

## AGENDA

### AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Monday, 30 January 2023

Time: 7.00 pm

Venue: Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT\*

Membership:

Councillors Derek Carnell (Chair), Simon Clark, Ann Hampshire, Angela Harrison, Mike Henderson (Vice-Chair), Denise Knights, Peter Marchington, Pete Neal and Richard Palmer.

Quorum = 3

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Pages

#### Information about this meeting

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  - (c) In the event of the alarm sounding, leave the building via the nearest safe exit and gather at the assembly point on the far side of the car park. Do not leave the assembly point or re-enter the building until advised to do so. Do not use the lifts.
  - (d) Anyone unable to use the stairs should make themselves known during this agenda item.
2. Apologies for Absence
  3. Declarations of Interest

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The Chair will ask Members if they have any disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs) or disclosable non-pecuniary interests (DNPis) to declare in respect of items on the agenda. Members with a DPI in an item must leave the room for that item and may not participate in the debate or vote.

Aside from disclosable interests, where a fair-minded and informed observer would think there was a real possibility that a Member might be biased or predetermined on an item, the Member should declare this and leave the room while that item is considered.

Members who are in any doubt about interests, bias or predetermination should contact the monitoring officer for advice prior to the meeting.

4. Minutes

To approve the [Minutes](#) of the Meeting held on 15 November 2022 (Minute Nos. 441 – 451) as a correct record.

### **Part A Report for Recommendation to the Policy and Resources Committee**

5. Treasury Management Strategy 2023/4 5 - 22

### **Part B Report for decision by the Audit Committee**

6. Interim Internal Audit & Assurance Report 2022/23 23 - 32

**Issued on Friday, 20 January 2023**

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**Chief Executive, Swale Borough Council,  
Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT**

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<b>Audit Committee</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	30 January 2023
<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24</b>
<b>EMT Lead</b>	Lisa Fillery, Director of Resources
<b>Head of Service</b>	Claire Stanbury, Head of Finance and Procurement
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Claire Stanbury, Head of Finance and Procurement Olga Cole, Management Accountant
<b>Key Decision</b>	Yes
<b>Classification</b>	Open
<b>Recommendations</b>	1. To approve the Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24 and the Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators.

## 1. Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 Treasury management is the management of the Council’s cash flows, borrowing and investments, and the associated risks. The Council 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 financial risk are therefore central to the Council’s prudent financial management.
- 1.2 Treasury risk management at the Council is conducted within the framework of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy’s Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2021 Edition (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Council to approve a treasury management strategy before the start of each financial year. This report fulfils the Council’s legal obligation under the Local Government Act 2003 to have regard to the CIPFA Code.

## 2. External Context

- 2.1 The ongoing impact on the UK from the war in Ukraine, together with higher inflation, higher interest rates, uncertain government policy, and a deteriorating economic outlook, will be major influences on the Council’s treasury management strategy for 2023/24.
- 2.2 The Bank of England (BoE) increased Bank Rate by 0.5% to 3.5% in December 2022. This followed a 0.75% rise in November which was the largest single rate hike since 1989 and the ninth successive rise since December 2021.
- 2.3 The November quarterly Monetary Policy Report (MPR) forecast a prolonged but shallow recession in the UK with CPI inflation remaining elevated at over 10% in the near-term. While the projected peak of inflation is lower than in the August report, due in part to the government’s support package for household energy costs, inflation is expected to remain higher for longer over the forecast horizon and the economic outlook remains weak, with unemployment projected to start rising.

- 2.4 The UK economy contracted by 0.3% between July and September 2022 according to the Office for National Statistics, and the BoE forecasts Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will decline 0.75% in the second half of the calendar year due to the squeeze on household income from higher energy costs and goods prices. Growth is then expected to continue to fall throughout 2023 and the first half of 2024.
- 2.5 The weakening economic picture during 2022 led the credit rating agencies to reflect this in their assessment of the outlook for the UK sovereign as well as several local authorities and financial institutions, revising them to negative from stable.
- 2.6 There are competing tensions in the banking sector which could impact bank balance sheet strength going forward. The weakening economic outlook and likely recessions in many regions increase the possibility of a deterioration in the quality of banks' assets, while higher interest rates provide a boost to net income and profitability.
- 2.7 However, the institutions on our adviser Arlingclose's counterparty list remain well-capitalised and their counterparty advice on both recommended institutions and maximum duration remain under constant review and will continue to reflect economic conditions and the credit outlook.

### 3. Background

#### Interest Rate Forecast and Market Outlook

- 3.1 The Council's treasury management adviser Arlingclose forecasts that Bank Rate will continue to rise in 2023 as the Bank of England attempts to subdue inflation which is significantly above its 2% target.
- 3.2 While interest rate expectations reduced during October and November 2022, multiple interest rate rises are still expected over the forecast horizon despite the looming recession. Arlingclose expects Bank Rate to rise to 4.25% by June 2023 under its central case, with the risks in the near- and medium-term to the upside should inflation not evolve as the Bank forecasts and remains persistently higher.
- 3.3 Yields are expected to remain broadly at current levels over the medium-term, with 5-, 10- and 20-year gilt yields expected to average around 3.6%, 3.7%, and 3.9% respectively over the 3-year period to September 2025. The risks for short, medium and longer-term yields are judged to be broadly balanced over the forecast horizon. As ever, there will undoubtedly be short-term volatility due to economic and political uncertainty and events.

