Treasury Management

Borrowing and Investments

1. The table below shows the year's opening balance of borrowing and investments, current levels and those predicted for year-end. Forecast borrowing is based on the forecast capital programme and will be subject to review during the year.

The Authority maintained its strategy of keeping borrowing and investments below their underlying levels in order to reduce risk and make a net saving.

2.

	31-Mar-22 Actual £M	31-Mar-22 Average Yield / Rate %	30-Sep-22 Actual £M	30-Sep-22 Average Yield / Rate %	31-Mar-23 Forecast £M	31-Mar-23 Forecast Average %
Long Term Borrowing						
Public Works Loan	246.30	2.88	252.74	2.75	279.99	2.91
LOBO Loans from Banks	9.00	4.89	9.00	4.86	9.00	4.87
	255.30	**2.95**	**261.74**	**2.88**	**288.99**	**2.82**
Short Term Borrowing						
Other Local Authorities	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.25
Other	0.36		0.44	1.84	0.44	1.60
Total External Borrowing	**255.66**	**0.00**	**262.18**	**2.86**	**289.43**	**2.78**
Other Long Term Liabilities						
PFI Schemes	47.52	9.01	45.95	10.20	44.37	10.20
Deferred Debt Charges (HCC)	13.10	2.66	12.92	2.56	12.73	2.56
Total Gross External Debt	**316.28**	**3.87**	**321.04**	**4.08**	**346.53**	**3.89**
Investments:						
Managed In-House						
Government & Local Authority	0.00	0.00	(22.44)	1.80		
Cash (Instant access)	(54.50)	0.51	(16.82)	2.12	(20.00)	5.00
Cash (Notice Account)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Long Term Bonds	(1.06)	5.27	(1.01)	5.27	(1.01)	5.27
Managed Externally						
Pooled Funds (CCLA) & Shares	(27.25)	3.81	(27.00)	3.76	(27.00)	3.00
Total Investments	**(107.22)**	**3.46**	**(67.27)**	**3.44**	**(48.01)**	**3.88**
Net Debt	**209.06**		**253.77**		**298.52**	

3. After taking into account maturing and new debt requirements in year and a forecast reduction in investment balances, net borrowing is expected to increase to £298.52M for the year.

During quarter 2 a review of the capital programme was undertaken which has resulted in a reduction in borrowing overall and a re-profiling of schemes to move borrowing into later years.

4. The interest cost of financing the council's long term and short term loan debt is charged to the general fund revenue account and is detailed below together with a summary of performance to date.

As detailed below rates for new long term borrowing are higher than budgeted and are on an upward trend. However, the higher interest rates are having a positive impact on investment income, and this somewhat mitigates the impact on the revenue budget.

	Borrowing
5.	The forecast cost of financing the council's loan debt is £16.71M of which £5.49M relates to the HRA, however this will be subject to movement as the need for further borrowing for the remainder of the year becomes more certain.
6.	Over the April-September period short term PWLB rates rose dramatically, particular in late September after the Chancellor's 'mini-budget' prompted a fall in sterling and rise in market interest rate expectations. Interest rates rose by over 2% during the period in both the long and short term. As an indication the 5-year maturity certainty rate rose from 2.30% on 1st April to 5.09% on 30th September; over the same period the 30-year maturity certainty rate rose from 2.63% to 4.68%. Although interest rates across the board have risen, short-term borrowing from other local authorities remains at lower interest rates than long term borrowing. We currently do not have any short term debt, we anticipate borrowing short term before year end to replace maturing long term debt, expected reduction in reserves and to fund the capital programme for the year, until a decision is taken with regards to long term borrowing. Any increase in short term borrowing costs will be offset by a reduction in long term costs.
7.	The Authority has previously raised the majority of its long-term borrowing from the PWLB but will consider long-term loans from other sources including banks, pensions and local authorities, and will investigate the possibility of issuing bonds and similar instruments, in order to lower interest costs and reduce over-reliance on one source of funding in line with the CIPFA Code. PWLB loans are no longer available to local authorities planning to buy investment assets primarily for yield; the Authority intends to avoid this activity in order to retain its access to PWLB loans.
8.	As outlined in the treasury strategy, the Authority's chief objective when borrowing has been to strike an appropriately low risk balance between securing low interest costs and achieving cost certainty over the period for which funds are required, with flexibility to renegotiate loans should the Authority's long-term plans change being a secondary objective. The Authority's borrowing strategy continues to address the key issue of affordability without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio.
9.	The Authority has an increasing CFR due to the capital programme and after future debt maturities currently has an estimated borrowing requirement of £30.73M for the year, as determined by the Liability Benchmark which considers capital spend, maturing debt, usable reserves and working capital. Rates continue on an upward trajectory and are currently above the rate used for setting budget. Further borrowing will be required during the year and rates will be monitored to determine the appropriate time; current advice is to take short term borrowing when required.

