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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

TUESDAY, 6TH FEBRUARY, 2024

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

Please find attached supplementary papers relating to the above meeting, as follows:

Agenda No	Item
5.	**<u>ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES</u> (Pages 3 - 42)**

5c) Finance, Audit and Risk Committee – Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury).

The report for this item can be found at Agenda for Finance, Audit and Risk Committee on Wednesday, 31st January, 2024, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council (north-herts.gov.uk).

An amended Appendix A is included with this supplement.

5d) Finance, Audit and Risk Committee – Revenue Budget 2024-25 – **to be considered with Item 10.**

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Item No	Referred from:	FINANCE, AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE
5C	Date:	31 JANUARY 2024
	Title of item:	INVESTMENT STRATEGY (INTEGRATED CAPITOL AND TRESURY)
To be considered alongside agenda item:		Referral only

The report considered by the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee at the meeting held on 31 January 2024 can be viewed here: [Agenda for Finance, Audit and Risk Committee on Wednesday, 31st January, 2024, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council (north-herts.gov.uk)]

RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET:

That Cabinet recommends to Council that they:

(1) Approve the adoption of the Investment Strategy (as attached at Appendix A), including the capital programme and prudential indicators. This incorporates the changes referenced in paragraphs 5.1 to 5.3.

(2) That Council approve the adoption of the four clauses in relation to the Code of Practice on Treasury Management (as detailed in paragraphs 8.10 to 8.16).

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

(1) To ensure that the capital programme meets the Council's objectives and officers can plan the implementation of the approved schemes.

(2) To ensure the Council's compliance with CIPFA's code of practice on Treasury Management, the Local Government Act 2003, statutory guidance from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and the CIPFA Prudential Code. As well as determining and managing the Councils risk appetite in respect of investments.

Audio recording – 21 minutes 25 seconds

The Service Director – Resources presented the report entitled 'Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury)' and highlighted that:

- The strategy covered the capital programme and determined the value of cash available to invest as part of the Treasury Management Strategy.
- At the budget workshops in November, proposals were put forward for the revenue and capital budgets for 2024-25.
- There were three items that Cabinet considered following these workshops and these were detailed at 5.1 of the report.
- A verbal update was presented to Cabinet in January regarding new areas for capital investments and this was highlighted at 5.2 of the report.
- There was an increase to the capital allocation for waste vehicles, which was currently an estimate due to the ongoing contract procurement.
- There would be revenue income savings from the capital funding of the leisure contractor.

- The anticipated income from the Royston learner pool project would be required to offset the capital cost of the project for it to be viable.
- The outcome of a bid form the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund should cover the majority of costs for the decarbonisation of leisure centres, but the Council would still need to make a significant contribution.
- The funding for new bins was discussed at the December Cabinet meeting.
- The current capital programme was highlighted in section 7 of the report and provided a starting point for the capital spend in future years.
- A full programme of capital schemes planned for 2024-25 was detailed in Appendix A1.
- Capital receipts were highlighted in Table 10 and indicated delays to expected capital receipts and they were being spent faster than they could be replaced. It was anticipated that next year the Council would run out of capital receipts.
- There had been some capital receipts forecasted this year, but these had been reduced and were likely to occur in future years and were due to resourcing needs and the current housing market.
- With the decline of capital receipts, borrowing would be required at a low level This could be funded externally but this would be subject to interest or internally, by borrowing against the cash in our reserves.
- The option to borrow internally would only be viable in the short term, and would result in lost interest income, but would cost less than external borrowing.
- It was hoped that should the Council need to borrow externally the interest rate would have lowered.
- Any borrowing would incur a revenue charge, and this would be spread over the lifespan of the asset that the borrowing related to and was explained in section 8.7 of the report.
- Cash amounts available for investments were detailed in Table 17.
- For investment limit purposes an average value would be used rather than an end of year balance, this was detailed in section 8.8 of the report, along with the amendments from previous years.
- The processes for investing were detailed in sections 8.10 to 8.15 of the report.

N.B Councillor Tom Plater left the Council Chamber at 19:56 and returned at 19:59.
N.B Councillor Tamsin Thomas entered the Council Chamber at 20:00.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Terry Hone
- Councillor Sean Nolan
- Independent Person John Cannon

In response to questions, the Service Director – Resources stated:

- That the Council would be borrowing by using the cash from their revenue reserves. There would be a need to borrow externally when there was a cashflow requirement to do so. This is different to the recommended minimum General Fund level.
- Initially should there be a need to borrow, the Council would finance it from revenue reserves and any further financing above that limit would come from external sources.
- Work would be ongoing on a strategy to ensure the use of longer-term borrowing rates and a spread of maturity dates.
- The Waste and Leisure assets would be capitalised. The waste vehicles were already capitalised as the Council retains the benefit of these.
- With the new waste contract, it was still uncertain if there would be a greater benefit from the Council from providing the up-front funding for the waste vehicles and this was being explored as part of the procurement.

- It was anticipated that once a detailed plan for the regeneration of Churchgate was developed then our borrowing requirement could increase. That would be offset by expected future income.
- The minimum revenue provision was an estimate and took into account the outcome if the current capital programme was fully spent, and a charge to capital spend would be required the following year. Any capital slippage would affect this provision.
- The valuation of Churchgate was an external valuation.
- Should the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund bid be unsuccessful then the Solar Thermal and Solar PV projects would still go ahead but the Heat Pump project would be delayed.
- In Table 14 the item with a maturity date of Jan 2031 should read as £25,000 and not 25,0000.
- The were concerns that the loan to SLL for the purchase of fitness equipment may not be repaid and during the pandemic period a bad debt provision had been created. The Committee can be updated on the progress of this matter.
- There was a minimum value for the general fund recommended at £2.4M. Should the Council be forecast to go below this level it would be likely that a section 114 notice would be issued. and this must be avoided.
- If the revenue saving failed to reach their target, then the revenue costs of the Capital Programme could contribute towards the Council going below that minimum.

N.B Councillor Tamsin Thomas left the Council Chamber at 20:12 and returned at 20:13.

Councillor Tom Plater proposed and Councillor Tamsin Thomas seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee provided comments on and recommended the Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury) to Cabinet.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET:

That Cabinet recommends to Council that they:

(1) Approve the adoption of the Investment Strategy (as attached at Appendix A), including the capital programme and prudential indicators. This incorporates the changes referenced in paragraphs 5.1 to 5.3.

(2) That Council approve the adoption of the four clauses in relation to the Code of Practice on Treasury Management (as detailed in paragraphs 8.10 to 8.16).

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

(1) To ensure that the capital programme meets the Council's objectives and officers can plan the implementation of the approved schemes.

(2) To ensure the Council's compliance with CIPFA's code of practice on Treasury Management, the Local Government Act 2003, statutory guidance from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and the CIPFA Prudential Code. As well as determining and managing the Councils risk appetite in respect of investments.

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Appendix A

Investment Strategy
(Integrated Capital and Treasury Strategy)

Part 1- Overview

Introduction

The Council is required to operate a balanced budget, which broadly means that cash raised during the year will meet cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operation is to ensure that this cash flow is adequately planned, with cash being available when it is needed. Surplus monies are invested in low risk counterparties or instruments commensurate with the Council's risk appetite, providing adequate security and liquidity initially before considering investment returns.