Official Bank Rate	Curr ent	Dec- 22	Mar- 23	Jun- 23	Sep- 23	Dec- 23	Mar- 24	Jun- 24	Sep- 24	Mar- 22	Jun- 25	Sep- 25	Dec- 25
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Upside Risk	0.00	0.25	0.50	0.75	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.25	1.50	1.75	1.50	1.25	1.25
Arlingclose	3.00	3.50	4.00	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.00	3.75	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
Downside Risk	0.00	0.25	0.50	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00

- 3.4 For the purpose of setting the 2023/24 budget, it has been assumed that new treasury investments will be made at an average rate of 2%, and that new short-term loans will be borrowed at an average rate of 4.20%.

### **Borrowing Strategy**

- 3.5 The Council's chief objective, when borrowing money, is to strike an appropriately low risk balance between securing low interest costs and achieving certainty of those costs over the period for which funds are required. The flexibility to renegotiate loans should the Council's long-term plans change is a secondary objective.
- 3.6 The Council currently holds £10 million of loans, as part of its strategy for funding previous years' capital programmes. The Council may borrow additional sums to pre-fund future years' requirements, providing this does not exceed the authorised limit for borrowing of £57 million.
- 3.7 Councils are required to balance their revenue budget annually and cannot borrow to achieve a balanced position. However, they have very far reaching powers to borrow to fund capital expenditure. This has historically been funded from borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), which is part of the Debt Management Office which is part of the Treasury. Borrowing can be for up to 50 years at rates which are below commercial rates.
- 3.8 CIPFA has published its revised Prudential Code and Treasury Management Code of Practice and these are available for sale on the CIPFA publications website. The Revised Prudential Code took effect from December 2021, although authorities may defer introducing the revised reporting requirements until the 2023/24 financial year if they wish. It particularly highlights that the requirement that local authorities must not borrow to invest primarily for financial return applies with immediate effect. In August 2021 HM Treasury significantly revised their PWLB guidance. This includes a statement highlighting that the government and CIPFA are clear that borrowing to invest for yield is not permitted under the prudential framework. This Council has had a clear policy of not borrowing for income purposes.
- 3.9 Given the significant cuts to public expenditure and in particular to local government funding, the Council's borrowing strategy continues to address the key issue of affordability without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio. With short-term interest rates currently lower than long-term rates, it is likely to be more cost effective in the short-term to either use internal resources, or to borrow short-term loans instead of borrowing at fixed rates for long periods. By doing so, the Council is able to reduce net borrowing costs (despite foregone investment income) and reduce overall treasury risk. The benefits of internal/short-term borrowing will be monitored regularly. Arlingclose will assist the Council with this 'cost of carry' and breakeven analysis. Its output may determine whether the Council borrows additional sums at long-term fixed rates in 2023/24 with a view to keeping future interest costs low, even if this causes additional cost in the short-term.

3.10 The Council may also consider forward starting loans, where the interest rate is fixed in advance, but the cash is received in later years. This would enable certainty of cost to be achieved without suffering a “cost of carry” in the intervening period. In addition, the Council may borrow short-term loans to cover unplanned cash flow shortages.

3.11 The approved sources of long-term and short-term borrowing are:

- HM Treasury’s PWLB Lending facility (formerly the Public Works Loan Board)
- Any institution approved for investments
- UK Local Authorities
- Any other UK public sector body
- Any other bank or building society authorised to operate in the UK
- UK public and private sector pension funds (except the Kent Pension Fund)
- Capital market bond investors
- UK Municipal Bonds Agency plc and other special purpose companies created to enable local authority bond issues.

3.12 In addition, capital finance may be raised by the following methods that are not borrowing, but may be classed as other debt liabilities:

- Leasing
- Hire Purchase
- Private Finance Initiative
- Sale and Leaseback

3.13 The Council has the following loans outstanding:

<b>Lender</b>	<b>Amount (£ million)</b>	<b>Borrowing rate</b>	<b>Start Date of Loan</b>	<b>Maturity Date of loan</b>	<b>Duration</b>
West Midlands Combined Authority	5	1.05 %	07/04/2022	06/04/2023	12 months
London Borough of Islington	5	0.40 %	28/02/2022	27/02/2023	12 months
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>				



## **Rainbow Homes**

- 3.14 In March 2020, the Cabinet approved proposals to set up a housing company which will help deliver affordable homes for local people without placing financial burden on the Council. Council-owned land would be transferred to the company to provide around 139 new properties, in exchange for an equity share in the company. The estimated build costs, energy efficiency and lifecycle costs of developing, managing and maintaining the initially planned 139 properties to be up to £23 million, which would be initially paid for through a 50-year loan to the company.
- 3.15 Short-term and variable rate loans: These loans leave the Authority exposed to the risk of short-term interest rate rises and are therefore subject to the interest rate exposure limits in the treasury management indicators below.
- 3.16 Debt rescheduling: The PWLB allows authorities to repay loans before maturity and either pay a premium or receive a discount according to a set formula based on current interest rates. Other lenders may also be prepared to negotiate premature redemption terms. The Council may take advantage of this and replace some loans with new loans, or repay loans without replacement, where this is expected to lead to an overall cost saving or a reduction in risk. As we currently don't have any long-term loans, this would not be applicable to 2023-24.

