

**TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL****Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for Year Ending 31 March 2026****1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The proposed Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for the financial year 2025/26 are set out in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management. The Strategy is in line with the Prudential Indicators approved by Council.

**2.0 BORROWINGS**

- 2.1 No new long-term loans were taken out with the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) during 2024/25.
- 2.2 Borrowings from PWLB at 31 March 2025 will total £0.191m. The next and last scheduled redemption occurs in March 2027 when a maturity type loan of £0.191m will be settled.

The approved Prudential Indicators envisage that substantial further long-term borrowing may be undertaken in the year 2025/26 relating to the new Operational Service Centre, Town Hall Roof, and Appledore Clean Maritime Innovation Centre.

- 2.3 Current approved borrowing:
- Operational Services Centre £2.8m (approved December 2022)
  - Town Hall Roof & Leisure Works £1.0m (approved October 2024)
  - Appledore Clean Maritime Innovation Centre £1.1m (approved July 2022)
  - Community Land Trust (CLT) revolving loan fund £0.6m (approved February 2019)
- 2.4 The Prudential Indicators on Appendix 3 to this report have been compiled on the assumption that the borrowing will take place in the 2025/26 financial year however the timing will be dependent upon the progress made with the project, the financial climate and the availability of internal resources.
- 2.5 The Council will ensure that borrowing will only be undertaken when it is identified that there is a need to do so.
- 2.6 IFRS16 (International Financial Reporting Standard) – Leases, came in for Local Authorities on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, this requires all material operating leases to be brought on to the Councils balance sheet as “right of use assets”, this creates corresponding lease liabilities, which are classified as long term liabilities like borrowing. The council only has a few leases that this applies to, with the leasing of private sector housing making up the majority. A borrowing figure for these leases of £1,046K has been calculated and included in the prudential indicators.
- 2.7 The existing debt and loan schedule was considered in 2017/18 and it was concluded that there was no advantage from re-scheduling or early redemption of existing loans.

**3.0 INVESTMENTS**

- 3.1 The Annual Investment Strategy for the forthcoming year is prepared in accordance with guidance issued under the Local Government Act 2003.

- 3.2 On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 short-term investments placed with financial institutions are estimated to be approximately £10m. The bulk of this amount represents the balances on Reserves and Usable Capital Receipts.
- 3.3 The Capital Programme for 2025/26 will be financed from capital receipts, grants and contributions, revenue contributions, reserves and borrowing. Internal borrowing may also be utilised, and this will reduce the funds available for investment.
- 3.4 The Investment Strategy during 2024/25 has been to place investments out for longer durations (6 to 12 months) to maximise returns. With interest rates falling during the year this has helped maintain the investment income the council receives.
- 3.5 The Investment Strategy for 2025/26 will be to spread the investments across counterparties to minimise risk. Investment periods are expected to be maintained, interest rates are expected to reduce slightly during the year. It is anticipated that the level of investments will reduce further due to continued capital expenditure.

#### **4.0 INTEREST RATES**

- 4.1 During 2024/25 the Bank of England Bank Base Interest Rate was cut 3 times from 5.25% at the start of the year, to 4.5% by February 2025.
- 4.2 The market expects interest rates to ease slightly during 2025.
- 4.3 Short-term interest rates are around 4.50% for 3 months and also 4.50% approaching one year. Interest rates available to the Torridge will be slightly lower because of the limited names on Counterparty List and the size of the amounts that we invest.
- 4.4 Long term borrowing rates from the PWLB have increased during the year. The current impact of this means the interest on a 20 year loan has increase to around 6.0% from just under 5.5%

#### **5.0 COUNTERPARTY LIST & LIQUIDITY FRAMEWORK**

- 5.1 The security of an investment should be considered paramount together with liquidity to ensure that an investment will be repaid on the due date. These will be considered of greater importance than yield. Investment yield will only be considered after security, liquidity and market sector risk have been evaluated.
- 5.2 In order to minimise the risk from a failed deposit-taker the Council sets a maximum investment amount and a maximum holding with any institution limit.

The current limits are:

- Maximum Investment amount of £5m.
- Maximum holding with any individual institution £10m

The Councils counterparty list includes all Fitch F1 rated UK Banks and Building Societies.