	Investment
10.	The Authority holds significant invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves. During the year investment balances have ranged between £109.37M and £66.45M and are currently £67.27M but are expected to reduce to £48M by year end. The increases in Bank Rate over the period under review, and with the prospect of more increases to come, short-dated cash rates, rose by around 1.5% for overnight/7-day maturities and by nearly 3.5% for 9-12 month maturities. By end September, the rates on DMADF deposits ranged between 1.85% (overnight) and 3.5% (6 months). The return on the Council's sterling low volatility net asset value (LVNAV) Money Market Funds ranged between 0.48% - 0.54% in early April and between 1.95% and 2.13% at the end of September Forecast income is now £1.63M, £0.61M higher than originally budgeted.
	Investment Performance
11.	The council's advisors undertake quarterly investment benchmarking across its client base. We previously had a more diversified portfolio and at higher interest rates than the average as a result of moving into the bond programme earlier than most clients, but there is now more competition for bonds from both government bodies and other local authorities, so opportunities to replace maturing bonds are limited and we have seen a fall in suitable instruments. With this in mind, and the changes to Prudential code to only borrow when cash flows dictate, our investments primarily now consist of a previous long-term investment in property funds and short term investments for cash flow purposes.
12.	Our current investments in bonds reduced from £3M to £1M following maturities in 2021/22 and we maintained the property funds at £27M, with all other cash being placed in short term deposits as shown in table in paragraph 2.
13.	As detailed in paragraph 10 our cash balances have continued to be higher than forecast but at £39.26M have reduced by £17.86M since June when we held £57.12M. Our target is to reduce this to a £20M working balance to reduce borrowing and therefore net interest costs but this will be dependent on actual capital spend and movement in balances.
14.	Investments managed internally are currently averaging a return of 1.91% which is higher than the average unitary authority at 1.74% whilst maintaining the same credit rating at AA-. Total income returns at 2.74% is also higher than the average for both unitary (2.13%) and LA's (2.05%), this is primarily due to historic investment in EIB bonds which return 5.27%, although on a small balance of £1M, since maturities cannot be replaced at the same level. We hold 44% of our investments in strategic funds which offer higher return over the long term as detailed in paragraphs 15 to 18 below. This is higher than the average but in line with our strategy. In addition, due to the increase in the capital value of our external funds of +10.72% our total investment return at 7.42% is significantly higher than the average LA's at 1.47% and the average unitary at 2.27% across Arlingclose's client base, but as previously reported it is the income return that is the driver to invest.

External Managed investments

15. The council has invested £27M in property funds as an alternative to buying property directly. As previously reported these funds offer the potential for enhanced returns over the longer term but may be more volatile in the shorter term and are managed by professional fund managers which allows the Authority to diversify into asset classes other than cash without the need to own and manage the underlying investments.

16. Because these funds have no defined maturity date but are usually available for withdrawal after a notice period (90 days), their performance and continued suitability in meeting the Authority's investment objectives is regularly reviewed.