## **Investment Strategy**

- 3.17 The Council holds significant invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves held. In the past 12 months, the Council's investment balance has averaged £33m compared with £38m in the previous financial year. The contribution that these investments make to the objectives of the Council is to support effective treasury management activities.
- 3.18 The CIPFA Code requires the Council 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 Council'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. Where balances are expected to be invested for more than one year, the Council will aim to achieve a total return that is equal or higher than the prevailing rate of inflation, in order to maintain the spending power of the sum invested. The Council aims to be a responsible investor and will consider environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues when investing
- 3.19 The Council largely uses Money Market Funds and the Debt Management office for short-term investments. The only long-term investment remains the £3 million in the Church, Charities and Local Authorities (CCLA) Property Fund.

- 3.20 **Environmental, Social and Governance Policy (ESG):** considerations are increasingly a factor in global investors' decision making, but the framework for evaluating investment opportunities is still developing and therefore the Council's ESG policy does not currently include ESG scoring or other real-time ESG criteria at an individual investment level. When investing in banks and funds, the Council will prioritise banks that are signatories to the UN Principles for Responsible Banking and funds operated by managers that are signatories to the UN Principles for Responsible Investment, the Net Zero Asset Managers Alliance and/or the UK Stewardship Code.
- 3.21 **Business models:** Under the International Financial Reporting Standard (IFRS) 9 the accounting for certain investments depends on the Council's "business model" for managing them. The Council aims to achieve value from its treasury investments by a business model of collecting the contractual cash flows and therefore, where other criteria are also met, these investments will continue to be accounted for at amortised cost.
- 3.22 The Council could make use of the following asset classes for both Treasury and Non Treasury investments:

<b>Treasury Investments</b>	
Government	Loans to, and bonds and bills issued or guaranteed by, national governments, regional and local authorities and multilateral development banks. These investments are not subject to bail-in, and there is generally a lower risk of insolvency, although they are not zero risk. Investments with the UK Government are deemed to be low credit risk due to its ability to create additional currency and therefore may be made in unlimited amounts for up to 50 years.
Banks and Building Societies (unsecured)	Accounts, deposits, certificates of deposit and senior unsecured bonds with banks and building societies, other than multilateral development banks. These investments are subject to the risk of credit loss via a bail-in should the regulator determine that the bank is failing or likely to fail. See below for arrangements relating to operational bank accounts
Operational Bank Accounts	The Council may incur operational exposures, for example through current accounts, collection accounts and merchant acquiring services, to any UK bank with credit ratings no lower than BBB- and with assets greater than £25 billion. These are not classed as investments but are still subject to the risk of a bank bail-in, and balances will therefore be kept below £500,000 per bank. The Bank of England has stated that in the event of failure, banks with assets greater than £25 billion are more likely to be bailed-in than made insolvent, increasing the chance of the Council maintaining operational continuity.
Money Market Funds	Pooled funds that offer same-day or short notice liquidity and very low or no price volatility by investing in short-term money markets. They have the advantage over bank accounts of providing wide diversification of investment risks, coupled with the services of a professional fund manager in return for a small fee. Although no sector limit applies to money market funds, the Council will take care to diversify its liquid investments over a variety of providers to ensure access to cash at all times

Strategic Pooled Funds	Bond, equity and property funds offer enhanced returns over the longer term, but are more volatile in the short term. These allow the Council to diversify into asset classes other than cash without the need to own and manage the underlying investments. 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 Council's investment objectives will be monitored regularly.
Registered Providers (unsecured)	Loans to, and bonds issued or guaranteed by, registered providers of social housing and registered social landlords, formerly known as housing associations. These bodies are regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing. As providers of public services, they retain the likelihood of receiving government support if needed.
Secured investments	Investments secured on the borrower's assets, which limits the potential losses in the event of insolvency. The amount and quality of the security will be a key factor in the investment decision. Covered bonds and reverse repurchase agreements with banks and building societies are exempt from bail-in. Where there is no investment specific credit rating, but the collateral upon which the investment is secured has a credit rating, the higher of the collateral credit rating and the counterparty credit rating will be used. The combined secured and unsecured investments with any one counterparty will not exceed the cash limit for secured investments.
Other Investments	This category covers treasury investments not listed above, for example unsecured corporate bonds and company loans. Non-bank companies cannot be bailed-in but can become insolvent placing the Council's investment at risk.
<b>Non-Treasury Investments</b>	
Non-Treasury Investments	The Council invests in property in the borough and will, where there are opportunities, consider further investment, where this is primarily related to the functions of the Council such as service delivery and regeneration. However, the Council will not borrow to invest primarily for financial return.

- 3.23 The Council will retain the CCLA property fund and keep the remaining monies primarily in Money Market Funds and the Debt Management Account Deposit Facility (DMADF) (an investment facility operated by the UK Government). The Director of Resources does not believe that investing in equity or bond funds is advisable at the current time, given equity market valuations and the impact on bond investments. This will be reviewed as market conditions develop.
- 3.24 Currently the Council makes no direct investments in equities or corporate bonds. If this changed in the year the Director of Resources will ensure that investments are consistent with the Council's health and climate change objectives.
- 3.25 Credit ratings are obtained and monitored by the Council's treasury advisers, who will notify changes in ratings as they occur. Where an entity has its credit rating downgraded, so that it fails to meet the approved investment criteria then:
- no new investments will be made;
  - any existing investments that can be recalled or sold at no cost will be; and,
  - full consideration will be given to the recall or sale of all other existing investments with the affected counterparty.

