

# **Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP)**

## **Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2026/27**

### **Introduction**

#### **Background**

- 1 The Authority 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 Authority's low risk appetite, providing adequate liquidity initially before considering investment return.
- 2 The second main function of the treasury management service is the funding of the Authority's capital plans. These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Authority, essentially the longer-term cash flow planning, to ensure that it 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 risk or cost objectives.
- 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.
- 4 CIPFA defines treasury management as:

"The management of the local authority's borrowing, investments and cash flows, including 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."
- 5 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.

#### **Reporting Requirements**

#### **Capital Strategy**

- 6 The CIPFA 2021 Prudential and Treasury Management Codes require all local authorities to prepare a Capital Strategy report which 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

7 The aim of the strategy is to ensure that all the Authority's elected members fully understand the overall long-term policy objectives and resulting Capital Strategy requirements, governance procedures and risk appetite.

8 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.

## **Treasury Management Reporting**

9 The Authority is currently required to receive and approve, as a minimum, three main treasury reports each year, which incorporate a variety of policies, estimates and actuals.

- a) **Prudential and treasury indicators and treasury strategy** (this report) - The first, and most important report is forward looking and covers: -
  - the capital plans, (including prudential indicators)
  - a minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy, (how residual capital expenditure is charged to revenue over time)
  - the Treasury Management Strategy, (how the investments and borrowings are to be organised), including treasury indicators; and
  - an Annual Investment Strategy, (the parameters on how investments are to be managed)
- b) **A mid-year treasury management report** – This is primarily a progress report and will update members on the capital position, amending prudential indicators as necessary, and whether any policies require revision. In addition, this Authority will receive quarterly update reports.
- c) **An annual treasury report** – This is a backward-looking review document and provides details of a selection of actual prudential and treasury indicators and actual treasury operations compared to the estimates within the strategy.

## **Scrutiny**

10 The above reports are required to be adequately scrutinised before being recommended to Full Council. This role is undertaken by the Audit and Governance Committee.

11 **Quarterly reports** – In addition to the three major reports detailed above quarterly reporting (end of June/end of December) are also required. However, these additional reports do not have to be reported to Full Council but do require to be adequately scrutinised. This role is undertaken by the Audit and Governance Committee. (The reports, specifically, should comprise updated Treasury/Prudential Indicators.)

## **Treasury Management Strategy for 2026/27**

12 The strategy for 2026/27 covers two main areas:

### **Capital issues**

- the capital plans and the prudential indicators;
- the minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy.

### **Treasury management issues**

- the current treasury position;
- treasury indicators which limit the treasury risk and activities of the Council;
- prospects for interest rates;
- the borrowing strategy;
- policy on borrowing in advance of need;
- debt rescheduling;
- the investment strategy;
- creditworthiness policy; and
- policy on use of external service providers.

13 These elements cover the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003, DLUHC Investment Guidance, DLUHC MRP Guidance, the CIPFA Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code.

## **Training**

14 The CIPFA Treasury Management Code requires the responsible officer to ensure that members with responsibility for treasury management receive adequate training in treasury management. This especially applies to members responsible for scrutiny.

15 Furthermore, pages 47 and 48 of the Code state that they expect “all organisations to have a formal and comprehensive knowledge and skills or training policy for the effective acquisition and retention of treasury management knowledge and skills for those responsible for management, delivery, governance and decision making.

16 The scale and nature of this will depend on the size and complexity of the organisation’s treasury management needs. Organisations should consider how to assess whether treasury management staff and board/ council members have the required knowledge and skills to undertake their roles and whether they have been able to maintain those skills and keep them up to date.

17 As a minimum, authorities should carry out the following to monitor and review knowledge and skills:

- Record attendance at training and ensure action is taken where poor attendance is identified.
- Prepare tailored learning plans for treasury management officers and council members.
- Require treasury management officers and council members to undertake self-

assessment against the required competencies (as set out in the schedule that may be adopted by the organisation).

- Have regular communication with officers and council members, encouraging them to highlight training needs on an ongoing basis.

- 18 In further support of the revised training requirements, CIPFA's Better Governance Forum and Treasury Management Network have produced a 'self-assessment by members responsible for the scrutiny of treasury management', which is available from the CIPFA website to download.
- 19 The following training has been undertaken by members on the 20th November 2025 and further training will be arranged as required.
- 20 The training needs of treasury management officers are periodically reviewed.
- 21 A formal record of the training received by officers central to the Treasury function will be maintained by the Finance Manager - Techincal. Similarly, a formal record of the treasury management/capital finance training received by members will also be maintained by the Finance Manager - Techincal.

### **Treasury management consultants**

- 22 The Councils Treasury Management advisors are MUFG Corporate Markets.
- 23 The Council recognises that responsibility for treasury management decisions remains with the organisation at all times and will ensure that undue reliance is not placed upon our external service providers. It also recognises that there is value in employing external providers of treasury management services in order to acquire access to specialist skills and resources.
- 24 It also recognises that there is value in employing external providers of treasury management services to acquire access to specialist skills and resources. The Authority will ensure that the terms of their appointment and the methods by which their value will be assessed are properly agreed and documented and subjected to regular review.

## **The Capital Prudential Indicators 2026/27 – 2028/29**

- 25 The Authority's capital expenditure plans are the key driver of treasury management activity. The output of the capital expenditure plans is reflected in the prudential indicators, which are designed to assist members' overview and confirm capital expenditure plans.

### **Capital expenditure and Financing**

- 26 This prudential indicator is a summary of the Council's capital expenditure plans, both those agreed previously, and those forming part of this budget cycle. Members are asked to approve the capital expenditure forecasts:

<b>Capital expenditure</b>	<b>2024/25 Actual £'000</b>	<b>2025/26 Estimate £'000</b>	<b>2026/27 Estimate £'000</b>	<b>2027/28 Estimate £'000</b>	<b>2028/29 Estimate £'000</b>
General Fund	102,652	98,917	107,517	66,722	34,211
HRA	29,129	44,481	43,083	43,835	38,308
<b>Total</b>	<b>131,781</b>	<b>143,398</b>	<b>150,600</b>	<b>110,557</b>	<b>72,519</b>

27 The following tables summarise the above capital expenditure plans and how these plans are being financed by capital or revenue resources. Any shortfall of resources results in a funding borrowing need.

