

Report to:	COUNCIL
Meeting date:	29 March 2023
Title:	INVESTMENT STRATEGY REPORT 2023/24
Originator:	BOROUGH TREASURER
Status	FOR DECISION

Purpose

The approval by Full Council of an Investment Strategy is a requirement of the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (Prudential Code), and the Treasury Management in the Public Services Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes (Treasury Management Code) which were updated in December 2021.

Recommendations

Council is recommended to approve the Investment Strategy as detailed in this report

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Authority invests its money for two broad purposes:

- because it has surplus cash as a result of its day-to-day activities, for example when income is received in advance of expenditure (known as **treasury management investments**); and
- held primarily for financial return i.e. the main reason for entering the investment or holding it is to earn money and not linked to treasury management activity (known as **commercial investments** where this is the primary purpose).

1.2 This investment strategy meets the requirements of statutory guidance issued by the Government in January 2018.

2.0 Treasury Management Investments

2.1. The Authority typically receives its income in cash (e.g. from taxes and grants) before it pays for its expenditure in cash (e.g. through payroll and invoices). It also holds reserves for future expenditure. These activities, plus the timing of borrowing decisions, can lead to a cash surplus which is invested in accordance with guidance from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). The balance of treasury management investments is expected to average £10m during the 2023/24 financial year.

Contribution: The contribution that these investments make to the objectives of the Authority is to support effective treasury management activities.

Further details: Full details of the Authority’s policies and its plan for 2023/24 for treasury management investments are covered in a separate document, the Treasury Management Strategy.

3.0 Commercial Investments

- 3.1 The prudential code defines commercial investments as “taken or held primarily for financial return i.e. the main reason for entering the investment or holding it is to earn money and not linked to treasury management activity.
- 3.2 The revised 2021 Prudential code states “that in order to comply with the Prudential code, an authority must not borrow to invest for the primary purpose of financial return”.
- 3.3 **Property Contribution:** The Council has a portfolio of properties that are leased out, in part for income generation purposes. During this financial year, the Council has not procured any new properties to add to this portfolio. The value of the existing portfolio is detailed in the table below. The Council approved a new commercial property asset strategy (P&O January 2023) together with a new Investments Buildings and Land Leasing Policy.

Property held for investment purposes

Property held for Investment Purposes	Value at 31/3/2022 £000's
Property portfolio	8,426
TOTAL	8,426

Security: If the Council decided to undertake a procurement process then it would seek to provide security for the investment in the following way:

- In accordance with government guidance, the Authority considers a property investment to be secure if its accounting valuation is at or higher than its purchase cost including taxes and transaction costs.
- Undertake a regular fair value assessment of the Authority’s investment property portfolio and use this to determine if the underlying assets provide security for capital investment.
- Should the year end accounts preparation and audit process value these properties below their purchase cost, then an updated investment strategy will be presented to full council detailing the impact of the loss on the security of investments and any revenue consequences arising therefrom.

Risk assessment: The Authority assesses the risk of loss before entering into, and whilst holding, property investments by undertaking regular rent reviews on its portfolio, utilising expert property advice (particularly for material holdings) and ensuring that where investments are made they are supported by investment appraisal techniques to quantify potential risks and opportunities.

Liquidity: Compared with other investment types, property is relatively difficult to sell and convert to cash at short notice, and can take a considerable period to sell in certain market conditions. To ensure that the invested funds can be accessed when they are needed, for example to repay capital borrowed, the Authority maintains a range of short-term liquid investments to access as required.

4.0 Proportionality

4.1 The Authority is partially dependent on investment activity returns to achieve a balanced Revenue Budget. The table below shows the extent to which General Fund expenditure is dependent on achieving the income from investments over the lifecycle of the Medium Term Financial Plan. Should it fail to achieve the expected income, the Authority’s contingency plans for continuing to provide these services are to keep service costs under review and maintain financial resilience via its Reserves.

Proportionality of Investments

	2021/22 Actual £000's	2022/23 Forecast £000's	2023/24 Budget £000's	2024/25 Budget £000's	2025/26 Budget £000's
General Fund Net Expenditure	11,879	11,254	11,742	12,465	12,626
Commercial Property Investment Income	502	631	535	554	573
Proportion %	4.23%	5.61%	4.56%	4.44%	4.54%
The proportion is the investment income divided by the General Fund service net expenditure as shown in the budget book and forward projections					

5.0 Capacity, Skills and Culture

5.1 **Elected members and statutory officers:** Investment decision making is largely the responsibility of the Accounts team. The Borough Treasurer, the Head of Finance and the Group Accountant are qualified accountants. The team also utilises expert third-party advice regarding investment decision-making and has appointed Arlingclose as its Treasury Management advisor. The team regularly utilises investment appraisal techniques to quantify investment options and their opportunities and risks.

Commercial deals: Any commercial deals must be submitted to the Head of Finance for approval as well as to the Council’s Borough Solicitor.

Corporate governance: The Policy & Organisation Board can request reports regarding the Council’s investment processes, as can the Standards &

Governance Committee. Investments can also be reviewed by the Council's Audit team and also by External Auditors.

Financial Services comments	As set out in the report
Legal Services comments	This report fulfils the Councils' legal obligation under the Local Government Act 2003 to have regard to CIPFA's Prudential code for capital finance in Local Authorities and that Full Council consider an Investment Strategy Report prior to the commencement of the new financial year.
Equality and Diversity	N/A
Climate Change	No direct impact
Crime and Disorder	N/A
Service Improvement Plan	N/A
Corporate Plan:	N/A
Risk Assessment:	As contained in the report
Background papers:	
Appendix	N/A
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