The second main function of the treasury management service is the funding of the Council's capital plans. These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Council, essentially the longer-term cash flow planning, to ensure that the Council can meet its capital spending plans. This management of longer-term cash may involve arranging long or short-term loans or using longer-term cash flow surpluses.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) define treasury management as:

> *"The management of the local authority's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks."*

This strategy provides an integrated view of capital spend and income, alongside treasury management. This is because long-term Treasury management is inextricably linked to the funding of the capital programme. There is also a requirement to apply treasury management principles to any capital spend that is not related to service provision.

The format of this strategy is as follows:

Part 2- Capital Spend

- A summary of the Council's current capital assets. For those assets that are not held for service provision, an assessment against the principles of Security, Liquidity and Yield.
- Forecasts of the capital and revenue spend required to maintain those assets.
- Planned spend on new capital assets, with the additional assessment of risk, security, liquidity and yield for those assets that are not being acquired for service provision.
- This part of the strategy therefore gives a complete picture of forecast capital spend.

Part 3- Capital balances, receipts and the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)

- Forecasts of expected receipts from the sale of surplus capital assets.
- Comparing capital spend forecasts with capital reserve balances and forecast future receipts gives the Capital Financing Requirement, which is the Council's need to borrow.

Part 4- Borrowing Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)

- This leads to the setting of a borrowing strategy which sets out how to borrow, when to borrow and for how long.
- Where the Council has a borrowing requirement, then it is required to set a policy on Minimum Revenue Provision.

Part 5- Investment Strategy

- This is then all combined to determine the levels of cash that the Council will have available for investment. This leads to an investment strategy that determines where to invest any balances, including limits on types of investments.

Part 6- Overall Risk considerations

- To consider the cumulative risks that the Council faces that arise from the totality of this strategy.

Part 7- Glossary of terms

- To explain the various terms used in this strategy.

The strategy sets a number of prudential and treasury indicators. A prudential indicator is one which is required by statutory guidance, whereas a treasury indicator is one that is set locally to provide information on performance.

Reporting requirements

Full Council will receive and approve three reports during the year:

- The Integrated Capital and Treasury strategy (this report)
- A mid-year review
- An annual report on the performance of the treasury management function, on the effects of the decisions taken and the transactions executed in the past year, and on any circumstances of non-compliance with the organisation’s treasury management strategy.

Each of these reports will be reviewed by the Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR) Committee and Cabinet. The FAR Committee and Cabinet will also receive reports on the position as at the end of the first (to end of June) and third (to end of December) quarters. The FAR Committee undertakes an oversight role.

These reports will provide relevant updates on performance against the prudential and treasury indicators.

Basis of Estimates

The estimates contained within this strategy are based on the best information that can reasonably be obtained. For forecasts of spend on assets (revenue maintenance, capital maintenance and capital acquisitions) this is based on a combination of previous experience, indicative quotes, condition surveys and professional advice. The estimates of capital receipts are provided by the Council’s Estates Team and are prudent estimates based on expected use, type of sale, market conditions and (where applicable) the status of negotiations to date.

The Council has experienced cost increases on capital projects in the past. These have generally arisen from delays in the start of the project and subsequent inflation, rather than incorrect estimates. Budget Holders have been asked to be as realistic as they can be about the timing of projects and ensure that forecast costs are aligned to the expected timing. There will also be external factors that affect estimates, particularly current economic conditions and the impact of inflation. For capital projects, there is some flexibility to the extent to which they can overspend without further approval (ranging from 5% to 20% dependant on value) and this is considered in setting this overall strategy and in the quarterly monitoring.

Treasury Management Policy and Treasury Management Practices

In line with guidance from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, the Council sets the following treasury management policy:

1. This Council defines its treasury management activities as: The management of the organisation’s investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.
2. The Council regards the successful identification, monitoring and control of risk to be the prime criteria by which the effectiveness of its treasury management activities will be measured. Accordingly, the analysis and reporting of treasury management activities will focus on their risk implications for the organisation, and any financial instruments entered into to manage these risks.
3. The Council acknowledges that effective treasury management will provide support towards the achievement of its business and service objectives. It is therefore committed to the principles of achieving value for money in treasury management, and to employing suitable comprehensive performance measurement techniques, within the context of effective risk management.

The Council also has treasury management practices (TMPs) which set out how the Council will carry out, manage and control the achievement of the policy above in practice. These TMPs follow the recommendations contained within the Code of Practice on Treasury Management (published by CIPFA), subject only to amendment where necessary to reflect the particular circumstances of the Council. Such amendments are minor and do not result in any material deviation from the Code’s key principles. The TMPs cover the following areas:

- TMP1- Risk Management
- TMP2- Performance Measurement
- TMP3- Decision making and analysis
- TMP4- Approved instruments, methods and techniques
- TMP5- Organisation, clarity and segregation of responsibilities, and dealing arrangements
- TMP6- Reporting requirements and management information arrangements
- TMP7- Budgeting accounting and audit arrangements
- TMP8- Cash and cash-flow management
- TMP9- Money laundering
- TMP10- Staff training and qualifications
- TMP11- Use of external service providers
- TMP12- Corporate Governance

Treasury Consultant

The Council undertook a tender to provide treasury management advice for a three year period. The contract was awarded to Link Asset Services (“Link”) to provide treasury management advice for the three year period April 2023 –March 2026 with the option to extend for a further two years. It is recognised that the responsibility for treasury management decisions remains with the Council at all times and the Council will ensure that undue reliance is not placed upon Link. However, there is value in employing external providers of treasury management services 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.

The performance of the treasury consultant is assessed through regular meetings and the justifications for the advice provided.

Skills and culture

It is important that decision makers are given the information that they need to make those decisions. Given that treasury and risk management can be a complex area; this should be accompanied by the availability of appropriate training. To address the availability of information, all Council, Cabinet and Committee reports include sections on both financial and risk implications. Where a decision is more financial in nature then these considerations will be detailed throughout the report. Table 1 details the key groups in relation to decision making and the training that has been made available. This strategy is required to disclose the steps that have been taken to provide training, and it is up to individual members of those groups to ensure that they take advantage of the opportunities offered.

Table 1

Group	Reason for training	Training that has been made available
Full Council (All Councillors)	Required to formally adopt this Strategy. Required to approve any capital purchase over £2.5m.	Annual training that provides an introduction to Local Authority funding and accounting was provided in June 2023. All Councillors were invited to attend, with a particular focus on new Members, Cabinet members and Finance, Audit and Risk Committee members.
Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR) Committee	To review the Council's policies on Treasury, Capital and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. To monitor the effective development and operation of risk management.	Members of the Committee (and substitutes) are encouraged to consider their skills and there is a standing item for future agenda items, which includes training ideas. This allows the targeting of specific training. This has enabled a number of training sessions to take place in advance of the regular FAR meetings. Where relevant (particularly early in the civic year) the presenter of reports provides a more detailed introduction to ensure the key information and context is fully understood. Regular reporting to the Committee on Capital, Risk and Treasury provides the opportunity to ask questions.
Chief Finance Officer and Finance Team	Responsibility for the financial management of the Council (under s151 of Local Government Act, 1972), including capital and treasury management. Provide advice to Budget Holders in respect of financial management. Responsible for reviewing and amending the financial implications sections of reports.	Ongoing Continuing Professional Development for all qualified members of the finance team, including focused training for specific areas of responsibility.
Leadership Team (LT)	Individual Service Directors will be responsible for putting forward proposals. Proposals will be reviewed by the Senior Management Team prior to taking through the Committee process. Members of SMT are likely to be involved in negotiating commercial deals.	Previous training session on risk, risk appetite and assessing risk. Regular updates on the Council's funding and finances, including significant changes in regulations. Updates on the core principles of the prudential framework.
Political Liaison Board (Joint	Cabinet makes recommendations to Council on the policy direction and budget for the Council.	Previous presentations on the implications of the CIPFA Financial Management Code to help ensure effective financial governance and sustainability.