- 3.26 Where a credit rating agency announces that a credit rating is on review for possible downgrade (also known as “rating watch negative” or “credit watch negative”) so that it may fall below the approved rating criteria, then only investments that can be withdrawn on the next working day will be made with that organisation until the outcome of the review is announced. This policy will not apply to negative outlooks, which indicate a long-term direction of travel, rather than an imminent change of rating.
- 3.27 The Council understands that credit ratings are good, but not perfect, predictors of investment default. Full regard will, therefore, be given to other available information on the credit quality of the organisations in which it invests, including credit default swap prices, financial statements, information on potential government support and reports in the quality financial press and analysis and advice from the Council’s treasury management adviser. No investments will be made with an organisation if there are substantive doubts about its credit quality, even though it may meet the credit rating criteria.
- 3.28 When deteriorating financial market conditions affect the creditworthiness of all organisations, as happened in 2008 and 2020, this is not generally reflected in credit ratings, but can be seen in other market measures. In these circumstances, the Council will restrict its investments to those organisations of higher credit quality and reduce the maximum duration of its investments to maintain the required level of security. The extent of these restrictions will be in line with prevailing financial market conditions. If these restrictions mean that insufficient commercial organisations of high credit quality are available to invest the Council’s cash balances, then the surplus will be deposited with the UK Government, or with other local authorities. This will cause investment returns to fall, but will protect the principal sum invested.
- 3.29 The Council currently has the following Investments:

<b>Counterparty</b>	<b>Average Rate %</b>	<b>Balance Invested at 30 December 2022 £'000</b>
Debt Management Office (Bank of England)	3.18	7,500
Invesco Money Market Fund	3.22	3,000
DWS (Deutsche) Money Market Fund	3.43	3,000
Goldman Sachs Money Market Fund	3.18	3,000
Aberdeen Standard Money Market Fund	3.23	3,000
Black Rock Money Market Fund	3.21	3,000
JP Morgan Money Market Fund	3.15	3,000
Morgan Stanley Money Market Fund	3.18	3,000
SSGA Money Market Fund	3.13	2,830
CCLA Property Fund	3.84	3,000
<b>Total Investments</b>		<b>34,330</b>

- 3.30 The definition of investments in CIPFA's revised Codes now covers all the financial assets of the Council, as well as other non-financial assets which the Council holds primarily for financial return. This is replicated in the 2018 Investment Guidance from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), in which the definition of investments is further broadened to also include all such assets held partially for financial return. The Prudential and Treasury Management Codes now have detailed definitions of treasury, service and commercial investments.
- 3.31 The Council has not made, and will not make, any direct commercial investments outside of the Borough. Capital funds will be used for the benefit of local residents.
- 3.32 At 31 March 2022 the Council held £4.03 million of longstanding investments in 13 directly owned properties. These investments generated £0.2 million of investment income for the Council in 2021/22 after taking account of direct costs, representing a rate of return of 5.2%. No significant change in this Investment is anticipated in 2023/24.
- 3.33 Although not strictly counted as investments, since no money has exchanged hands yet, loan commitments carry similar risks to the Council and are included here for completeness.
- 3.34 The loans made by the Council are shown below:

	<b>31 March 2022</b>
	<b>£'000</b>
Housing repair loans	1,949
Employee car loans	80
Other debtors	4,040
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,069</b>

- 3.35 The main risk when making service loans is that the borrower will be unable to repay the principal lent and/or the interest due. In order to limit this risk, a loss allowance is calculated for each debt reflecting the statistical likelihood that the debtor will be unable to meet their contractual commitments to the Council, which for 2021/22 was £0.2 million. The loss allowance has been calculated by reference to the Council's historic experience of default. In addition, to mitigate risk, all debts have to be managed in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.
- 3.36 The most significant loans shown are the Housing Repair Loans which are loans for private sector housing home adaptations – landlords and owner-occupiers can apply for a loan for adaptations that will enable them to stay in their own homes. The risk relating to these loans is low as they are a charge of the property and are repayable when a property is sold.
- 3.37 An analysis of short-term debtors is reported to Policy and Resources committee as part of the quarterly Financial Management Report.

## 4. Proposal

- 4.1 The Council may invest its surplus funds with any of the counterparty types in the table below, subject to the cash limits (per counterparty) and the time limits shown.

Counterparty	Time Limit	Cash Limits
The UK Government	50 years	Unlimited
Local Authorities and other government entities	25 years	£3m
Major UK banks / building societies unsecured deposits*	13 months	£3m
Leeds Building Society unsecured deposits*	As per credit advice	£1.5m
Close Brothers unsecured deposits*	As per credit advice	£1.5m
Money Market Funds*	n/a**	£3m each
Strategic Pooled Funds e.g., Absolute return, Equity income, Corporate Bond Funds, Multi Asset Funds	n/a**	£3m each
CCLA Property Fund	n/a**	£3m
Registered providers (unsecured) *	5 years	£3m in aggregate
Secured Investments*	25 years	£3m in aggregate
Other Investments *	5 years	£3m in aggregate
Non treasury investments	As per credit advice	To be agreed on a case by case basis

\* Minimum credit rating: Treasury investments in the sectors marked with an asterisk will only be made with entities whose lowest published long-term credit rating is no lower than [A-]. Where available, the credit rating relevant to the specific investment or class of investment is used, otherwise the counterparty credit rating is used. However, investment decisions are never made solely based on credit ratings, and all other relevant factors including external advice will be taken into account.