17. Strategic fund investments are made in the knowledge that capital values will move both up and down on months, quarters and even years; but with the confidence that over a three to five-year period total returns will exceed cash interest rates. Considering their performance over the long-term and the Authority's latest cash flow forecasts, investment in these funds has been maintained.

18. The market improved since year end when the value was reported as £30.89M and this improvement continue into the first quarter when the value was reported at £32.51M. The has now fallen back to £31.13M a decrease of £1.38M since June but is still £4.13M above the initial investment of £27M.

The dividend for April to June was £0.26M and has been estimated at £0.30M for July to September, 3.98% against the original investment, this is in line with 2021/22. If rates remain at this level the total forecast dividend for the year is £1.07M.

Financial Review and Outlook

19. A summary of the external factors, which sets the background for Treasury, as provided by the council's treasury advisors, Arlingclose Ltd, is summarised below.

Arlingclose's Economic Outlook for the remainder of 2022/23 (based on 26th September 2022 interest rate forecast)

	Current	Dec-22	Mar-23	Jun-23	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25
Official Bank Rate													
Upside risk	0.00	0.50	0.75	0.75	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Arlingclose Central Case	2.25	4.25	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	4.75	4.25	3.75	3.25
Downside risk	0.00	-1.00	-1.00	-0.75	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.75	-1.25	-1.50	-1.75	-1.75	-1.75

20. The economic background has changed dramatically since last reported in June and there is further increased uncertainty. For contrast Arlingclose's forecast for June is included.

Arlingclose's Economic Outlook for the remainder of 2022/23 (based on the June 2022 interest rate forecast)

	Current	Sep-22	Dec-22	Mar-23	Jun-23	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25
Official Bank Rate													
Upside risk	0.00	0.50	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75
Arlingclose Central Case	1.25	1.75	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.00	2.00	1.75	1.75
Downside risk	0.00	-0.25	-0.25	-0.25	-0.25	-0.25	-0.25	-0.25	-0.50	-0.50	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75

21. The economic interest rate outlook provided by the Council's treasury advisor, Arlingclose Ltd, for September 2022 is based on the following Underlying Assumptions:

	• Arlingclose expects Bank Rate to rise further during 2022/23 to reach 5% by the end of the year. • The MPC is particularly concerned about the demand implications of fiscal loosening, the tight labour market, sterling weakness and the willingness of firms to raise prices and wages. • The MPC may therefore raise Bank Rate more quickly and to a higher level to dampen aggregate demand and reduce the risk of sustained higher inflation. Arlingclose now expects Bank Rate to peak at 5.0%, with 200bps of increases this calendar year. • This action by the MPC will slow the economy, necessitating cuts in Bank Rate later in 2024. • Gilt yields will face further upward pressure in the short term due to lower confidence in UK fiscal policy, higher inflation expectations and asset sales by the BoE. Given the recent sharp rises in gilt yields, the risks are now broadly balanced to either side. Over the longer term, gilt yields are forecast to fall slightly over the forecast period.
22.	Monetary policymakers are behind the curve having only raised rates by 50bps in September. This was before the "Mini-Budget", which was poorly received by the markets, triggered a rout in gilts with a huge spike in yields and a further fall in sterling. In a shift from recent trends, the focus now is perceived to be on supporting sterling whilst also focusing on subduing high inflation. There is now an increased possibility of a special Bank of England MPC meeting to raise rates to support the currency. Followed by a more forceful stance over concerns on the looser fiscal outlook. The MPC is therefore likely to raise Bank Rate higher than would otherwise have been necessary given already declining demand. A prolonged economic downturn could ensue. Uncertainty on the path of interest rates has increased dramatically due to the possible risk from unknowns which could include for instance another Conservative leadership contest, a general election, or further tax changes including implementing windfall taxes. The government's blank cheque approach to energy price caps, combined with international energy markets priced in dollars, presents a fiscal mismatch that has contributed to significant decline in sterling and sharp rises in gilt yields which will feed through to consumers' loans and mortgages and business funding costs. UK government policy has mitigated some of the expected rise in energy inflation for households and businesses flattening the peak for CPI, whilst extending the duration of elevated CPI. Continued currency weakness could add inflationary pressure. The UK economy already appears to be in recession, with business activity and household spending falling. The short- to medium-term outlook for the UK economy is relatively bleak. Global bond yields have jumped as investors focus on higher and stickier US policy rates. The rise in UK government bond yields has been sharper, due to both an apparent decline in investor confidence and a rise in interest rate expectations, following the UK government's shift to borrow to loosen fiscal policy. Gilt yields will remain higher unless the government's plans are perceived to be fiscally responsible. The housing market impact of increases in the Base Rate could act as a "circuit breaker" which stops rates rising much beyond 5.0%, but this remains an uncertainty.