Member and Officer Leadership Team)	Approves capital spend up to £2.5m.	Regular updates on key financial issues.

Part 2- Capital Spend

Current Capital Assets

As at 31st March 2023, a summary of the capital assets owned by the Council is shown in table 2 below.

Table 2

Asset Type	Asset	Reason for ownership	Value (£000)
Investment Properties	Various	Retained to generate income	30,598
Surplus Land and buildings	Various	Held for future sale or development	9,012
Offices and Storage	Offices	Staff offices, customer service centre and democratic facilities	3,823
Offices and Storage	Unit 3 / Depots	Off-site storage, back-up IT and emergency planning	590
Leisure Facilities	Hitchin Swim Centre / Archers	Service use	8,955
Leisure Facilities	Letchworth Outdoor Pool	Service use	3,278
Leisure Facilities	North Herts Leisure Centre	Service use	13,607
Leisure Facilities	Royston Leisure Centre	Service use	8,641
Leisure Facilities	Pavilions / Bandstands	Service use	2,328
Leisure Facilities	Recreation Grounds / Play Areas / Gardens/Allotments	Service use	5,638
Community Centres and Halls	Various	Community facilities, generally operated by third parties	13,017
Markets	Hitchin Market	To provide a market	170
Museums and Arts	Hitchin Town Hall and District Museum	District-wide museum and community facility	7,242
Museums and Arts	Letchworth and Hitchin museums, Burymead store	Museum storage	1,791
Cemeteries	Various	Service use	1,485
Community Safety	Various CCTV cameras	Service use	0
IT	Various computer equipment and software	To enable the delivery of other services	398
Parking	Various car parks	Service use	11,707
Waste Collection	Bins	Service use	235
Waste Collection	Vehicles	Service use	908
Public Conveniences	Various	Subject to leases/ management arrangements	582
Other	Various	Various	531
Total			**124,536**

Table 3 shows the capital expenditure that has been incurred during the year, or is forecast to be spent in the remainder of the year:

Table 3

Asset Type	Asset	Reason for purchase/ expenditure	Value (£000)
Cemeteries	Icknield Way and Wilbury Hills	Path Enhancement	116
Community Centres and Halls	Various	Grants for refurbishment of community facilities. Relates to properties that are not owned by the Council (REFCUS)	98
Grants	Various	Local Authority Housing Fund	1,967
Grants	Various	Private Sector Housing Grants	148
Grants	Various	S106 Grants (REFCUS)	416
Grants	Various	Shared Prosperity Fund	180
Investment Properties	Residential Housing	To enable the conversion of Harkness Court to increase housing provision in the District	35
IT	Various computer equipment and software	To maintain IT service and provision of equipment	667
Leisure Facilities	Hitchin Swim Centre	Enhancements	65
Leisure Facilities	Leisure Condition Survey	Improvements to various Leisure sites	206
Leisure Facilities	North Herts Leisure Centre	Soft Play Area, Refurbish Gym toilets and reconfigure Reception	211
Leisure Facilities	Recreation Grounds / Play Areas / Gardens	Refurbishment of play areas.	1,335
Leisure Facilities	Royston Leisure Centre	Refurbish Swim Showers and Change Village	75
Parking	Multi-storey car parks	Structural Repairs, Resurfacing and Decoration	70
Parking	Off Street	Match Funding for Electric Vehicle charging and DCO charging points	123
Parking	Off Street	Upgrade pay and display machines and resurfacing	481
Parking	On Street	Instal On Street Charging	50
REFCUS	Cycle Strategy / Transport Plans / Green Infrastructure	Cycle Strategy / Transport Plans / Green Infrastructure	713
Various	Various	Capital maintenance of Council buildings/land	368
Waste	Bins	Service Use	135
Waste	Bury Mead Road Transfer Facility	Service Use	30
Total			**7,489**

Capitalisation Policy:

Assets that have physical substance and are held for use in the production or supply of goods or services, for rental to others, or for administrative purposes and that are expected to be used during more than one financial year are classed as Property, Plant and Equipment.

Expenditure, above the de-minimis level, on the acquisition, creation or enhancement of property, plant and equipment is capitalised on an accruals basis provided that it is probable that the future economic benefits or service potential associated with the item will flow to the authority and the cost of the item can be measured reliably. Expenditure that maintains but does not add to an asset's potential to deliver future economic benefits or service potential (i.e. repairs and maintenance) or is below the de-minimis level, is charged as an expense when it is incurred.

The Authority's de-minimis level is £20,000 for property and £10,000 for vehicles, plant and equipment.

The Council will provide grants that fund works on assets that it does not own. This expenditure can be treated as capital expenditure, even though it does not create an asset that the Council would then own or recognise. This is known as revenue expenditure allowed to be funded by capital under statute (or REFCUS).

For the assets that the Council owns (or plans to purchase in the year) that are **not** for service delivery, the security, liquidity and yield in relation to these have been considered. For these assets it is up to the Council to determine how it balances these, and this will depend on its risk appetite. This analysis is shown in Table 4. In most cases, assets are grouped together by type. Assets that are held for income generation purposes are revalued annually. This valuation is on a fair value basis. Unless detailed below the asset is considered to provide sufficient security.

Definitions:

Security- In traditional treasury terms, this is the possibility that other parties fail to pay amounts due to the Authority. For commercial investments it relates to how susceptible they are to changes in value and market conditions.

Liquidity- This is the possibility that the Authority may not have funds available to meet its commitments to make payments. In general it relates to how easy it is to sell an asset.

Yield- The income return on an investment or asset, such as the interest received or rental income from holding a particular investment or asset.

Table 4

Asset (or type of asset)	Security	Liquidity	Yield
Ground leases- mainly of commercial premises in Royston, Letchworth and Hitchin (£23.7m by value)	Generally subject to long leases where the land has been built on. The building would become owned by the Council if there was a default on the lease agreement. Therefore, high security.	It is possible that the Council could try and sell to the leaseholder. Otherwise low liquidity in common with commercial premises.	The assets have been owned for a number of years. Valuations are based on the yield generated.
Churchgate Shopping Centre, Hitchin (value £4.5m)	The Council now has combined ownership of the freehold and leasehold. The Council now generates income directly from the tenants. This income will be affected by economic conditions, but overall is projected to remain fairly stable. Note that the primary reason for holding the asset is regeneration.	On the basis that it generates a reasonable rental stream, likely to be some interest as an investment. Liquidity likely to be improved now that the ownership of the freehold and leasehold are combined.	Forecasts (based on independent advice) when the leasehold was acquired, was that net income would exceed the capital costs of acquiring the asset and the existing income from the freehold interest.
Letchworth Town Hall (value £0.8m)	25 year lease (from 2012) where the tenant has provided significant investment.	Very low liquidity as would require someone to be interested in this type of building. Listed so would limit redevelopment.	Valuations are based on the yield generated.
Beverley Close Store, Royston (value £0.2m)	15 year lease from 2017	Low liquidity in common with commercial premises.	Valuations are based on the yield generated. Previously used as a Council store and a decision was made to retain for rental income.
Residential housing (Harkness Court) (value £0.8m)	The demand for housing is considered to be greater than an office building. Therefore, it is expected that the expenditure on a conversion scheme has increased the security of the asset.	The liquidity of the asset increased with the granting of planning permission and building regulations approval. It is now expected to have high liquidity.	Not currently generating any income. The final completion of the conversion will enable generation of rental income.
Other assets valued at less than £0.1m (£0.5m in total)	Not fully assessed	Not fully assessed	Not fully assessed

Definitions:

Fair Value: The price that would be received to sell an asset in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date.