### General Fund Capital Expenditure

Capital expenditure	2024/25 Actual £'000	2025/26 Estimate £'000	2026/27 Estimate £'000	2027/28 Estimate £'000	2028/29 Estimate £'000
<b>General Fund Total</b>	<b>102,652</b>	<b>98,917</b>	<b>107,517</b>	<b>66,722</b>	<b>34,211</b>
<b>Financed by:</b>					
Capital receipts	-	1,287	-	-	-
Capital grants & Contributions	57,554	75,592	76,159	45,952	30,671
Revenue, S106 and CIL financing	3,709	7,894	15,398	3,088	518
Prudential Borrowing	41,389	14,144	15,960	17,682	3,022
<b>Total financing for the year</b>	<b>102,652</b>	<b>98,917</b>	<b>107,517</b>	<b>66,722</b>	<b>34,211</b>

### HRA Capital Expenditure

Capital expenditure	2024/25 Actual £'000	2025/26 Estimate £'000	2026/27 Estimate £'000	2027/28 Estimate £'000	2028/29 Estimate £'000
<b>HRA Total</b>	<b>29,129</b>	<b>44,481</b>	<b>43,083</b>	<b>43,835</b>	<b>38,308</b>
<b>Financed by:</b>					
Capital receipts	2,107	5,261	3,564	2,144	1,732
Capital grants & Contributions	10,698	6,660	11,733	5,253	2,598
Revenue, S106 and CIL financing	3,122	6,144	6,640	3,500	5,000
Major Repairs Allowance	13,202	16,806	16,434	16,498	17,025
Prudential Borrowing	-	9,610	4,712	16,440	11,953
<b>Total financing for the year</b>	<b>29,129</b>	<b>44,481</b>	<b>43,083</b>	<b>43,835</b>	<b>38,308</b>

### The Council's borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement)

28 The second prudential indicator is the Council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). The CFR is simply the total historic outstanding capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for from either revenue or capital resources. It is essentially a measure of the Council's underlying borrowing need. Any capital expenditure above, which has not immediately been paid for through a revenue or capital resource, will increase the CFR.

29 The CFR does not increase indefinitely, as the minimum revenue provision (MRP) is a statutory annual revenue charge which broadly reduces the indebtedness in line with each asset's life, and so charges the economic consumption of capital assets as they are used.

30 The CFR includes any other long-term liabilities (e.g. PFI schemes, finance leases). Whilst these increase the CFR, and therefore the Council's borrowing requirement, these types of scheme include a borrowing facility and so the Council is not required to separately borrow for these schemes.

31 The Council is asked to approve the CFR projections:

	2024/25 Actual £'000	2025/26 Estimate £'000	2026/27 Estimate £'000	2027/28 Estimate £'000	2028/29 Estimate £'000
<b>Capital Financing Requirement</b>					
CFR - General Fund	405,482	407,330	410,994	416,380	407,106
CFR - HRA	137,782	146,392	150,104	165,544	176,497
<b>Total CFR</b>	<b>543,264</b>	<b>553,722</b>	<b>561,098</b>	<b>581,924</b>	<b>583,603</b>
<b>Movement in CFR</b>	26,008	10,458	7,376	20,826	1,679
<b>Movement in CFR represented</b>					
Net movement in borrowing for the year (above)	41,389	23,754	20,672	34,122	14,975
Less MRP/VRP and other financing movements	(12,307)	(13,296)	(13,296)	(13,296)	(13,296)
<b>Movement in CFR</b>	<b>29,082</b>	<b>10,458</b>	<b>7,376</b>	<b>20,826</b>	<b>1,679</b>

32 A key aspect of the regulatory and professional guidance is that elected members are aware of the size and scope of any borrowing in relation to the authority's overall financial position. The capital expenditure figures and the details above demonstrate the scope of this activity and, by approving these figures, consider the scale proportionate to the Council's remaining activity.

### Liability Benchmark

33 The Authority is required to estimate and measure the Liability Benchmark for the forthcoming financial year and the following two financial years, as a minimum.

34 There are four components to the LB: -

- Existing loan debt outstanding:** the Authority's existing loans that are still outstanding in future years.
- Loans CFR:** this is calculated in accordance with the loans CFR definition in the Prudential Code and projected into the future based on approved prudential borrowing and planned MRP.
- Net loans requirement:** this will show the Authority's gross loan debt less treasury management investments at the last financial year-end, projected into the future and based on its approved prudential borrowing, planned MRP and any other major cash flows forecast.
- Liability benchmark (or gross loans requirement):** this equals net loans requirement plus short-term liquidity allowance.

35 Appendix 4 to this strategy illustrates the graphical estimate of the liability benchmark for the general fund and HRA separately. It confirms both funds have net loan requirement supported by the internal borrowing capacity of the authority. This benchmark will continually be updated and referred to as new borrowing is considered in the medium term.

## Core Funds and Expected Investment Balances

36 The application of resources (capital receipts, reserves etc.) to either finance capital expenditure or other budget decisions to support the revenue budget will have an ongoing impact on investments unless resources are supplemented each year from new sources (asset sales etc.). Detailed below are estimates of the year-end balances for each resource and anticipated day-to-day cash flow balances.

	2024/25 Actual £'000	2025/26 Estimate £'000	2026/27 Estimate £'000	2027/28 Estimate £'000	2028/29 Estimate £'000
Fund balances / reserves	99,636	99,636	99,636	99,636	99,636
Capital receipts	11,898	11,898	11,898	11,898	11,898
Provisions	26,633	26,633	26,633	26,633	26,633
Other	(49,383)	(119,226)	(210,776)	(348,101)	(554,089)
<b>Total core funds</b>	<b>88,784</b>	<b>18,941</b>	<b>(72,609)</b>	<b>(209,934)</b>	<b>(415,922)</b>
Working Capital*	(99,796)	(99,796)	(99,796)	(99,796)	(99,796)
Under/over borrowing	167,066	122,408	61,783	14,608	(51,714)
<b>Expected Internal Investments</b>	<b>67,270</b>	<b>22,612</b>	<b>(38,013)</b>	<b>(85,188)</b>	<b>(151,510)</b>

\*Working capital balances shown are estimated year-end; these may be higher mid-year

## Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy statement

37 The Authority's MRP policy was amended in 2023/24 following a comprehensive review of MRP charges and methodology. This updated policy reflects the new MRP calculation methods to be implemented.

38 For supported capital expenditure incurred before 1st April 2008, the Authority will apply the Asset Life Method using an annuity calculation.

39 Unsupported borrowing will be subject to MRP under option 3 of the guidance (Asset Life Method). MRP will be based on the estimated life of the assets in accordance with the statutory guidance using the annuity method, calculated on a weighted average basis, where appropriate.

40 MRP in respect of unsupported borrowing taken to meet expenditure, which is treated as capital expenditure by virtue of either a capitalisation direction or regulations, will be determined in accordance with the asset lives as recommended by the statutory guidance.

41 The interest rate applied to the annuity calculations will reflect the market conditions at the time, and will for the current financial year be based on PWLB annuity rates

42 Where applicable, repayments included in annual PFI or finance leases are applied as MRP.

43 MRP Overpayments - The MRP Guidance allows that any charges made in excess of the statutory minimum revenue provision (MRP), i.e. voluntary revenue provision or overpayments, can be reclaimed in later years if deemed necessary or prudent. In order for these sums to be reclaimed for use in the budget, this policy must disclose the cumulative overpayment made each year. The cumulative amount of VRP overpayments made between 1 April 2023 and 31st March 2025 was £12.8m.