- 4.2 The Director of Resources in consultation with the Chair of Policy and Resources committee may consider longer duration depending on market conditions.

- 4.3 The Council may also purchase property for investment purposes, but the Council will not borrow to invest primarily for financial return. The Council may also make loans and investments for service purposes, for example in shared ownership housing, as loans to local businesses and landlords, or as equity investments and loans to the Council's owned companies, in line with existing policies and where there is a sound business case.

- 4.4 The Council does not directly invest in financial derivatives although these may be present in pooled funds and will be managed in line with the overall treasury strategy. The Council will only use standalone financial derivatives (such as swaps, forwards, futures and options) where they can be clearly demonstrated to reduce the overall level of the financial risks that the Council is exposed to. In line with the CIPFA Code, the Council will seek external advice and will consider that advice before entering into financial derivatives to ensure that it fully understands the implications. Financial derivative transactions may be arranged with any organisation that meets the approved investment criteria, assessed using the appropriate credit rating for derivative exposures. An allowance for credit risk calculated using the methodology in the Treasury Management Practices document will count against the counterparty credit limit and the relevant foreign country limit.
- 4.5 The Director of Resources ensures that any commercial deals meet the regulatory requirements and the CIPFA prudential framework.

### Treasury Adviser

- 4.6 The Council has appointed Arlingclose Limited as its treasury management adviser and receives specific advice on investment, debt and capital finance issues. Officers meet with Arlingclose on a quarterly basis, receive information daily and attend relevant training courses.
- 4.7 The day-to-day treasury management activity is undertaken on the Council's behalf by Kent County Council's Treasury & Investments team to the criteria set out in this report. This has been particularly beneficial in using their relationships to obtain the low-cost loans from other Councils.

## 5. Alternative Options

- 5.1 The Strategy is intended to give flexibility with regard to borrowing and investment options.
- 5.2 The CIPFA Code does not prescribe any particular treasury management strategy for local authorities to adopt. The Director of Resources believes that the above Strategy represents an appropriate balance between risk management and cost effectiveness. Some alternative strategies, with their financial and risk management implications, are listed below.

<b>Alternative</b>	<b>Impact on income and expenditure</b>	<b>Impact on risk management</b>
Invest in a narrower range of counterparties and/or for shorter times	Interest income will be lower	Lower chance of losses from credit related defaults, but any such losses may be greater
Invest in a wider range of counterparties and/or for longer times	Interest income will be higher	Increased risk of losses from credit related defaults, but any such losses may be smaller

<b>Alternative</b>	<b>Impact on income and expenditure</b>	<b>Impact on risk management</b>
Borrow additional sums at long-term fixed interest rates	Debt interest costs will rise; need to ensure that this is offset by higher investment income	Higher investment balance leading to a higher impact in the event of a default; however long-term interest costs may be more certain
Borrow short-term or variable loans instead of long-term fixed rates	Debt interest costs will initially be lower	Increases in debt interest costs will be broadly offset by rising investment income in the medium term, but long-term costs may be less certain

## 6. Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

6.1 Consultation has been taken with Arlingclose.

## 7. Implications

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Implications</b>
Corporate Plan	Good management of the Council's cash balances assists the overall financial position of the Council and this helps to meet the emerging Corporate Plan objectives.
Financial, Resource and Property	The budget for net investment income in 2023/24 is £(147,000).
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	Government and CIPFA requirements complied with.
Crime and Disorder	Not applicable
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	Not applicable
Health and Wellbeing	Not applicable
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	Not applicable
Risk Management and Health and Safety	Risk is controlled through adherence to specific guidance included in CIPFA's Treasury Management Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes. The principle of security of funds over-rides investment performance considerations.
Equality and Diversity	Not applicable
Privacy and Data Protection	Not applicable



## 8. Appendices

8.1 The following appendices are published with this report and form part of the report.

- Appendix I Treasury Management Prudential Indicators

## 9. Background Papers

None

### Acronyms Used:

BoE	The Bank of England
CCLA	Church, Charities and Local Authorities
CFR	Capital Financing Requirement
CIPFA	The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
DLUHC	Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities
DMADF	Debt Management Account Deposit Facility
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
PWLB	Public Works Loan Board
STC	Sittingbourne Town Centre

## Treasury Management Prudential Indicators

### Background

There is a requirement under the Local Government Act 2003 for local authorities to have regard to CIPFA's Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the "CIPFA Prudential Code") when setting and reviewing their Prudential Indicators. The objectives of the Prudential Code are to ensure, within a clear framework, that the capital investment plans of local authorities are affordable, prudent and sustainable, and that treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice. To demonstrate that the Council has fulfilled these objectives, the Prudential Code sets out the following indicators that must be set and monitored each year.

### Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)

This is a key indicator of prudence. Statutory guidance states that external debt should not exceed the capital financing requirement in the previous year plus the estimates of any increase in the CFR at the end of the current year and the next two years. The table below demonstrates that the Council is complying with this aspect of the Prudential Code.