For each of the assets in table 4, there is also a requirement to carry out a fair value assessment that demonstrates that the underlying assets provide security for the capital invested. There is a further requirement to carry out an assessment of the risk of loss. This assessment generally relates to investments in commercial activities so includes items that may be less relevant to the majority of our assets. In total the risk assessment covers:

- Assessment of the market that competing in, including nature and level of competition, market and customer needs including how these will evolve over time, barriers to entry and exit, and ongoing investment required.
- Use of external advisers and how the quality of these is monitored
- Whether credit ratings are used and how these are monitored
- Any other sources of information that are used

The assessments described above are shown in table 5. In most cases the assets are grouped together by type.

Table 5

Asset (or type of asset)	Fair value assessment	Assessment of the risk of loss
Ground leases- mainly of commercial premises in Royston, Letchworth and Hitchin (£23.7m by value)	Valued on a fair value basis. The valuation is based on rental yields.	Subject to competition from other sites within the same industrial areas and other locations. Difficult (uneconomic) for current lessees to exit due to lease terms and investment in the site. Any maintenance is the responsibility of the leaseholder.
Churchgate Shopping Centre, Hitchin- ground lease (value £4.5m)	Valued on a fair value basis. The valuation is based on rental yields.	External valuations were commissioned to support the decision to acquire the leasehold interest. Whilst there are difficulties that face retail and shopping centres in particular, Hitchin is a good retail location, and this shopping centre is fairly unique in the rents that it offers. However, there is still risk in the context of current economic conditions. As part of the acquisition, the Council commissioned condition surveys and is undertaking necessary works. These works are generally expected to be funded from current and forecast balances in the service charge account.
Letchworth Town Hall (value £0.8m)	Valued on a fair value basis. The valuation is based on rental yields.	The building has some unique features in relation to its prominence and location. However, overall, there currently is an over-supply of office accommodation in Letchworth. Difficult (uneconomic) for current lessees to exit due to lease terms and investment in the building. Any maintenance during the lease term is the responsibility of the leaseholder.
Beverley Close Store, Royston (value £0.2m)	Valued on a fair value basis. The valuation is based on rental yields.	Subject to competition from other sites within the same industrial areas and other locations. Currently let to a company with significant property interest nearby. Might be difficult to re-let.
Other assets valued at less than £0.1m (£0.5m in total)	Not fully assessed	Not fully assessed

Under the ‘Use of Capital Receipts Direction’, the Council can treat certain specified revenue spend as capital. Further details of the direction are shown below. Where this direction is used, the spend is included in the capital forecasts in tables 3, 6 and 7.

Use of Capital Receipts Direction:

The Capital Receipts direction was last used to fund the decommissioning of pavilions and play areas in 2018/19. There are no plans to make further use of the Direction in the period 2024/25– 2028/29.

For all assets the future capital cost of maintaining those assets has been considered, and gives the following future capital spend requirements (table 6). For some of the elements of some items (marked with an asterisk) the spend could be included in table 7 but is included here to make the tables shorter.

Table 6

Asset	**Description of future capital expenditure**	**Forecast Capital Expenditure (£000)**					
		2024/25	**2025/26**	**2026/27**	**2027/28**	**2028/29**	**2029/30 to 2033/34**
Existing Capital Programme-schemes 2024/25 onwards							
Various	Capital maintenance based on condition surveys	100	100	100	85	0	0
Cemeteries	St Johns and Wilbury Hills footpath resurfacing	50	0	30	0	0	0
Computer Software & Equipment	To maintain IT services	396	1,124	136	62	1,042	1,275
Council Car Fleet	New accounting Standard requires the Council’s leased Vehicles to be recorded on the Council’s Asset Register	141	0	0	0	0	0
Grounds Maintenance Vehicles	New accounting Standard requires the Council’s leased Vehicles to be recorded on the Council’s Asset Register	315	0	0	0	0	0
Hitchin Swim Centre*	Refurbishments / Boiler Replacement / Solar PV Installation	382	300	225	0	0	0
North Herts Museum & Community Facility	Weatherproof solution to allow all year round use of the Terrace Gallery balcony space	48					
North Herts Leisure Centre*	Various Refurbishments / Solar PV installation	538	0	0	120	150	0

Royston Leisure Centre	Refurbishments / Boiler Replacement	758	30	0	0	0	0
Various	Private sector housing grants (REFCUS)	60	60	60	60	60	300
Various	Creation of and improvements to local green spaces	100	0	0	0	0	0
Various	Community Engagement Schemes	163	0	0	0	0	0
Various	Funding for local sports facilities, tournaments, teams and leagues	100	0	0	0	0	0
Various Off-Street Car Parks	Resurfacing / Enhancements	655	50	59	0	0	0
Various Parks and Playgrounds	Enhancements	345	180	190	190	180	900
Waste and Recycling	Bin replacements	90	90	90	90	90	270
New Capital Programme							
Cemeteries	Burials Database System	55	0	0	0	0	0
Grange and Jackmans Community Centres	Install flat roof safety barriers	43	0	0	0	0	0
Hitchin Swim Centre	Various Refurbishments and Gym Equipment	89	372	0	0	0	0
Howard Park Kiosk	Refurbishment	30	0	0	0	0	0
Letchworth Outdoor Pool	Café	53	0	0	0	0	0
NH Museum and Community Facility	Various Refurbishments	30	0	25	0	0	0
North Herts Leisure Centre	Various Refurbishments	1,196	0	250	0	0	0
Norton Common Bowls Pavilion	Various Enhancements	55	0	0	0	0	0
Old Hale Way Allotments	Resurface roads and footpaths	20	0	0	0	0	0
Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund*	Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund	9,515	0	0	0	0	0
Royston Leisure Centre*	Various Refurbishments	70	822	0	0	0	0
Various Parks and Playgrounds	Enhancements	140	0	0	0	0	0
Total		**15,537**	**3,128**	**1,165**	**607**	**1,522**	**2,745**

The totals for 2029/30 to 20332/34 are estimates only and could be subject change. These should be treated as early indications only, and formal approval of these amounts is not required.

The revenue maintenance of these assets has also been considered. The Council has chosen to allocate a central budget of £234k per year for this purpose.

New Capital Assets

There are also proposals for the following capital expenditure on new capital assets and expenditure on existing assets that is not related to capital maintenance (table 7).