44 MRP will commence in the year following the year in which capital expenditure financed from borrowing is incurred, except for asset under construction where the MRP will be deferred until the year after the asset becomes operational.

## Borrowing

45 The capital expenditure plans set out earlier provide details of the service activity of the Authority. The treasury management function ensures that the Authority's cash is organised in accordance with the relevant professional codes, so that sufficient cash is available to meet this service activity and the Authority's Capital Strategy. This will involve both the organisation of the cash flow and, where capital plans require, the organisation of appropriate borrowing facilities. The strategy covers the relevant treasury / prudential indicators, the current and projected debt positions, and the Annual Investment Strategy.

### Current portfolio position

46 The overall Treasury Management portfolio as at 31 March 2025 and for the position as at 31 December 2025 are shown below for both borrowing and investments.

	Actual 31/03/2025 £'000	Actual 31/03/2025 %	Current 31/12/2025 £'000	Current 31/12/2025 %
<b>Treasury investments</b>				
Money Market Funds	650	25%	7,825	11%
Bank Deposits	0	0%	0	0%
DMADF	1,900	75%	0	0%
Local Authorities	0	0%	65,000	89%
<b>Total Treasury Investments</b>	<b>2,550</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>72,825</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Treasury External Borrowing</b>				
PWLB	188,896	51%	188,896	44%
Local Authorities	121,500	33%	181,000	42%
Private Sector	60,563	16%	58,388	14%
<b>Total External Borrowing</b>	<b>370,959</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>428,284</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Net treasury investment / (borrowing)</b>	<b>(368,409)</b>		<b>(355,459)</b>	

47 The Authority's forward projections for borrowing are summarised below. The table shows the actual external debt, against the underlying capital borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement - CFR), highlighting any over or under borrowing.

	2024/25 Actual £'000	2025/26 Estimate £'000	2026/27 Estimate £'000	2027/28 Estimate £'000	2028/29 Estimate £'000
<b>External Debt</b>					
Treasury Debt 1st April	295,126	370,960	426,718	495,361	564,004
PFI and Finance Lease Liability	5,238	4,596	3,954	3,312	2,670
Expected change in Debt	75,834	55,758	68,643	68,643	68,643
<b>Actual gross debt at 31 March</b>	<b>376,198</b>	<b>431,314</b>	<b>499,315</b>	<b>567,316</b>	<b>635,317</b>
<b>The Capital Financing Requirement</b>	<b>543,264</b>	<b>553,722</b>	<b>561,098</b>	<b>581,924</b>	<b>583,603</b>
<b>Under / (over) borrowing</b>	<b>167,066</b>	<b>122,408</b>	<b>61,783</b>	<b>14,608</b>	<b>(51,714)</b>

48 Within the range of prudential indicators there are several key indicators to ensure that the Authority operates its activities within well-defined limits. One of these is that the Authority needs to ensure that its gross debt does not, except in the short-term, exceed the total of the CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2026/27 and the following two financial years. This allows some

flexibility for limited early borrowing for future years but ensures that borrowing is not undertaken for revenue or speculative purposes.

49 The S151 officer reports that the Authority complied with this prudential indicator in the current year and does not envisage difficulties for the future. This view takes account of current commitments, existing plans and the proposals in this budget report.

### Treasury Indicators: limits to borrowing activity

50 **The operational boundary.** This is the limit beyond which external debt is not normally expected to exceed. In most cases, this would be a similar figure to the CFR, but may be lower or higher depending on the levels of actual debt.

51 **The authorised limit for external debt.** A further key prudential indicator represents a control on the maximum level of borrowing. This represents a limit beyond which external debt is prohibited, and this limit needs to be set or revised by the full Council. It reflects the level of external debt which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable in the longer term.

a This is the statutory limit determined under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003. The Government retains an option to control either the total of all Councils' plans, or those of a specific Council, although this power has not yet been exercised.

b The Audit and Governance Committee is asked to approve the following authorised limit:

	2024/25 Actual £'000	2025/26 Estimate £'000	2026/27 Estimate £'000	2027/28 Estimate £'000	2028/29 Estimate £'000
Operational Boundary	775	800	825	850	850
Authorised Limit	810	835	860	895	895

### Prospects for interest rates

52 The Council has appointed MUFG Corporate Markets as its treasury advisor and part of their service is to assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates. MUFG Corporate Markets provided the following forecasts on 11.08.25. These are forecasts for Bank Rate, average earnings and PWLB certainty rates, gilt yields plus 80 bps.

MUFG Corporate Markets Interest Rate View 11.08.25													
	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27	Jun-27	Sep-27	Dec-27	Mar-28	Jun-28	Sep-28
BANK RATE	4.00	4.00	3.75	3.75	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25
3 month ave earnings	4.00	4.00	3.80	3.80	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30
6 month ave earnings	4.00	3.90	3.70	3.70	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.30	3.30	3.40	3.40	3.40
12 month ave earnings	4.00	3.90	3.70	3.70	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.30	3.40	3.50	3.60	3.60
5 yr PWLB	4.80	4.70	4.50	4.40	4.30	4.30	4.30	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.10	4.10
10 yr PWLB	5.30	5.20	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.80	4.80	4.70	4.70	4.70	4.70	4.60	4.60
25 yr PWLB	6.10	5.90	5.70	5.70	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.40	5.40	5.30	5.30	5.30	5.20
50 yr PWLB	5.80	5.60	5.40	5.40	5.30	5.30	5.30	5.20	5.20	5.10	5.10	5.00	5.00

*Additional notes by MUFG Corporate Markets on this forecast table: -*

53 Our last interest rate forecast update was undertaken six months ago, in February 2025. Throughout the intervening period we have successfully forecast a gradual reduction in Bank Rate, although we were not overly persuaded that a cut in August was the correct policy, given even the Bank of England anticipates CPI inflation hitting 4% in the autumn. As it happened, a 5-4 split vote for a rate cut to

4% laid bare the different views within the Monetary Policy Committee, with the accompanying commentary noting the decision was “finely balanced” and that future rate cuts would be undertaken “gradually and carefully”.

54 What we also know after last week’s release of the Bank of England’s Quarterly Monetary Policy Report is that annual UK GDP is expected to be in the region of 1.2% for Q3 2025, rising to 1.7% by Q3 2028. The Bank anticipates wage growth to moderate to a sustainable 3.75% and CPI inflation to return to 2% in around 18 months’ time.

55 With the August rate cut now done, we are comfortable revising our previous forecast for a November rate cut, instead pushing that back to February 2026, on the basis that CPI inflation should have peaked by then and will be on a slow downwards trajectory back to 2% by 2027. Further gradual reductions in Bank Rate to 3.25% are then anticipated but, and it is a big BUT, only if inflation and employment data are supportive of such cuts.