<b>Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement</b>	<b>2022/23 Revised</b>	<b>2023/24 Estimate</b>	<b>2024/25 Estimate</b>	<b>2025/26 Estimate</b>
	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>
Capital Financing Requirements	50,043	53,996	61,000	67,803
Gross External Debt	(10,000)	(30,000)	(35,000)	(50,000)
<b>Internal Borrowing</b>	<b>40,043</b>	<b>23,996</b>	<b>26,000</b>	<b>17,803</b>

### Estimates of Capital Expenditure

This indicator is set to ensure that the level of proposed capital expenditure remains within sustainable limits and, in particular, to consider the impact on Council Tax. (See Capital Programme in 2023/24 Budget Report to Policy and Resources Committee.)

<b>Capital Expenditure and Financing</b>	<b>2022/23 Revised</b>	<b>2023/24 Estimate</b>	<b>2024/25 Estimate</b>	<b>2025/26 Estimate</b>
	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>13,089</b>	<b>26,522</b>	<b>29,711</b>	<b>9,963</b>
Revenue contributions	2,894	50	509	0
Capital receipts	74	2,463	0	0
Grants	7,031	9,574	14,602	2,163
Internal/ External borrowing	3,090	14,435	14,600	7,800
<b>Total Financing</b>	<b>13,089</b>	<b>26,522</b>	<b>29,711</b>	<b>9,963</b>

## Treasury Management Prudential Indicators

### Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream

This is an indicator of affordability, highlighting the revenue implications of existing and proposed capital expenditure by identifying the proportion of the revenue budget required to meet financing costs, net of investment income.

Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream	2022/23 Revised	2023/24 Estimate	2024/25 Estimate	2025/26 Estimate
	%	%	%	%
<b>General Fund Total</b>	<b>6.81</b>	<b>6.62</b>	<b>6.84</b>	<b>5.25</b>

### Authorised Limit for External Debt

The Authorised Limit sets the maximum level of external borrowing on a gross basis (i.e., not net of investments) for the Council. It is measured on a daily basis against all external borrowing items on the Balance Sheet (i.e., long and short-term borrowing, overdrawn bank balances and long-term liabilities). This Prudential Indicator separately identifies borrowing from other long-term liabilities such as finance leases. It is consistent with the Council's existing commitments, its proposals for capital expenditure and financing, and its approved treasury management policy statement and practices.

The Authorised Limit has been set on the estimate of the most likely, prudent but not worst-case scenario with sufficient headroom over and above this to allow for unusual cash movements.

The Authorised Limit is the statutory limit determined under Section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2003 (referred to in the legislation as the Affordable Limit).

Authorised Limit for External Debt	2022/23 Revised	2023/24 Estimate	2024/25 Estimate	2025/26 Estimate
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Borrowing	60,000	55,000	55,000	50,000
Other long-term liabilities	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>62,000</b>	<b>57,000</b>	<b>57,000</b>	<b>52,000</b>

## Treasury Management Prudential Indicators

### Operational Boundary for External Debt

The operational boundary is based on the Council's estimate of most likely (i.e., prudent but not worst case) scenario for external debt. It links directly to the Council's estimates of capital expenditure, the capital financing requirement and cash flow requirements, and is a key management tool for in-year monitoring. Other long-term liabilities comprise finance lease and other liabilities that are not borrowing but form part of the Council's debt.

Operational Boundary	2022/23 Revised £'000	2023/24 Estimate £'000	2024/25 Estimate £'000	2025/26 Estimate £'000
Borrowing	40,000	45,000	45,000	40,000
Other long-term liabilities	500	500	500	500
<b>Total Operational Boundary</b>	<b>40,500</b>	<b>45,500</b>	<b>45,500</b>	<b>40,500</b>

**Interest Rate Exposures:** This indicator is set to control the Council's exposure to interest rate risk. The upper limits on the one-year revenue impact of a 1% rise or fall in interest rates will be:

Interest rate risk indicator	Limit
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>rise</u> in interest rates	£(250,000)
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>fall</u> in interest rates	£250,000

### Maturity Structure of Borrowing

This indicator is set to control the Council's exposure to refinancing risk. The upper and lower limits on the maturity structure of fixed rate borrowing will be:

Maturity Structure of Borrowing	Lower Limit for 2023/24 %	Upper Limit for 2023/24 %
Under 12 months	0	100
12 months and within 24 months	0	100
24 months and within 5 years	0	100
5 years and within 10 years	0	100
10 years and above	0	100

## Treasury Management Prudential Indicators

## Long-term treasury management investments

The purpose of this indicator is to control the Council's exposure to the risk of incurring losses by seeking early repayment of its investments. The prudential limits on the long-term treasury management investments will be:

Price Risk Indicator	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	No Fixed
	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Date
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Limit on principal invested longer than 1 year	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000

Long-term investments with no fixed maturity date include strategic pooled funds and real estate investment trusts but exclude money market funds and bank accounts with no fixed maturity date as these are considered short-term.

**Liability benchmark:** To compare the Council's actual borrowing against an alternative strategy, a liability benchmark has been calculated showing the lowest risk level of borrowing. This assumes that cash and investment balances are kept to a minimum level of £10m at each year-end to maintain sufficient liquidity but minimise credit risk.