Table 7

Asset	Reason for capital expenditure	Forecast Capital Expenditure (£000)					
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30 to 2033/34
Charnwood House	Refurbish and update the building for community use.	350	0	0	0	0	0
John Barker Place	Contribution to redevelopment	1,096	0	0	0	0	0
NH Museum and Community Facility	Museum Storage Solution	2,000	2,000	0	0	0	0
Off-Street Parking	Parking Machines Upgrade	150	0	0	0	0	0
Royston Leisure Centre	Extension to provide a new multi-functional room and increase size of fitness room	1,000	0	0	0	0	0
Royston Leisure Centre	Learner Pool	2,500	0	0	0	0	0
Various pavilions and cemetery sites.	Provision of remote testing Emergency Lights and Water Temperature Monitoring	0	13	0	0	0	0
Walsworth Common Pavilion	New pavilion	0	300	0	0	0	0
Waste and Recycling	Vehicles	0	8,500	0	0	0	0
Waste and Recycling	Recyclable material transfer facility, vehicle depot and offer facility co-located with a residual waste transfer facility	0	0	3,000	3,000	0	0
Waste and Recycling	New fibre bins	0	1,170	0	0	0	0
Total		**7,096**	**11,983**	**3,000**	**3,000**	**0**	**0**

Below is an estimate of the total capital expenditure to be incurred in the years 2024/25 to 2028/29. This is based on tables 6 and 7. This is a Prudential Indicator and the Council is required to set a target for it and monitor against it during the year.

Prudential Indicator 1: Estimate of total capital expenditure to be incurred in years 2024/25 to 2028/29

Year	£m
2024/25	22.633
2025/26	15.111
2026/27	4.165
2027/28	3.607
2028/29	1.522

A list of new capital schemes and schemes planned to commence from 2024/25 is provided in Appendix A1.

Where this proposed expenditure does not relate to service delivery, the security, liquidity and yield in relation to this spend has to be considered. The capital allocations do not include any spend that is not linked to service delivery, but the Council will continue to consider opportunities in relation to residential property and other investments where they support regeneration or support Council priorities. If these opportunities arise then they will be brought to Council for consideration, alongside an updated Investment Strategy. The table below (table 8) provides an analysis of security, liquidity and yield in relation to these types of investment.

Table 8

Asset (or type of asset)	Security	Liquidity	Yield
Residential Property (including developing housing on Council land)	The underlying value of residential property generally appreciates over the medium term due to the overall shortage of supply. Any focus on developing new properties or converting existing properties to residential will also help to ensure security due to the expected uplift in value. Individual market factors will be considered prior to acquisition. Where retained it is likely that the property will be held through a company, although various funding structures can be considered (e.g. loan funding, equity funding or leasing the assets to the company for onward rental). Maximum security would be achieved through loan funding (with the loan secured against the property) or an onward leasing arrangement. But there may be instances where higher levels of equity funding are considered appropriate.	Property is a medium to long-term asset due to the costs of buying and selling. However, it is generally possible to sell residential property within a reasonable time-frame if priced accordingly.	The expected rental yield will be compared to the costs of acquisition or construction as part of the business case.

Other investments	The primary reason for any other investment would be to enable regeneration and/ or to support the delivery of Council priorities. But given overall Council finances, the security of investments will be given a high weighting in determining whether to take any forward. However there will always be some risk relating to both general market conditions and specific factors relevant to individual properties.	Property is a medium to long-term asset due to the costs of buying and selling, and that property markets can be cyclical in nature.	To reflect the risk of property investment a net surplus of 1% (above revenue costs of capital, administration and acquisition costs) will be targeted as a minimum. Any target surplus will be commensurate with the level of risk.

For these assets, table 9, also details an assessment of the risk of loss. This covers the same factors that have been detailed previously. Where relevant, assets have been grouped together.

Table 9

Asset (or type of asset)	Assessment of the risk of loss
Residential Property	This will be fully assessed as part of the business case for the acquisition of any properties.
Other investments	This will be fully assessed as part of the business case for the acquisition of any properties.

<u>Part 3- Capital balances, receipts and the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)</u>

<u>Capital Funding</u>

The Council forecasts the following additions to its capital receipts (table 10). All the planned disposals are surplus land that is being sold to generate capital receipts. The disposals will also reduce the risks and costs of holding the land. Due to the potential impact on negotiations over disposal values, individual values are not detailed. Table 8 above mentions potential opportunities for the Council to develop residential properties on existing land. If these were to be progressed, then that would require a refresh of the Investment Strategy. If the properties were then sold at the end, then that would result in a delayed (but expected to be greater) capital receipt. If some (or all of) the properties were retained, then that would swap a capital receipt for an expected revenue income stream. The valuations used are prudent for selling with limited restrictions and assuming that planning permission can be obtained. If the Council requires enhanced conditions in relation to affordable housing provision, then that could result in a reduced capital receipt. An allowance has been incorporated for higher environmental standards for new disposals, but the impact is uncertain as it will be affected by the cost of those enhanced standards (which is expected to fall over time) and any premium that the end purchaser of the property is prepared to pay. If there were changes in the receipts that could be achieved, then it may be necessary to revise the Investment Strategy. That would increase the borrowing requirement, increase borrowing costs and therefore have a greater revenue impact (due to revenue costs of capital). The Council has surplus land that is expected to have a value that is not included in the foreacsts below as the amount and/or timing of the receipt is too uncertain. These sales are likely to fall in to the period from 2027/28 onwards.

Table 10

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Balance B/Fwd	2,759	0	0	0	0	0
Used in Year	3,452	0	7,600	600	0	0
Forecast Receipts (£000)	693	0	7,600	600	Tbc	Tbc
Balance C/Fwd	0	0	0	0	0	0

The above timing and values are an estimate only. Actual timings will depend on market conditions and time taken for planning permission to be granted (where sales values are subject to planning). The Council will seek to get the best value it can from land sales.

Table 11

Funding Source	Brought forward (at 31/3/23)	Forecast expenditure and funding sources (£000)						
		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30 to 2033/34
Capital Expenditure		7,489	22,633	15,111	4,165	3,607	1,522	2,745
Less: Set-aside receipts used	2,719	564	2,155	0	0	0	0	0
Less: Capital receipts used	2,759	3,452	0	7,600	600	0	0	0
Less: Grant funding used		2,952	8,106	0	0	0	0	0
Less: IT Reserve used		0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Less: S106 receipts used		516	467	37	0	0	0	0
Less: Funding from revenue		0	0	3,200	0	0	0	0
Less: Other Capital Contributions		5	48	250	0	0	0	0
Borrowing requirement		**0**	**11,857**	**4,024**	**3,565**	**3,607**	**1,522**	**2,745**
Cumulative borrowing requirement		**0**	**0**	**15,881**	**19,446**	**23,053**	**24,575**	**27,320**

Definitions:

Capital receipts- money received from the sale of surplus assets.

Set-aside receipts- previously money generated from the sale of surplus assets was not defined as capital receipt. The residual funding that the Council has (which is mainly from the sale of its housing stock to North Herts Homes) is treated as a set-aside receipt. In essence these are treated in the same way as capital receipts.

The borrowing requirement is the balancing item. It is also known as the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). This is a Prudential Indicator and the Council is required to set a target for it and monitor against it during the year.

Prudential Indicator 2: Capital Financing Requirement

Year	£m
As at 31st March 2023 (actual)	-2.7
As at 31st March 2024 (forecast)	-2.2
As at 31st March 2025 (forecast)	11.9
As at 31st March 2026 (forecast)	15.9
As at 31st March 2027 (forecast)	19.4
As at 31st March 2028 (forecast)	23.1

Where the Council has a Capital Financing Requirement (i.e. the borrowing requirement is positive) then it:

- Must make a charge to revenue for a Minimum Revenue Provision.
- Can choose whether to borrow internally or externally.