### **Borrowing strategy**

56 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 have been used as a temporary measure. This strategy is prudent as medium and longer dated borrowing rates are expected to fall from their current levels, albeit only once prevailing inflation concerns are addressed by restrictive near-term monetary policy. That is, Bank Rate remains relatively elevated in 2026 even if further rate cuts arise.

57 Against this background and the risks within the economic forecast, caution will be adopted with the 2026/27 treasury operations. The Director of Finance will monitor interest rates in financial markets and adopt a pragmatic approach to changing circumstances:

- if it was felt that there was a significant risk of a sharp FALL in borrowing rates, then borrowing will be postponed.
- if it was felt that there was a significant risk of a much sharper RISE in borrowing rates than that currently forecast, fixed rate funding will be drawn whilst interest rates are lower than they are projected to be in the next few years.

58 Any decisions will be reported to the appropriate decision making body at the next available opportunity.

### **Policy on borrowing in advance of need**

59 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 that value for money can be demonstrated and that the Council can ensure the security of such funds.

60 Risks associated with any borrowing in advance of activity will be subject to prior appraisal and subsequent reporting through the mid-year or annual reporting mechanism.

### **Debt rescheduling**

61 Rescheduling of current borrowing in our debt portfolio may be considered whilst premature redemption rates remain elevated but only if there is surplus cash available to facilitate any repayment, or rebalancing of the portfolio to provide more certainty is considered appropriate.

62 If rescheduling was done, it will be reported to the Audit and Governance Committee, at the earliest meeting following its action.

### **Approved Sources of Long- and Short-term Borrowing**

<b>On Balance Sheet</b>	<b>Fixed</b>	<b>Variable</b>
PWLB	●	●
Community municipal bonds	●	●
UK Municipal bond agency	●	●
Local authorities	●	●
Banks	●	●
Pension funds	●	●
Insurance companies	●	●
UK Infrastructure Bank	●	●
Market (long-term)	●	●
Market (temporary)	●	●
Market (LOBOs)	●	●
Stock issues	●	●
Local temporary	●	●
Local Bonds	●	●
Local authority bills	●	●
Overdraft	●	●
Negotiable Bonds	●	●
Internal (capital receipts & revenue balances)	●	●
Commercial Paper	●	●
Medium Term Notes	●	●
Finance leases	●	●

## **Annual Investment Strategy**

### **Investment Policy**

63 The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) 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, (a separate report).

64 The Council's investment policy has regard to the following: -

- DLUHC's Guidance on Local Government Investments ("the Guidance")
- CIPFA Treasury Management in Public Services Code of Practice and Cross Sectoral Guidance Notes 2021 ("the Code")
- CIPFA Treasury Management Guidance Notes 2021

**The Council's investment priorities will be security first, portfolio liquidity second and then yield, (return).**

65 In the current economic climate, it is considered appropriate to maintain a degree of liquidity to cover cash flow needs but to also consider "laddering" investments for periods up to 12 months with high credit rated financial institutions, whilst investment rates remain elevated, as well as wider range fund options.

66 The above guidance from the DLUHC and CIPFA places a high priority on the management of risk. This Authority has adopted a prudent approach to managing risk and defines its risk appetite by the following means: -

- a) Minimum acceptable credit criteria are applied in order to generate a list of highly creditworthy counterparties. This also enables diversification and thus avoidance of concentration risk. The key ratings used to monitor counterparties are the short-term and long-term ratings.
- b) Other information: ratings will not be the sole determinant of the quality of an institution; it is important to continually assess and monitor the financial sector on both a micro and macro basis and in relation to the economic and political environments in which institutions operate. The assessment will also take account of information that reflects the opinion of the markets. To achieve this consideration the Authority will engage with its advisors to maintain a monitor on market pricing such as "credit default swaps" and overlay that information on top of the credit ratings.
- c) Other information sources used will include the financial press, share price and other such information pertaining to the financial sector in order to establish the most robust scrutiny process on the suitability of potential investment counterparties.
- d) This Authority has engaged external consultants, to provide expert advice on how to optimise an appropriate balance of security, liquidity and yield, given the risk appetite of this Authority in the context of the expected level of cash balances and need for liquidity throughout the year.
- e) All investments will be denominated in sterling.
- f) As a result of the change in accounting standards under IFRS 9, this Authority will consider the implications of investment instruments which could result in an adverse movement in the value of the amount invested and resultant charges at the end of the year to the General Fund. (In November 2018, the MHCLG, concluded a consultation for a temporary override to allow English local authorities time to adjust their portfolio of pooled investments by announcing a statutory override to delay implementation of IFRS 9 for five years ending 31.3.23. Subsequently, a further extension to the over-ride to 31.3.29 was agreed by Government but only for those pooled investments made before 1st April 2024.

67 However, this Authority will also pursue value for money in treasury management and will monitor the yield from investment income against appropriate benchmarks for investment performance. Regular monitoring of investment performance will be carried out during the year.

### **Creditworthiness policy**

68 The primary principle governing the Council's investment criteria is the security of its investments, although the yield or return on the investment is also a key consideration. After this main principle, the Council will ensure that:

- a It maintains a policy covering both the categories of investment types it will invest in, criteria for choosing investment counterparties with adequate security, and monitoring their security. This is set out in the specified and non-specified investment sections below; and
- b It has sufficient liquidity in its investments. For this purpose, it will set out procedures for determining the maximum periods for which funds may prudently be committed. These procedures also apply to the Council's prudential indicators covering the maximum principal sums invested.

69 The Chief Financial Officer will maintain a counterparty list in compliance with the following criteria and will revise the criteria and submit them to Council for approval as necessary. These criteria are separate to which types of investment instruments that can be used as it provides an overall pool of counterparties considered high quality which the Council may use, rather than defining what types of investment instruments are to be used.

70 Credit rating information is supplied by MUFG Corporate Markets, our treasury consultants, on all active counterparties that comply with the criteria below. Any counterparty failing to meet the criteria would be omitted from the counterparty (dealing) list. Any rating changes, rating watches (notification of a likely change), rating outlooks (notification of a possible longer-term change) are provided to officers almost immediately after they occur, and this information is considered before dealing. For instance, a negative rating watch applying to a counterparty at the minimum Council criteria will be suspended from use, with all others being reviewed in light of market conditions.

71 The criteria for providing a pool of high-quality investment counterparties (both specified and non-specified investments) is:

### **Sovereign Ratings**

- AAA (non-UK)

*(Rating Description: AAA = Prime Rating, AA+, AA, AA- = High Grade Rating)*

Appendix 2 sets out the current list of countries that the Council can invest funds with.

The UK sovereign rating is currently AA. To ensure that the Treasury Function has capacity to operate effectively no specific minimum UK sovereign rating has been set out.