The liability benchmark is an important tool to help establish whether the Council is likely to be a long-term borrower or long-term investor in the future, and so shape its strategic focus and decision making. The liability benchmark itself represents an estimate of the cumulative amount of external borrowing the Council must hold to fund its current capital and revenue plans while keeping treasury investments at the minimum level required to manage day-to-day cash flow.

	31.3.22 Actual £m	31.3.23 Estimate £m	31.3.24 Forecast £m	31.3.25 Forecast £m	31.3.26 Forecast £m
Loans CFR	47.8	50.0	54.0	61.0	67.8
Less: Balance sheet resources	-64.4	-64.4	-64.4	-64.4	-64.4
<b>Net loans requirement</b>	<b>-16.6</b>	<b>-14.4</b>	<b>-10.4</b>	<b>-3.4</b>	<b>3.4</b>
Plus: Liquidity allowance	10	10	10	10	10
<b>Liability benchmark</b>	<b>-6.6</b>	<b>-4.4</b>	<b>-0.4</b>	<b>-6.6</b>	<b>13.4</b>

The long-term liability benchmark above assumes capital expenditure funded by borrowing, minimum revenue provision on new capital expenditure based on income, expenditure and reserves all increasing by inflation and appropriate asset life values (8 years for waste vehicles, 50 years for all other assets).

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<b>Audit Committee Meeting</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	30 January 2023
<b>Report Title</b>	Interim Internal Audit & Assurance Report 2022/23
<b>EMT Lead</b>	Lisa Fillery – Director of Resources
<b>Head of Service</b>	Katherine Woodward – Head of Audit Partnership
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Katherine Woodward – Head of Audit Partnership
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Open</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	1. That work completed so far on the 2022/23 Audit & Assurance Plan be noted.

## **1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report is for information and summarises progress towards delivering the plan up to mid December 2022. In addition, it also provides updates on:
- Completed 2021/22 audits which will be used to inform the 2022/23 Audit Opinion.
  - Resource changes with the Mid Kent Audit Partnership team.
  - Other work and overall progress.
  - The results of the follow up of agreed management actions.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 The Audit Committee approved the 2022/23 audit plan in March 2022. This report provides information to Members on the work completed by internal audit since the last report in November 2022.

## **3 Proposals**

- 3.1 We present the report to Members for their information and for noting.

## **4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected**

- 4.1 We present the report to Members for their information and for noting.

## **5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed**

- 5.1 We present the report for Member information and for noting. There has been no formal consultation, but its content has been discussed with the Director of Resources and Executive Management Team.

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Implications</b>
Corporate Plan	Mid Kent Audit's work supports all Council activity and the wider Corporate Plan in evaluating governance
Financial, Resource and Property	The work internal audit does on behalf of Swale Borough Council, is carried out within agreed resources.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	The Council is required by Regulations to deliver a conforming internal audit service
Crime and Disorder	No direct implications
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	No direct implications
Health and Wellbeing	No direct implications
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	No direct implications
Risk Management and Health and Safety	The audit plan draws on the Council's risk management in considering areas for audit review. In turn, audit findings will provide feedback on identification and management of risk.
Equality and Diversity	No direct implications
Privacy and Data Protection	We handled all information collected by the service in line with relevant data protection policies.

## **7 Appendices**

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

Appendix I: Interim Internal Audit & Assurance Report.

## **8 Background Papers**

Full reports which support the audit engagements summarised in this report are available on request. In addition, previous Audit Committee reports can be found [here](#).



**MID KENT AUDIT**

# **Interim Internal Audit & Assurance Report**

**January 2023**

**Swale Borough Council**



# MID KENT AUDIT

## Introduction

1. The Audit Committee approved the 2022/23 audit plan in March 2022. This report provides information to Members on the work completed by internal audit since the last report in November 2022.
2. This report is for information and summarises progress towards delivering the plan up to mid December 2022. In addition, it also provides updates on:
  - Completed 2021/22 audits which will be used to inform the 2022/23 Audit Opinion.
  - Resource changes with the Mid Kent Audit Partnership team.
  - Other work and overall progress.
  - The results of the follow up of agreed management actions.

## Resource Need

3. We reported in our plan presented to this Committee in March 2022 an assessment on the resources available to the audit partnership for completing work at the Council. That review decided:

MKA has the skills and expertise to deliver the 2022/23 Audit Plan and it is confirmed that planned audit work will enable a Head of Audit opinion for 2022/23 to be delivered in Spring 2023.

4. Since March 2022 we have experienced further change within the audit team:
  - One of our apprentices left for a more senior role elsewhere. While we're always pleased to support development, their loss has left a notable gap in the team that we have not yet recruited to.
  - The Interim Audit Manager Julie Hetherington left at the end of November 2022, and the Interim Audit Manager Andy Billingham left at the end of January 2023.
  - The Deputy Head of Audit post has been deleted, and
  - The new Head of Audit Partnership started on 5 December 2022.
5. The result is the team currently has three vacancies. The Head of Audit Partnership is currently reviewing the structure.
6. To fill the staffing gap, we prepared a market tender to seek contractor support in completing the 2022/23 audit and assurance plans. This contract was awarded for work

# MID KENT AUDIT

to take place from November to April and work is underway to complete these audits by April.

7. Despite all this change we continue to make progress through the Audit Plan although overall delivery of the plan has been impacted.