Part 4- Borrowing Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)

Borrowing strategy

Definitions:

Internal Borrowing- Even when the Council has no capital reserves, it can borrow internally against its revenue balances and reserves. This uses the cash that is available and is different to funding capital from revenue. The Council is still required to have a Minimum Revenue Provision but does not incur any external interest costs. Interest income from investing the revenue balances and reserves would be lost.

External Borrowing- Borrowing from a third party (e.g. Public Works Loans Board, a Local Authority or a financial institution). Interest costs would be incurred, as well as having to make a Minimum Revenue Provision.

Based on Prudential Indicator 2 above the Council has a Capital Financing Requirement from 2025/26 onwards and therefore does have a need to borrow.

If the Council had a borrowing requirement, then in order to determine whether to borrow internally or externally, it must consider the level of revenue reserves and provisions that it has, and when it expects that these will be spent. Forecasts of the revenue budget give the following estimates (table 12). These totals are also used in determining the cash that it has available for investment.

Table 12

Revenue balance	Brought forward (at 31/3/23)	Forecast balance at year end					
		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
General Fund[1]	11,990	13,425	13,222	11,687	10,800	10,359	10,411
Add back MRP	0	0	0	721	1,163	1,313	1,411
Revenue Reserves[2]	10,661	10,491	9,783	5,357	5,857	6,357	6,857
S106 balances	4,622	4,106	3,640	3,603	3,603	3,603	3,603
Provisions	1,366	1,366	1,366	1,366	1,366	1,366	1,366
Outstanding Debt	367	347	325	305	290	275	265
Total	**29,006**	**29,735**	**28,336**	**23,039**	**23,079**	**23,273**	**23,913**

1 Based on General Fund forecasts as per 'Revenue Budget 2024/25' report.
2 Revenue Reserve balance as at 31/3/23. Then increases in line with contributions to waste vehicle reserve at an average of £454k per year for 7 years. (First year £253K final year £727K). At the end of 7 years assumed that this funding will be used to fund new waste vehicles. For simplicity this ignores some of the fluctuations in reserve balances that are detailed in the 'Revenue Budget 2024/25' report, as these do not have a material impact.

MRP is added back as it is not an outflow of cash and can be used for internal borrowing. The cash outflow happens when the borrowing is repaid. The Revenue budget includes forecasts of the MRP charge.

The Prudential Code (published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) provides a framework for Councils to develop investment plans that are affordable, prudent and sustainable. This details that an expectation that Councils will use cash reserves (i.e. borrow internally) before they borrow externally. The reason for this is that it reduces costs as not paying external interest. However, in the longer term it will introduce financing risk, as there will come a time when the Council will have diminished its cash reserves (except amounts held for cashflow purposes) and will need to borrow externally. This will need to be planned so that borrowing can be achieved at a reasonable rate.

Current forecasts (see tables 11 and 12) are that the Council will have revenue reserves in excess of its borrowing requirement. Therefore all borrowing (except any cashflow borrowing) will be internal over the period of the Investment Strategy.

Table 13

	Brought forward (at 31/3/23)	Forecast amount of borrowing in year (£000)						Carried forward (at 31/3/34)
		2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30 to 2033/34	
Total borrowing requirement	367	0	11,857	4,024	3,565	3,607	1,522	2,745	
Made up of:									
Internal borrowing	0	0	11,857	4,024	3,565	3,607	1,522	2,745	27,320
External borrowing	367	(21)	(21)	(20)	(15)	(15)	(10)	(15)	250

The brought forward borrowing total is made up of historic borrowing that it is not cost effective to pay off. This is because the interest that would be payable over the course of the remaining loan has to be paid upfront instead. The reduction is due to these being loans that are repaid in instalments.

The Council is required to set two prudential indicators that are based on external debt. These are an operational boundary and an authorised limit.

Definitions:

Operational Boundary: This is the limit beyond which external debt is not normally expected to exceed. Set as £1m (rounded to the nearest £0.1m) above the forecast external debt.

Authorised Limit: This represents a limit beyond which external debt is prohibited, and this limit needs to be set or revised by the full Council. It reflects the level of external debt which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable or required in the longer term. This is set at £5m above the operational boundary.

Prudential Indicator 3: External Debt

Year	Forecast Borrowing £m	Forecast other long-term liabilities[1] £m	Less: Internal Borrowing £m	Forecast Total External Debt £m	Operational Boundary £m	Authorised Limit £m
As at 31st March 2023 (actual)	0.367	1.023	0	1.390	3.0	8.0
As at 31st March 2024 (forecast)	0.347	0.516	0	0.863	2.0	7.0
As at 31st March 2025 (forecast)	12.182	0.106	(11.857)	0.431	2.0	7.0
As at 31st March 2026 (forecast)	16.185	8.600	(15.880)	8.905	10.0	15.0
As at 31st March 2027 (forecast)	19.736	8.092	(19.446)	8.382	10.0	15.0
As at 31st March 2028 (forecast)	23.328	7.582	(23.053)	7.857	9.0	14.0
As at 31st March 2029 (forecast)	24.840	7.072	(24.575)	7.337	9.0	14.0

1 Comprises the finance lease relating to Letchworth Multi-storey car park, Grounds Maintenance Vehicles / Machinery, Leased Vehicles and the impact of the finance lease for waste vehicles.

The external borrowing forecast can be used to give an indication of the borrowing that may be required, which is combined with outstanding existing borrowing (table 14). The Council will also borrow for short-term cash-flow needs if required. The actual borrowing that is taken out will depend on the latest forecasts and the offers that are available at the time that it is required. There will also be a consideration of when any other borrowing becomes due, with the aim of achieving a spread of these dates. This is to try and avoid refinancing risk. The Council is required to set indicators for the maturity structure of its borrowing. Given the low level of borrowing that the Council currently has and is forecast to have, it is considered appropriate to maintain full flexibility as to the exact duration of any borrowing undertaken. This is reflected in the indicators set out as Treasury Indicator 4 below.

Table 14

Loan Type	Start date	Duration (years)	Maturity date	Amount Borrowed (£)	Balance Outstanding 31/03/24 (£)	Interest Rate (actual or forecast) (%)	Current Annual interest cost (£)
PWLB	08/01/49	80	Oct 2025	5,346	350	3.125	15
	16/09/49	80	Jul 2029	380	27	3.0	1
	10/05/46	80	Jan 2026	10,150	636	3.125	27
	12/11/48	80	Jul 2028	13,885	1,918	3.0	66
	28/07/64	60	Jul 2024	15,801	474	6.0	69
	02/03/65	60	Jan 2025	19,558	1,155	6.0	119
	01/10/65	60	Jul 2025	33,976	2,968	6.0	261
	05/07/66	60	Jan 2026	35,000	4,018	6.0	324
	02/08/66	60	Jul 2026	50,000	7,072	6.0	540
	18/03/68	60	Jan 2028	40,000	10,191	7.375	870
	03/01/69	60	Jul 2028	53,027	16,106	8.125	1,484
	06/03/70	60	Jan 2030	20,100	8,121	8.75	776
	24/11/70	60	Jul 2030	18,714	8,509	9.5	874
	26/01/71	60	Jan 2031	25,000	12,196	9.75	1,275
	05/03/71	60	Jan 2031	12,500	5,883	9.25	585
	05/03/71	60	Jan 2031	25,000	11,773	9.25	1,170
	31/05/46	80	Jan 2026	9,570	628	3.125	26
	28/02/47	80	Jan 2027	5,832	486	2.5	15
	18/10/46	80	Jul 2026	1,527	107	2.5	3
	20/02/48	80	Jan 2028	14,952	1,850	3.0	65
	22/09/50	80	Jul 2030	654	127	3.0	4
	27/08/82	60	Jul 2042	250,000	250,000	11.5	28,750
	07/12/45	80	Sep 2025	1,500	114	3.125	4
	16/09/49	80	Sep 2029	640	107	3.0	3
	20/03/53	80	Mar 2033	1,020	329	4.125	14
	23/10/53	80	Sep 2033	750	240	4.0	10
	20/11/53	80	Sep 2033	420	137	4.0	5
	25/04/52	80	Mar 2032	480	141	4.25	6
	30/01/48	80	Sep 2027	1,560	170	3.0	6
	20/09/45	80	Sep 2025	16,690	1,089	3.125	50
Total					**346,922**		