### **Selection Criteria**

72 Banks 1 - the Council will use UK and non-UK banks which have, as a minimum at least one of, the following Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poors credit ratings (where rated):

	Fitch	Moody's	Standard & Poors
Short Term	F1	P1	A-1
Long Term	A-	A3	A-

73 Investments will include term deposits, call accounts, notice accounts and Certificate of Deposits.

- a Banks 2 – Part nationalised UK bank – Royal Bank of Scotland ring-fenced operations. This bank can be included provided it continues to be part nationalised or it meets the ratings in Banks 1 above.
- b Banks 3 – The Council's own bankers (HSBC, Lloyds and Barclays) for transactional purposes if the bank falls below the above criteria, although in this case balances will be minimised in both monetary size and time.
- c Bank subsidiary and treasury operation - The Council will use these where the parent bank has provided an appropriate guarantee or has the necessary ratings outlined above.
- d Building societies. The Council will use societies which meet the ratings for Banks 1 outlined above.
- e Money Market Funds (MMFs) Constant net asset value (CNAV)
- f Money Market Funds (MMFs) Low-Volatility net asset value (LVNAV)
- g Money Market Funds (MMFs) Variable net asset value (VNAV)
- h Ultra-Short Dated Bond Funds with a credit rating of at least 1.25
- i Ultra-Short Dated Bond Funds with a credit rating of at least 1.50
- j Cash Plus Funds
- k UK Government (including gilts, Treasury Bills and the Debt Management Account Deposit Facility (DMADF))
- l Local authorities, Police and Fire Authorities, Parish Councils, BCP Council Companies (Subsidiaries) and Partnerships.
- m Pooled Funds

#### **Maximum Time and Monetary Limits applying to Investments**

74 The maximum amount that can be invested in any one institution at the time of the investment (including call accounts) as a percentage of the total investment portfolio has been reviewed and rationalised. All AA- and above rated institutions have a maximum limit of 25%, all A+, A or A- rated institutions have a maximum limit of 20%. For practical reasons where the average investment balance falls

below £10m it may become necessary to increase the percentage limit to 33% at the time of investment (this only applies to call accounts and money market funds).

75 The maximum time and monetary limits for institutions on the Council's Counterparty List are as follows (these will cover both Specified and Non-Specified Investments):

	Long Term Rating	Money Limit	Time Limit
Banks 1 higher quality	AA-	25%	2 years
Banks 1 medium quality	A	20%	1 year
Banks 1 lower quality	A-	20%	6 months
Banks 2 category – part-nationalised	N/A	20%	2 years
Limit 3 category – Council's banker Barclays	AA-	25%	3 months
DMADF	UK sovereign rating	Unlimited	6 months
Local Authorities	N/A	20%	5 years
Money Market Funds CNAV	AAA	25%	Instant access
Money Market Funds LVNAV	AAA	25%	Instant access
Money Market Funds VNAV	AAA	25%	Instant access
Ultra-Short Dated Bond Funds	N/A	25%	Unlimited

### **Use of additional information other than credit ratings**

76 Additional requirements under the Code require the Council to supplement credit rating information. Whilst the above criteria relies primarily on the application of credit ratings to provide a pool of appropriate counterparties for officers to use, additional operational market information will be applied before making any specific investment decision from the agreed pool of counterparties. This additional market information will be applied to compare the relative security of differing investment counterparties.

### **Investment strategy**

#### **In-house funds**

77 Investments will be made with reference to the core balance and cash flow requirements and the outlook for short-term interest rates (i.e. rates for investments up to 12 months).

### **Investment returns expectations**

78 Bank Rate is forecast to over the next two years reaching 3.25% by 2027.

79 The suggested budgeted investment earnings rates for returns on investments placed for periods up to about three months during each financial year were updated on 11 August 2025 and are as follows: -

<b>Average earnings in each year</b>	<b>Now</b>	<b>Previously</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>2025/26 (residual)</b>	3.90	4.10
<b>2026/27</b>	3.60	3.60
<b>2027/28</b>	3.30	3.50
<b>2028/29</b>	3.50	3.50
<b>2029/30</b>	3.50	3.50
<b>Years 6-10</b>	3.50	3.50
<b>Years 10+</b>	3.50	3.50

### **Investment treasury limit**

80 The maximum period for investments will be 5 years.

### **Ethical Investing**

81 This is an area of investing that is becoming increasingly considered by financial institutions and customers. Products from financial institutions are growing but still remain limited. To consider investing in sustainable deposits they will still need to meet our counterparty criteria and parameters set out earlier in the strategy. Investment guidance, both statutory and from CIPFA, makes clear that all investing must adopt SLY principles – security, liquidity and yield: ethical issues must play a subordinate role to those priorities. The Treasury team will continue to explore this area and report to members of any further developments.

### **Treasury Management Policy, Practices and Schedules**

82 The Treasury Management Policy, Practices and Schedules will be presented alongside this 2026/27 update of the TM Strategy.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Economic Background