	Economic background
23.	The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has continued to put pressure on global inflation and the economic outlook for UK and world growth remains weak. The UK political situation towards the end of the period following the 'fiscal event' increased uncertainty further. The economic backdrop during the April to September period continued to be characterised by high oil, gas and commodity prices, ongoing high inflation and its impact on consumers' cost of living, no imminent end in sight to the Russia-Ukraine hostilities and its associated impact on the supply chain, and China's zero-Covid policy. Central Bank rhetoric and action remained robust. The Bank of England, Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank all pushed up interest rates over the period and committed to fighting inflation, even when the consequences were in all likelihood recessions in those regions. UK inflation remained extremely high. Annual headline CPI hit 10.1% in July, the highest rate for 40 years, before falling modestly to 9.9% in August. RPI registered 12.3% in both July and August. The energy regulator, Ofgem, increased the energy price cap by 54% in April, while a further increase in the cap from October, which would have seen households with average energy consumption pay over £3,500 per annum, was dampened by the UK government stepping in to provide around £150 billion of support to limit bills to £2,500 annually until 2024. The labour market remained tight through the period but there was some evidence of easing demand and falling supply. The unemployment rate 3m/year for April fell to 3.8% and declined further to 3.6% in July. Although now back below pre-pandemic levels, the recent decline was driven by an increase in inactivity rather than demand for labour. Pay growth in July was 5.5% for total pay (including bonuses) and 5.2% for regular pay. Once adjusted for inflation, however, growth in total pay was -2.6% and –2.8% for regular pay. With disposable income squeezed and higher energy bills still to come, consumer confidence fell to a record low of –44 in August, down –41 in the previous month. Quarterly GDP fell -0.1% in the April-June quarter driven by a decline in services output, but slightly better than the 0.3% fall expected by the Bank of England. The Bank of England increased the official Bank Rate to 2.25% over the period. From 0.75% in March, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) pushed through rises of 0.25% in each of the following two MPC meetings, before hiking by 0.50% in August and again in September. August's rise was voted by a majority of 8-1, with one MPC member preferring a more modest rise of 0.25%. the September vote was 5-4, with five votes for an 0.5% increase, three for an 0.75% increase and one for an 0.25% increase. The Committee noted that domestic inflationary pressures are expected to remain strong and so given ongoing strong rhetoric around tackling inflation further Bank Rate rises should be expected. On 23rd September the UK government, following a change of leadership, announced a raft of measures in a 'mini budget', loosening fiscal policy with a view to boosting the UK's trend growth rate to 2.5%. With little detail on how government borrowing would be returned to a sustainable path, financial markets reacted negatively. Gilt yields rose dramatically by between 0.7% - 1% for all maturities with the rise most pronounced for shorter dated gilts. The swift rise in gilt yields left pension funds vulnerable, as it led to margin calls on their interest rate swaps and risked triggering large scale redemptions of assets across their portfolios to meet these demands. It became necessary for the Bank of England to intervene to preserve market stability through the