Definitions:

Refinancing Risk (or Maturity Risk): The risk that if all borrowing becomes due for repayment at the same time that this will be at a time when the costs for taking out new borrowing (refinancing) are very high.

To manage refinancing risk, the Council sets limits on the maturity structure of its borrowing. However, these indicators are set at a high level to provide sufficient flexibility to respond to opportunities to repay or take out new debt (if it was required), while remaining within the parameters set by the indicators. Due to the low level of existing borrowing, all the limits have a broad range. This is particularly necessary for the 'under 12 months' limit, to allow for cash-flow borrowing (if it was required).

Treasury Indicator 4: Maturity Structure of Fixed Interest Rate Borrowing

Maturity period	Lower %	Upper %
Under 12 months	0	100
12 months to 2 years	0	100
2 years to 5 years	0	100
5 years to 10 years	0	100
10 years to 20 years	0	100
20 years and above	0	100

The Council does not place any restrictions on where it can borrow from. This is because the Council will hold the money and therefore there is not a risk around the security of the funds. In practice any borrowing is likely to come from the Public Works Loan Board, UK banks, UK building societies and other Local Authorities. All borrowing will be denominated in GBP Sterling. The decision on any borrowing will be made by the Chief Finance Officer and reflect the advice of the Council's treasury advisers.

The Council can enter in to borrowing arrangements at both fixed and variable rates. Variable rate borrowing has a greater risk and so therefore Treasury Indicator 5 limits the amount of borrowing that can be at a variable rate. To aid administration and monitoring, the limits are shown as £ values but are based on percentages of the Operational Boundary. Borrowing at fixed rates can be up to 100% (inclusive) of the Boundary, and variable rate borrowing can be up to 30% of the Boundary.

Definitions:

Fixed Rate: The rate of interest is set at the point the borrowing is taken out and remains at the same percentage rate for the full term of the loan.

Treasury Indicator 5: Fixed and Variable Borrowing Rate Exposure

Year	Operational Boundary relating to borrowing excluding long term liabilities £m	Limit on Fixed Rate borrowing £m	Limit on Variable Rate borrowing £m
2023/24	1.5	1.5	0.5
2024/25	1.9	1.9	0.6
2025/26	1.4	1.4	0.4
2026/27	1.9	1.9	0.6
2027/28	1.4	1.4	0.4
2028/29	1.9	1.9	0.6

There is a requirement for the Council to consider the proportionality of the income that it generates from its non-service (investment) assets and how this compares to any borrowing that is linked to those assets. Current and planned investment assets were detailed in table 3 and table 8. Treasury indicator 6 shows the capital value and expected income from these assets, alongside any borrowing that is attached to those assets and the expected cost of that borrowing.

The totals below are based on existing investment assets and estimates of the income that they are expected to generate. As there is no borrowing linked to investment assets, the expected annual borrowing costs are shown as zero.

Treasury Indicator 6: Income from investment assets and the costs of associated borrowing

Year	Capital value of investment assets £m	Expected annual income from investment assets £m	Total borrowing linked to investment assets £m	Expected annual borrowing costs for loans linked to investment assets £m
2024/25	30.598	1.570	0	0
2025/26	30.598	1.555	0	0
2026/27	30.598	1.541	0	0
2027/28	30.598	1.541	0	0
2028/29	30.598	1.541	0	0

Borrowing in advance of need

The Council would not borrow money in advance of need or at a low rate to try and reinvest that money to earn a higher interest rate, and profit from the margin between the two rates. However, the waste contract requires the use of vehicles that are provided by the contractor. The Council has taken the view that it receives the risks and rewards of those vehicle assets. Under accounting regulations, it is therefore required to treat this as a finance lease embedded within the contract. This requires the Council to recognise the vehicle assets as belonging to it, alongside a liability. The liability is effectively repaid through the contract sums over the seven years of the contract.

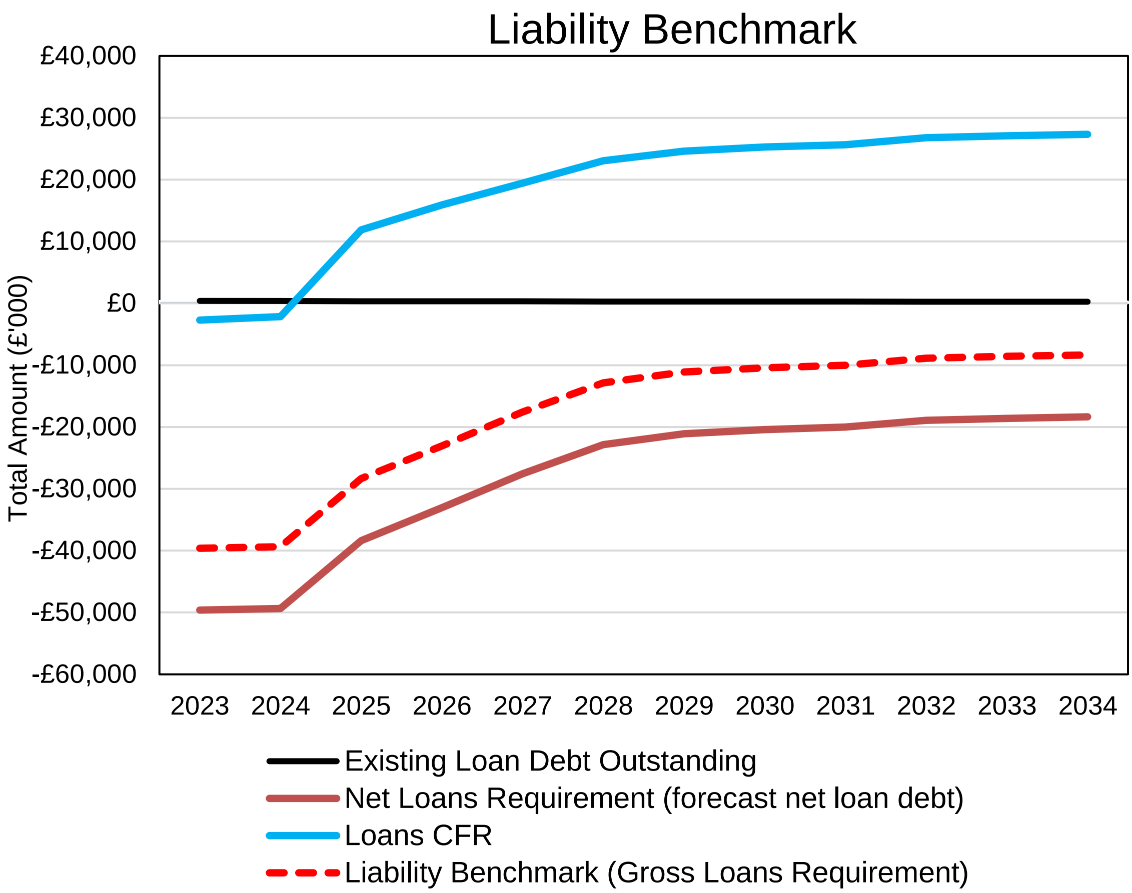
The extended definition of borrowing in advance of need now covers borrowing for capital investments where they are acquired purely to generate profit. The change to the PWLB rules also means that this borrowing cannot be accessed if there is any capital spend that is primarily to generate income, even if that spend was intended to be financed from reserves. The capital programme has been reviewed and there are no investments which have a primary purpose of generating income.