- 5.3 The Authority will only undertake Specified Investments, which are denominated in sterling. Such investments can only be made with the United Kingdom Government, another local authority, or a body awarded a high credit rating by a credit rating agency, Peer to Peer lending, or loans through the councils Community Land Trust (CLT) revolving loan fund. The Authority will not undertake Non-specified Investments. This strategy will avoid being locked into lower rates when interest rates rise and to ensure flexibility to fund the capital programme.

5.4 For the purposes of this Strategy a high credit rating is defined as short-term F1 or better as rated by Fitch Ratings Ltd. The Principal Accountant maintains a counterparty list comprising UK Government Departments, UK Local Authorities and major banks and building societies with a minimum credit rating of Fitch F1 that operate in the local authority market. Guidance recommends that other factors and information such as market data regarding the sector or the counterparty should also be considered.

5.5 Link Asset Services (formerly known as Capita Asset Services) are engaged as the council's external Treasury advisors. As part of their service they undertake a monthly review of investments held and produce a report to confirm the credit strength of investments held.

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. The Council 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.

5.6 Appendix 2 gives details of our authorised counterparties comprising UK Government Departments, UK Local Authorities and major banks and building societies with a minimum credit rating of Fitch F1 that operate in the local authority market. A list of our current counterparties/investments is also given. The Credit ratings of the Counterparty List will be monitored at least quarterly to ensure they continue to meet the council's requirements. Credit ratings of relevant counterparties will be checked on the day of (and prior to) the investment being placed. Some counterparties are not taking further deposits as they do not require further funding and this could limit our ability to invest at the most beneficial rates from time to time.

5.7 Appendix 2 also gives the details of the council's approach to ethical investments, comprising of "green treasury deposits", where such deposits are given priority if they meet the following conditions:

- Meet the councils investing limits and credit requirements (i.e. F1 rated UK Banks and Building Societies)
- Meet the investment timescales required to manage the councils cashflow (e.g. 3 months / 6 months / 1 year)
- Any reduced yield when comparing to standard treasury deposits is within 0.2% (at an annual rate)

5.8 It is inevitable that as part of daily transactions and cash management, sums will be held with the council's bankers consistent with the council's cash management needs. The Council appointed Lloyds Bank as its bankers with effect from 1 January 2015.

5.9 The Council has previously approved Svenska Handelsbanken to operate a call/short term notice account and will be operated when the interest rates on offer are competitive. Interest rates on call accounts will vary from time to time and it may be necessary to change providers from time to time.

## **6.0 DELEGATION**

6.1 It should be recognised that the background to this Strategy may change very quickly which is why the detailed operation of the Treasury Management function is delegated to the S151 Officer.

The S151 (responsible) officer is responsible for:-

- 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.

Members should recognise that decisions often have to be taken quickly in the light of prevailing circumstances and that the strategy may therefore need to change during the course of the year.

Reports on treasury management policies, practices and activities are received by full Council.

## 7.0 TREASURY MANAGEMENT INDICATORS

The Indicators for Treasury Management are as follows;

- 7.1 The Council must set limits to contain the activity of the treasury function within certain limits. An upper limit is required on its fixed and variable interest rate exposures for outstanding principal sums on both borrowing and investment.

<b>Upper limit on interest rate exposure % Principal outstanding</b>	<b>2024/25 Estimate</b>	<b>2024/25 Forecast Actual for 31<sup>st</sup> March</b>	<b>2025/26 Estimate</b>	<b>2026/27 Estimate</b>	<b>2027/28 Estimate</b>
Fixed Interest Rate Exposures	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Variable Interest Rate Exposures	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

- 7.2 Upper and lower limits are needed for the maturity structure of borrowing. The amount of projected borrowing that is at a fixed rate maturing in each period as a percentage of total projected borrowing that is fixed rate at the start of the period:

	<b>2024/25 Actual</b>	<b>Lower limit</b>	<b>Upper limit</b>
Under 1 year	44%	0%	100%
1 year < 2 years	56%	0%	100%
2 years < 5 years	0%	0%	60%
5 years < 10 years	0%	0%	60%
10 years and above	0%	0%	100%

- 7.3 The CIPFA 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. The need for Member training in treasury management will be revisited during 2025/26.