	purchase of long-dated gilts, albeit as a temporary measure, which has had the desired effect with 50-year gilt yields falling over 100bps in a single day. Bank of England policymakers noted that any resulting inflationary impact of increased demand would be met with monetary tightening, raising the prospect of much higher Bank Rate and consequential negative impacts on the housing market. After hitting 9.1% in June, annual US inflation eased in July and August to 8.5% and 8.3% respectively. The Federal Reserve continued its fight against inflation over the period with a 0.5% hike in May followed by three increases of 0.75% in June, July and September, taking policy rates to a range of 3% - 3.25%. Eurozone CPI inflation reached 9.1% y/y in August, with energy prices the main contributor but also strong upward pressure from food prices. Inflation has increased steadily since April from 7.4%. In July the European Central Bank increased interest rates for the first time since 2011, pushing its deposit rate from –0.5% to 0% and its main refinancing rate from 0.0% to 0.5%. This was followed in September by further hikes of 0.75% to both policy rates, taking the deposit rate to 0.75% and refinancing rate to 1.25%.
	Financial markets
24.	Uncertainty remained in control of financial market sentiment and bond yields remained volatile, continuing their general upward trend as concern over higher inflation and higher interest rates continued to dominate. Towards the end of September, volatility in financial markets was significantly exacerbated by the UK government's fiscal plans, leading to an acceleration in the rate of the rise in gilt yields and decline in the value of sterling. Due to pressure on pension funds, the Bank of England announced a direct intervention in the gilt market to increase liquidity and reduce yields. Over the period the 5-year UK benchmark gilt yield rose from 1.41% to 4.40%, the 10-year gilt yield rose from 1.61% to 4.15%, the 20-year yield from 1.82% to 4.13% and the 50-year yield from 1.56% to 3.25%. The Sterling Overnight Rate (SONIA) averaged 1.22% over the period.
	Credit background
25.	Having completed its full review of its credit advice on unsecured deposits at UK and non-UK banks, in May Arlingclose extended the maximum duration limit for five UK banks, four Canadian banks and four German banks to six months. The maximum duration for unsecured deposits with other UK and non-UK banks on Arlingclose's recommended list is 100 days. These recommendations were unchanged at the end of the period. Arlingclose continued to monitor and assess credit default swap levels for signs of credit stress but made no changes to the counterparty list or recommended durations. Nevertheless, increased market volatility is expected to remain a feature, at least in the near term and, as ever, the institutions and durations on the Authority's counterparty list recommended by Arlingclose remains under constant review.

	Revision to CIPFA Codes
26.	CIPFA published revised Prudential and Treasury Management Codes in December 2021. The Prudential Code took immediate effect although detailed reporting requirements could be deferred until the 2023/24 financial year and have not been included in this report whilst we are reviewing the impact of the proposed changes.
27.	The main changes or expected changes from previous codes include: • Additional reporting requirements for the Capital Strategy. • For service and commercial investments, in addition to assessments of affordability and prudence, an assessment of proportionality in respect of the Authority's overall financial capacity (i.e. whether plausible losses could be absorbed in budgets or reserves without unmanageable detriment to local services). • Forward looking prudential code indicators must be monitored and reported to members at least quarterly. • A new indicator for net income from commercial and service investments to net revenue stream. • Inclusion of the liability benchmark as a treasury management prudential indicator. CIPFA recommends this is presented as a chart of four balances – existing loan debt outstanding; loans CFR, net loans requirement, liability benchmark – over at least 10 years and ideally cover the authority's full debt maturity profile. • Excluding investment income from the definition of financing costs. • Credit and counterparty policies should set out the Authority's policy and practices relating to Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) investment considerations. • Additional focus on the knowledge and skills of officers and elected members involved in decision making
28.	Early indications are that future long-term investments, such as CCLA will be prohibited but we will not need to unwind existing investments.