Appendix 2 - Approved Countries for investments

Appendix 3 - The Treasury Management role of the S151 Officer

Appendix 4 - Liability Benchmarking – GF and HRA

## **Appendix 1: Economic Background (provided by MUFG Corporate Markets)**

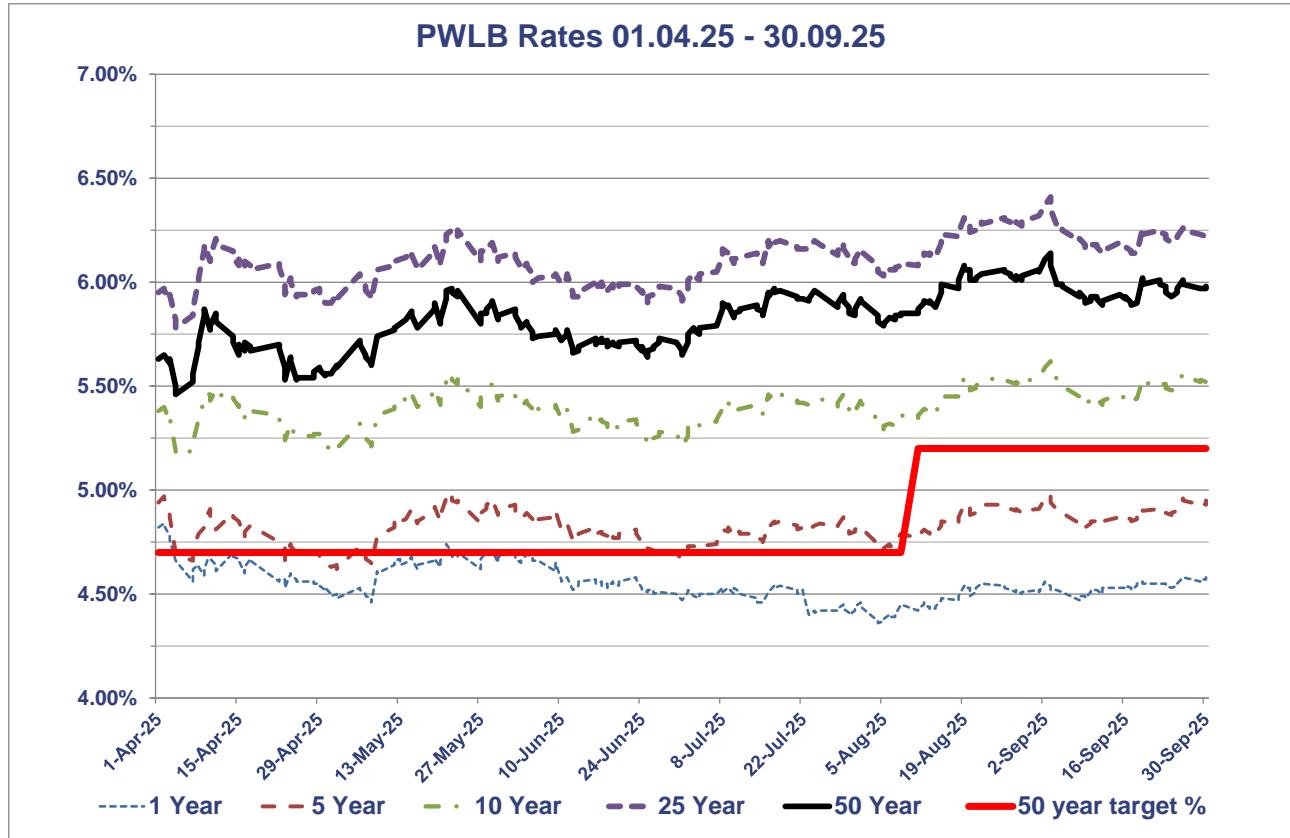
- The first half of 2025/26 saw:
  - A 0.3% pick up in GDP for the period April to June 2025. More recently, the economy flatlined in July, with higher taxes for businesses restraining growth, but picked up to 0.1% m/m in August before falling back by 0.1% m/m in September.
  - The 3m/yy rate of average earnings growth excluding bonuses has fallen from 5.5% to 4.6% in September.
  - CPI inflation has ebbed and flowed but finished September at 3.8%, whilst core inflation eased to 3.5%.
  - The Bank of England cut interest rates from 4.50% to 4.25% in May, and then to 4% in August.
  - The 10-year gilt yield fluctuated between 4.4% and 4.8%, ending the half year at 4.70% (before falling back to 4.43% in early November).
- From a GDP perspective, the financial year got off to a bumpy start with the 0.3% m/m fall in real GDP in April as front-running of US tariffs in Q1 (when GDP grew 0.7% on the quarter) weighed on activity. Despite the underlying reasons for the drop, it was still the first fall since October 2024 and the largest fall since October 2023. However, the economy surprised to the upside in May and June so that quarterly growth ended up 0.3% q/q. Nonetheless, the 0.0% m/m change in real GDP in July, followed by a 0.1% m/m increase in August and a 0.1% decrease in September will have caused some concern. GDP growth for 2025 and 2026 is currently forecast by the Bank of England to be in the region of 1.4% before picking up in 2027.
- Sticking with future economic sentiment, the composite Purchasing Manager Index (PMI) for the UK increased to 52.2 in October. The manufacturing PMI output balance improved to just below 50 but it is the services sector (52.2) that continues to drive the economy forward. Nonetheless, the PMIs suggest tepid growth is the best that can be expected in the second half of 2025 and the start of 2026. Indeed, on 13 November we heard that GDP for July to September was 0.1% q/q.
- Turning to retail sales volumes, and the 1.5% year-on-year rise in September, accelerating from a 0.7% increase in August, marked the highest gain since April. On a monthly basis, retail sales volumes rose 0.5%, defying forecasts of a 0.2% fall, following an upwardly revised 0.6% gain in August. Household spending remains surprisingly resilient, but the headwinds are gathering.
- With the November Budget edging nearer, the public finances position looks weak. The £20.2 billion borrowed in September was slightly above the £20.1 billion forecast by the OBR. For the year to date, the £99.8 billion borrowed is the second highest for the April to September period since records began in 1993, surpassed only by borrowing during the COVID-19 pandemic. The main drivers of the increased borrowing were higher debt interest costs, rising government running costs, and increased inflation-linked benefit payments, which outweighed the rise in tax and National Insurance contributions.
- The weakening in the jobs market looked clear in the spring. May's 109,000 m/m fall in the PAYE measure of employment was the largest decline (barring the pandemic) since the data began and the seventh in as many months. The monthly change was revised lower in five of the previous seven months too, with April's 33,000 fall revised down to a 55,000 drop. More recently, however, the monthly change was revised higher in seven of the previous nine months by a total of 22,000. So instead of falling by 165,000 in total since October, payroll employment is now thought to have declined by a smaller 153,000. Even so, payroll employment has still fallen in nine of the ten months since the Chancellor announced the rises in National Insurance Contributions (NICs) for employers and the minimum wage in the October 2024 Budget. The number of job vacancies in the three months to October 2025 stood at 723,000 (the peak was 1.3 million in spring 2022). All this suggests the labour market continues to loosen, albeit at a slow pace.
- A looser labour market is driving softer wage pressures. The 3m/yy rate of average earnings growth excluding bonuses has fallen from 5.5% in April to 4.6% in September. The rate for the private sector slipped from 4.3% to 4.2%.

- CPI inflation remained at 3.8% in September, whilst core inflation fell to 3.5%. Services inflation stayed at 4.7%. A further loosening in the labour market and weaker wage growth may be a requisite to UK inflation coming in below 2.0% by 2027.
- An ever-present issue throughout recent months has been the pressure being exerted on medium and longer dated gilt yields. The yield on the 10-year gilt moved sideways in the second quarter of 2025, rising from 4.4% in early April to 4.8% in mid-April following wider global bond market volatility stemming from the “Liberation Day” tariff announcement, and then easing back as trade tensions began to de-escalate. By the end of April, the 10-year gilt yield had returned to 4.4%. In May, concerns about stickier inflation and shifting expectations about the path for interest rates led to another rise, with the 10-year gilt yield fluctuating between 4.6% and 4.75% for most of May. Thereafter, as trade tensions continued to ease and markets increasingly began to price in looser monetary policy, the 10-year yield edged lower, and ended June at 4.50%.
- More recently, the yield on the 10-year gilt rose from 4.46% to 4.60% in early July as rolled-back spending cuts and uncertainty over Chancellor Reeves’ future raised fiscal concerns. Although the spike proved short lived, it highlighted the UK’s fragile fiscal position. In an era of high debt, high interest rates and low GDP growth, the markets are now more sensitive to fiscal risks than before the pandemic. During August, long-dated gilts underwent a particularly pronounced sell-off, climbing 22 basis points and reaching a 27-year high of 5.6% by the end of the month. While yields have since eased back, the market sell-off was driven by investor concerns over growing supply-demand imbalances, stemming from unease over the lack of fiscal consolidation and reduced demand from traditional long-dated bond purchasers like pension funds. For 10-year gilts, by late September, sticky inflation, resilient activity data and a hawkish Bank of England kept yields elevated over 4.70% although by early November yields had fallen back again to a little over 4.40%.
- The FTSE 100 fell sharply following the “Liberation Day” tariff announcement, dropping by more than 10% in the first week of April - from 8,634 on 1 April to 7,702 on 7 April. However, the de-escalation of the trade war coupled with strong corporate earnings led to a rapid rebound starting in late April. As a result, the FTSE 100 ended June at 8,761, around 2% higher than its value at the end of March and more than 7% above its level at the start of 2025. Since then, the FTSE 100 has enjoyed a further 4% rise in July, its strongest monthly gain since January and outperforming the S&P 500. Strong corporate earnings and progress in trade talks (US-EU, UK-India) lifted share prices and the index hit a record 9,321 in mid-August, driven by hopes of peace in Ukraine and dovish signals from Fed Chair Powell. September proved more volatile and the FTSE 100 closed September at 9,350, 7% higher than at the end of Q1 and 14% higher since the start of 2025. Future performance will likely be impacted by the extent to which investors’ global risk appetite remains intact, Fed rate cuts, resilience in the US economy, and AI optimism. A weaker pound will also boost the index as it inflates overseas earnings. In early November, the FTSE100 climbed to a record high just above 9,900.

