.000)	12.000	0.63
Cash and cash equivalents	0.226	2.017	2.243	0.43
Icelandic	0.485	(0.011)	0.474	-
Total investments	**21.711**	**(3.194)**	**18.517**	**1.20**
Net borrowing	**43.119**	**10.450**	**53.569**	

Borrowing Activity

At 31st March 2018, the Authority held £72.086m of loans, an increase of £7.256m on the previous year, as part of its strategy for funding the current years' capital programme and maintaining cashflow. The year-end borrowing position and the year-on-year change in show in table 3 below.

Table 3: Borrowing Position

	31.3.17 Balance £m	2017/18 Movement £m	31.3.18 Balance £m	31.3.18 Rate %
Public Works Loan Board	48.930	(0.544)	48.386	3.68
Banks (LOBO)	15.900	(8.900)	7.000	4.24
Banks (fixed-term)	0	8.900	8.900	3.82
Local authorities (short-term)	0	7.800	7.800	0.63
Total borrowing	**64.830**	**7.256**	**72.086**	**3.42**

The council's chief objective when borrowing has been to strike an appropriately low risk balance between securing low interest costs and achieving cost certainty over the period for which funds are required, with flexibility to renegotiate loans should the Authority's long-term plans change being a secondary objective.

In furtherance of these objectives, no new long term borrowing occurred in 2017/18 apart from temporary borrowing. This strategy enabled the Authority to reduce net borrowing costs and reduce overall treasury risk.

The Authority continues to hold £7m of LOBO (Lender's Option Borrower's Option) loans where the lender has the option to propose an increase in the interest rate as set dates, following which the Authority has the option to either accept the new rate or to repay the loan at no additional cost. No banks exercised their option during 2017/18.

8. Investment Activity

The Authority holds invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves held. During 2017/18, the Authority's investment balance ranged between £15.641 and £30.218 million due to timing differences between income and expenditure. The year-end investment position and the year-on-year change in show in table 4 below.

Table 4: Investment Position (Treasury Investments)

	31.3.17 Balance £m	2017/18 Movement £m	31.3.18 Balance £m	31.3.18 Rate %
Banks & building societies (unsecured)	20.000	(11.000)	9.000	0.62
Government (incl. local authorities)	1.000	2.000	3.000	0.78
Money Market Funds/Call Accounts	300	1.646	1.946	0.43
Property Funds	0	3.000	3.000	4.14
Total investments	**21.300**	**(4.354)**	**16.946**	**1.20**

Both the CIPFA Code and government guidance require the Authority to invest its funds prudently, and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its investments before seeking the highest rate of return, or yield. The Authority'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.

In furtherance of these objectives, and given the increasing risk and low returns from short-term unsecured bank investments, the council diversified into higher yielding asset classes during 2017/18. £3m that is available for longer-term investment was moved from bank and building society deposits into the CCLA Property Fund. As a result, investment risk was lowered, while the average rate of return has increased from 0.54% to 0.80%.

The £3m portfolio of externally managed pooled property fund generated a total return of £53k (4.25%). 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 Authority's investment objectives is regularly reviewed. In light of their strong income generation performance and the Authority's latest cash flow forecasts, investment in these types of pooled funds has been targeted for the 2018/19 financial year.

9. Financial Implications

The outturn for debt interest paid in 2017/18 was £2.434 million (3.67%) on an average debt portfolio of £66.357 million against a budgeted £2.439 million on an average debt portfolio of £65m million at an average interest rate of 3.75%.

The outturn for investment income received in 2017/18 was £431k (0.80%) on an average investment portfolio of £23.507 million against a budgeted £365k on an average investment portfolio of £22 million at an average interest rate of 0.45%.

Net loans and investments budget for 2017/18 was a cost of £389,200 but made an actual return of £318,407, a surplus of £70,793.

10. Compliance Report

The Chief Finance Officer is pleased to report that all treasury management activities undertaken during 2017/18 complied fully with the CIPFA Code of Practice and the Authority's approved Treasury Management. Compliance with the authorised limit and operational boundary for external debt is demonstrated in table 5 below.

Table 5: Debt Limits

	2017/18 Maximum £m	31.3.18 Actual £m	2017/18 Operational Boundary £m	2017/18 Authorised Limit £m	Complied
Borrowing	72.560	72.086	112.000	122.000	✓

Since the operational boundary is a management tool for in-year monitoring it is not significant if the operational boundary is breached on occasions due to variations in cash flow, and this is not counted as a compliance failure. Total debt was never above the operational boundary during 2017/18.

11. Treasury Management Indicators

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

11.1 Security

The Authority has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to credit risk by monitoring the value-weighted average credit rating 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.

	31.3.18 Actual	2017/18 Target	Complied
Portfolio average credit rating	AA-	A	✓

11.2 Maturity Structure of Borrowing

This indicator is set to control the Authority’s exposure to refinancing risk. The upper and lower limits on the maturity structure of fixed rate borrowing were:

	31.3.18 Actual	Upper Limit	Lower Limit	Complied
Under 12 months	11.58%	50%	0%	✓
12 months and within 24 months	0.79%	50%	0%	✓
24 months and within 5 years	2.51%	100%	0%	✓
5 years and within 10 years	5.78%	100%	0%	✓
10 years and above	79.34	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.

11.3 Principal Sums Invested for Periods Longer than 364 days

The purpose of this indicator is to control the Authority’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 were:

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Actual principal invested beyond year end	4m	8m	8m
Limit on principal invested beyond year end	10m	10m	10m
Complied	✓	✓	✓