## Audit Plan Progress: Closing 2021/22

8. In July, there was one audit engagement (Environmental Enforcement) that was not completed in time to be included for the 2021/22 annual audit opinion. See Appendix I for our summary findings for this engagement. The results of this audit will now feed into the Head of Audit Partnership annual assurance opinion for 2022/23.

## Audit Plan Progress: 2022/23

9. The chart below shows current and expected progress through the engagements described in the 2022/23 Audit Plan, completed audits are detailed at Appendix I

Audit	Progress to date	Assurance rating
IT Project Management *	Completed	Strong
Website & accessibility	Draft Report	
Committee Management	Draft Report	
Workforce Planning*	Complete	Sound
Temporary Accommodation	Fieldwork	
Project Management - Swale House Refurb	Planning	
Accounts Receivable	Planning	
Accounts Payable	Planning	
Asset Inspection	Due to start Q4	
Maintenance of Open Spaces	Due to start Q4	
Waste Contract Tendering *	Due to start Q4	
Food Safety *	Planning	
Licensing Enforcement	Due to start Q4	
Private Water Supply *	Due to start Q4	

\* shared service audit, work will include all authorities included in the shared service

# MID KENT AUDIT

10. Below are the remaining audits currently unallocated due to resource constraints – these have been reviewed by the Head of the Audit Partnership and will not be completed during 2022/23.

Audits not yet allocated
Private Sector Housing
Facilities Management
Elections Management
IT Backup & Recovery – x cutting
Network Security x cutting
Leisure Services
BACS Project
Rainbow Homes

## Other work and overall progress

### Risk

11. Our work on overseeing, updating, and reporting on risk has continued during the year in line with the Risk Management Framework. As well as the routine cycle of work we have put in place a risk management software package called JCAD. Implementation of this software is allowing us to further settle and develop risk management across the Council. Audit, Governance & Standards Committee will receive a detailed report on the risk management framework in April 2023.

### Grant Certification work

12. We conducted the Covid 19 Test & Trace Support Payment Certification, and found no issues.

### Head of Audit view on Annual Audit Opinion

13. Consideration has been given to the following factors:

- Reviewing the level of work undertaken so far
- Work in progress
- Work due to be completed by the end of the year
- Other available sources of assurance
- Risk maturity of the organisation
- Progress on Annual Governance Statement governance issues

# MID KENT AUDIT

14. Based on all of these factors, the Head of Audit is confident that providing an annual audit opinion for 2022/23 is achievable. There are likely to be a higher number of audits delivered than last year and from discussion with the team and officers of the council there are no significant control, risk or governance weaknesses that have been identified to date.

We will keep the plans under review to maximise delivery of high-risk audit work and will continue to review progress and anticipated overall delivery of the audit plans.

# MID KENT AUDIT

## Agreed Actions Follow Up Results

15. Our approach to agreed actions is that we follow up each as it falls due in line with the plan agreed with management when we finish our reporting. We report progress on implementation to Senior Management Team each quarter. This includes noting any matters of continuing concern and where we have revisited an assurance rating (typically after addressing key actions). In total, we summarise in the table below the current position on following up agreed actions:

16. We are currently following up on actions due in Q3 and the data was not available in time for production of this report.

Swale and Cross Cutting	Total	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Open actions before 01/05/22	19	4	13	2
New actions agreed from 01/05/22	13	0	6	7
<b>Total open action</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>9</b>
Closed Actions since 01/05/22	17	0	9	8
<b>Current Open Actions as at 17/10/22</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>

17. Of the current open actions listed above, none of them were overdue at the point of this report. The process for reporting recommendations will be reviewed in line with requests from this Committee, to provide more detailed information on high priority actions and those that have been deferred.

# MID KENT AUDIT

## Appendix I

### Environmental Enforcement (October 2022)

18. Our opinion based on our audit work is Environmental Enforcement has SOUND controls in place to manage its risks and support achievement of its objectives.

**Finding Summary:** 3 x Medium priority.

The findings were:

- Cases were not always closed where applicable, some cases were unallocated, or had no action recorded against them.
- The spreadsheet to track Fixed Penalty Notice had data held on from 2006, and data was not always standardised, making it harder to filter or analysis the information.
- Timeframes for prosecution was not processed in good time, and cases were closed down as would seem unreasonable to pursue. In addition, recording of location of evidence was not always noted in the case management system.

### IT Project Management (November 2022)

19. Our opinion based on our audit work is IT Project Management has STRONG controls in place to manage its risks and support achievement of its objectives.

**Finding Summary:** 2 x Low priority.

The findings were:

- While the members of the ICT team demonstrated a good understanding of the necessary requirements for an ICT project, staff would still benefit from having procedural documentation showing how to manage the different ICT projects.
- that the terms of reference for the JCG are in draft form at the time of the review. Furthermore, the document did not include the date of approval, date of implementation, or date of next review.

# MID KENT AUDIT

## Workforce Planning (December 2022)

20. Our opinion based on our audit work is Workforce Planning has SOUND controls in place to manage its risks and support achievement of its objectives.

**Finding Summary:** 1 x Medium priority and 2 Advisory priority

The findings were:

- Maidstone Borough Council's Workforce Strategy is out of date (2016-2020). Swale Borough Council's Workforce Strategy is due to end in 2022.
- Data from exit surveys is reported, but comments around what could or should be done differently to improve working at each Council are not included.
- Workforce Strategy Action Plans are static, covering a 3-5 year period.