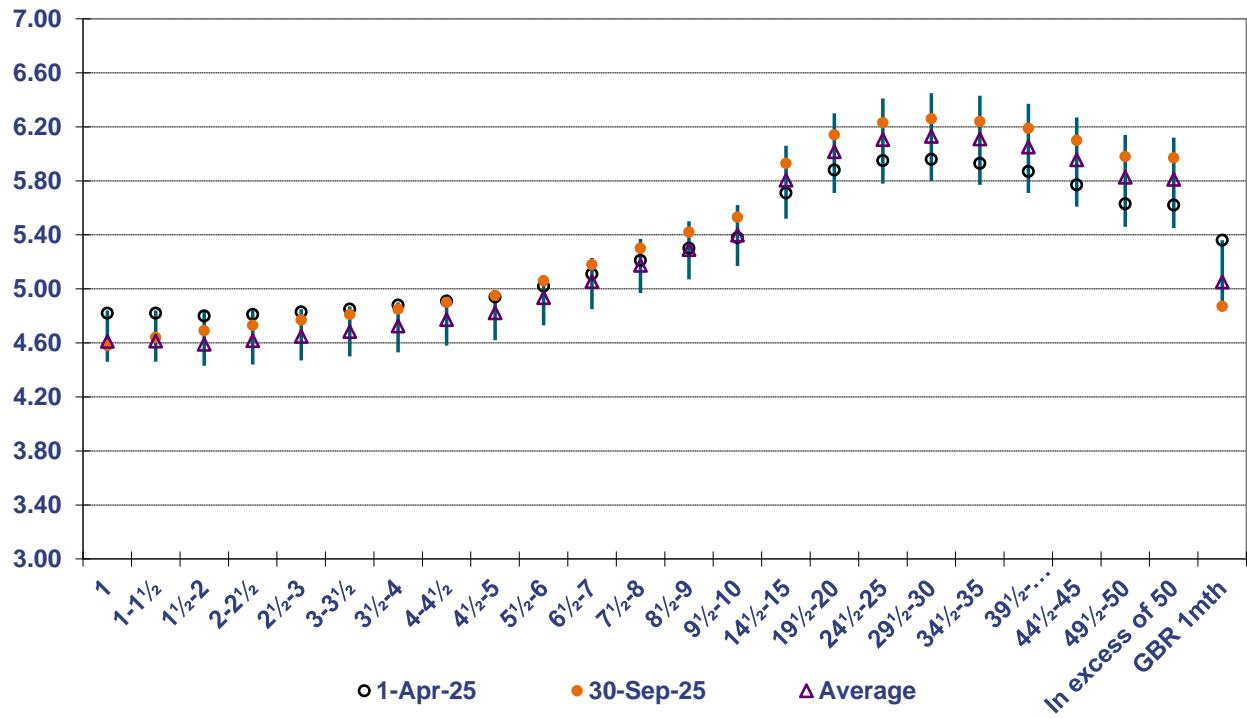
## **MPC meetings: 8 May, 19 June, 7 August, 18 September, 6 November 2025**

- There were five Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meetings in the first half of the financial year. In May, the Committee cut Bank Rate from 4.50% to 4.25%, while in June policy was left unchanged. In June's vote, three MPC members (Dhingra, Ramsden and Taylor) voted for an immediate cut to 4.00%, citing loosening labour market conditions. The other six members were more cautious, as they highlighted the need to monitor for "signs of weak demand", "supply-side constraints" and higher "inflation expectations", mainly from rising food prices. By repeating the well-used phrase "gradual and careful", the MPC continued to suggest that rates would be reduced further.
- In August, a further rate cut was implemented. However, a 5-4 split vote for a rate cut to 4% laid bare the different views within the Monetary Policy Committee, with the accompanying commentary noting the decision was "finely balanced" and reiterating that future rate cuts would be undertaken "gradually and carefully". Ultimately, Governor Bailey was the casting vote for a rate cut but with the CPI measure of inflation expected to reach at least 4% later this year, the MPC was wary of making any further rate cuts until inflation begins its slow downwards trajectory back towards 2%.
- With wages still rising by just below 5%, it was no surprise that the September meeting saw the MPC vote 7-2 for keeping rates at 4% (Dhingra and Taylor voted for a further 25bps reduction). Moreover, the Bank also took the opportunity to announce that they would only shrink its balance sheet by £70bn over the next 12 months, rather than £100bn. The repetition of the phrase that "a gradual and careful" approach to rate cuts is appropriate suggested the Bank still thought interest rates will fall further.
- At the 6 November meeting, Governor Bailey was once again the deciding vote, keeping Bank Rate at 4% but hinting strongly that a further rate cut is imminent. With GDP for Q3 disappointing, and the September CPI number staying at 3.8%, the market is split over whether the next rate cut will be in December or February.

## PWLB RATES 01.04.25 - 30.09.25



## PWLB Certainty Rate Variations 01.04.25 to 30.09.25



## HIGH/LOW/AVERAGE PWLB RATES FOR 01.04.25 – 30.09.25

	1 Year	5 Year	10 Year	25 Year	50 Year
<b>01/04/2025</b>	4.82%	4.94%	5.38%	5.95%	5.63%
<b>30/09/2025</b>	4.58%	4.95%	5.53%	6.23%	5.98%
<b>Low</b>	4.36%	4.62%	5.17%	5.78%	5.46%
<b>Low date</b>	04/08/2025	02/05/2025	02/05/2025	04/04/2025	04/04/2025
<b>High</b>	4.84%	4.99%	5.62%	6.41%	6.14%
<b>High date</b>	02/04/2025	21/05/2025	03/09/2025	03/09/2025	03/09/2025
<b>Average</b>	4.55%	4.82%	5.40%	6.11%	5.83%
<b>Spread</b>	0.48%	0.37%	0.45%	0.63%	0.68%

## **Appendix 2: Approved countries for investments**

### **AAA**

- Australia
- Denmark
- Germany
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Singapore
- Sweden
- Switzerland

### **AA+**

- Canada
- U.S.A.

### **AA**

- Abu Dhabi (UAE)
- Finland
- Qatar

### **AA-**

- U.K.

### **A+**

- Belgium
- France

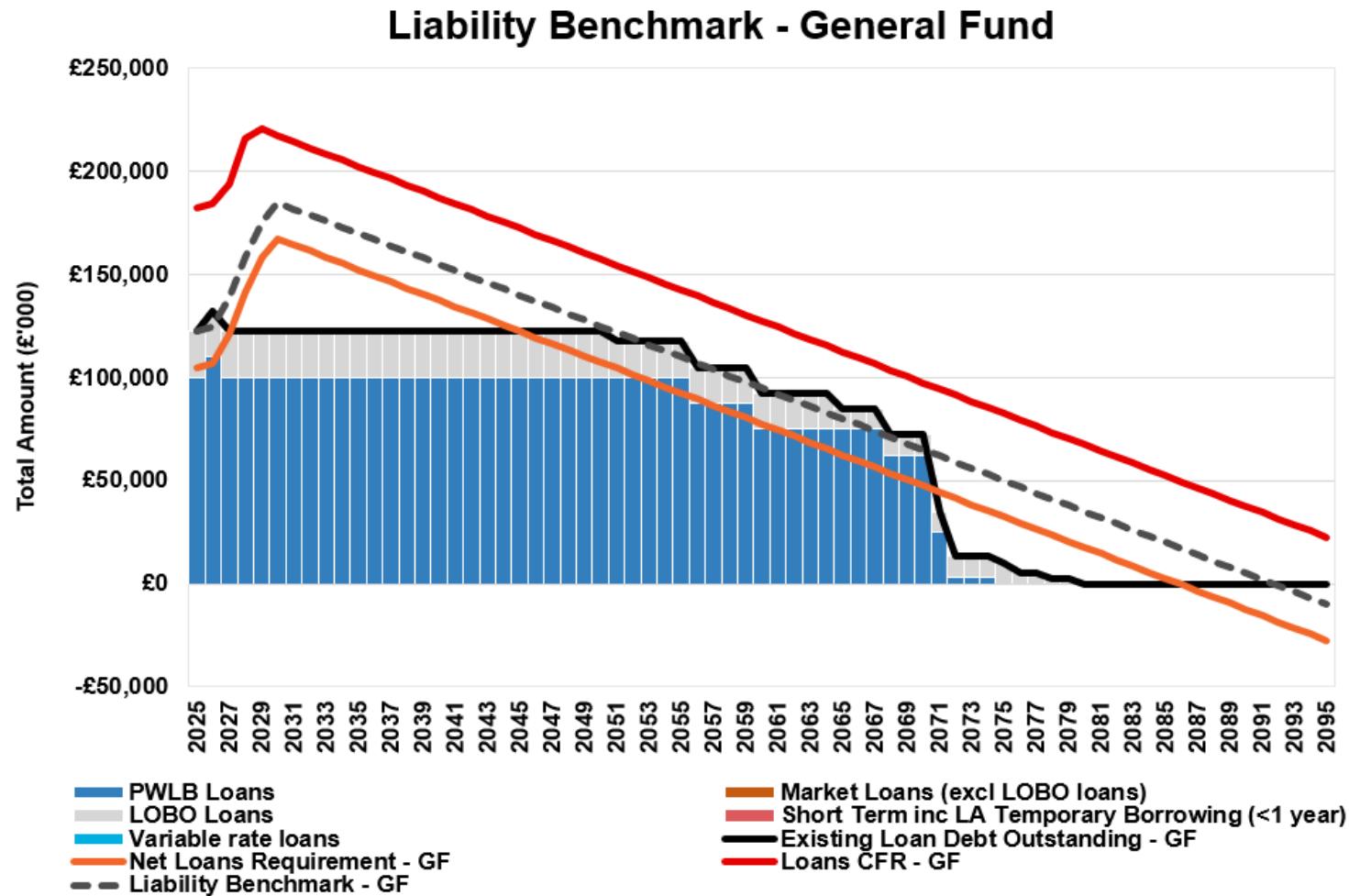
## Appendix 3: The Treasury Management role of the section 151 officer

### The S151 (responsible) officer

- recommending clauses, treasury management policy/practices for approval, reviewing the same regularly, and monitoring compliance;
- submitting regular treasury management policy reports;
- submitting budgets and budget variations;
- receiving and reviewing management information reports;
- reviewing the performance of the treasury management function;
- ensuring the adequacy of treasury management resources and skills, and the effective division of responsibilities within the treasury management function;
- ensuring the adequacy of internal audit, and liaising with external audit;
- recommending the appointment of external service providers.
- preparation of a Capital Strategy to include capital expenditure, capital financing, non-financial investments and treasury management, with a long-term timeframe (say 20+ years – *to be determined in accordance with local priorities.*)
- ensuring that the Capital Strategy is prudent, sustainable, affordable and prudent in the long term and provides value for money
- ensuring that due diligence has been carried out on all treasury and non-financial investments and is in accordance with the risk appetite of the authority
- ensure that the Authority has appropriate legal powers to undertake expenditure on non-financial assets and their financing
- ensuring the proportionality of all investments so that the Authority does not undertake a level of investing which exposes the Authority to an excessive level of risk compared to its financial resources
- ensuring that an adequate governance process is in place for the approval, monitoring and ongoing risk management of all non-financial investments and long-term liabilities
- provision to members of a schedule of all non-treasury investments including material investments in subsidiaries, joint ventures, loans and financial guarantees
- ensuring that members are adequately informed and understand the risk exposures taken on by the Authority
- ensuring that the Authority has adequate expertise, either in house or externally provided, to carry out the above
- creation of Treasury Management Practices which specifically deal with how non treasury investments will be carried out and managed, to include the following:-
  - *Risk management (TMP1 and schedules), including investment and risk management criteria for any material non-treasury investment portfolios;*
  - *Performance measurement and management (TMP2 and schedules), including methodology and criteria for assessing the performance and success of non-treasury investments;*
  - *Decision making, governance and organisation (TMP5 and schedules), including a statement of the governance requirements for decision making in relation to non-treasury investments; and arrangements to ensure that appropriate professional due diligence is carried out to support decision making;*

- *Reporting and management information (TMP6 and schedules), including where and how often monitoring reports are taken;*
- *Training and qualifications (TMP10 and schedules), including how the relevant knowledge and skills in relation to non-treasury investments will be arranged.*

## Appendix 4 – Liability Benchmark – General Fund



## Appendix 4 – Liability Benchmark – HRA