As part of the revised CIPFA Treasury Management Code and Prudential Code, Councils are required to adopt a Liability Benchmark (LB) treasury indicator to support the financing risk management of the capital financing requirement. The Authority is required to estimate and measure the LB for the forthcoming financial year and the following two financial years, as a minimum.

There are four components to the LB: -

1. **Existing loan debt outstanding**: the Authority's existing loans and their repayment over time (black line).
2. **Loans CFR:** this is calculated in accordance with the loans CFR definition in the Prudential Code and projected into the future based on forecast capital spend and MRP charges (light blue line).

3. **Net loans requirement:** this will show the Authority's gross loan debt less treasury management investments at the last financial year-end, projected into the future and based on its approved prudential borrowing, planned MRP and any other major cash flows forecast.
4. **Liability benchmark** (or gross loans requirement): this equals net loans requirement plus short-term liquidity allowance.



The Liability Benchmark is effectively the Net Borrowing Requirement of a local authority plus a liquidity allowance. In its simplest form, it is calculated by deducting the amount of investable resources available on the balance sheet (reserves, cash flow balances) from the amount of outstanding external debt and then adding the minimum level of investments required to manage day-to-day cash flow.

The purpose of this indicator is to compare the authority's existing loans outstanding (the black line) against its future need for loan debt, or liability benchmark (the orange line). If the black line is below the orange line, the existing portfolio outstanding is less than the loan debt required, and the authority will need to borrow to meet the shortfall. If the black line is above the orange line (as above), the authority will (based on current plans) have more debt than it needs, and the excess will have to be invested. The chart therefore tells an authority how much it needs to borrow and when. It therefore shows that the Council does not need to take out any further external borrowing.

<u>Minimum Revenue Provision</u>

When the Council has a Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) it is required to make a charge to the General Fund (revenue budget) called a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). Subject to guidelines, the Council sets its MRP policy, which is detailed below:

Minimum Revenue Provision:

The Council is required to have a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy, and when required make charges to revenue in accordance with that policy.

The Council will use the asset life method. The MRP amount will be spread over the estimated life of the assets with no charge levied in the first year, in accordance with the regulations. The Council will apply one of the two approaches below based on the project(s) that the borrowing is used for and the benefits derived from the project(s).

- Equal instalments – The principal repayment made is the same each year.

Or

- Annuity – the principal repayments increase over the life of the asset. This has the advantage of linking MRP to the benefits arising from capital expenditure, where these benefits are expected to increase over the life of the asset.

The Council will have a need to borrow in 2024/25 if the Capital programme is fully spent and will therefore need to apply a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). The current capital programme is mainly spent on service provision. Therefore, it is considered appropriate to adopt an equal instalment MRP policy.

There is a prudential indicator that compares the net cost of financing (i.e. borrowing costs less income generated from investments) with the net revenue budget of the Council. This will be looked at later in this document after considering investments and their forecast returns. However, the indicator below considers the cost of borrowing as a % of the net revenue budget of the Council.

Treasury Indicator 7: Cost of borrowing (interest and MRP) as a % of the net revenue budget 2023/24 to 2028/29

Year	Estimated cost of borrowing (£m)	Forecast net revenue budget (£m)	Estimated cost of borrowing as a % of net revenue budget (%)
2023/24	0.037	17.404	0.213
2024/25	0.570	20.265	2.813
2025/26	0.755	19.576	3.857
2026/27	1.196	18.971	6.304
2027/28	1.345	19.070	7.052
2028/29	1.442	18.828	7.658

Part 5- Investment Strategy

Based on the assumptions above the following available investment balances are assumed. This includes a forecast of revenue reserves, capital reserves, capital financing requirement and external borrowing (table 15).

Table 15

Balances	Brought forward (at 31/3/23)	Forecast balance at year end (£000)					
		2023/24	**2024/25**	**2025/26**	**2026/27**	**2027/28**	**2028/29**
Revenue balances (including MRP added back)	34,296	29,735	28,336	23,039	23,079	23,273	23,913
Capital Receipts	2,540	694	0	7,600	600	0	0
Capital Grants Unapplied	899	899	186	186	186	186	186
Add: Long-term liabilities[1]	1,023	516	562	8,984	8,336	7,687	7,038
Less: Capital Financing Requirement	-2,719	-2,155	11,856	15,880	19,445	23,052	24,574
Less: Borrowing repayments	19	20	21	20	15	15	10
Total forecast of available for investment	**41,458**	**33,979**	**17,207**	**23,909**	**12,741**	**8,079**	**6,553**

1 The net position of money owed by the Council or to the Council can lead to increased or decreased cash available for investment. The short-term position is assumed to be net zero. Long-term liabilities are included as the expenditure has been assumed to have been incurred, but the cash has not yet been paid. This primarily relates to waste vehicles and is based on the assumption that the Council (for the new contract) will capitalise the cost of the vehicles but the contractor will pay for the vehicles and charge for the use of them through the contract price. The Council may decide that it is better value to fund the vehicles up-front, in return for a lower contract cost. This would affect the long-term liabilities adjustment from 2025/26 onwards, but doesn't affect amounts for 2024/25.

The Council needs to consider the following in determining how long it will invest any surplus cash for:

- The period that any particular cash balance is available for. If a balance is expected to be available over a long period then it is possible to invest it over a long period.
- How much might be required to cover short term variations in cash. For example, it could be forecast that the cash at the start and end of the month will be the same. But if there is a need to pay out half that cash at the start of the month before getting an equivalent amount just before the end, then there is a need to plan.
- The risk of investing for longer periods as it increases the chance that the counterparty could have financial problems and therefore not pay back the principal invested and/ or the interest due.
- The risk of investing for longer periods as it could lead to a lost opportunity. If the investment is at a fixed rate and then there is a general rise in rates available (e.g. due to an unexpected Bank of England base rate rise) then it would not be possible to take advantage of the new improved rates until the investment matures.

Before considering where the Council will invest any surplus cash in treasury investments, it firstly needs to consider any loans that it may want to make for other purposes. A local authority can choose to make loans to local enterprises, local charities, wholly owned companies and joint ventures. These loans can relate to service provision or to promote local economic growth. These loans may not seem prudent when considered purely in relation to security and liquidity. Table 16 details current and planned loans and shows the reasons for these loans, how their value is proportionate, the risk of loss and credit control arrangements that are in place.

Table 16

Loan	Amount	Reason for Loan	Proportionality of value	Expected Credit Loss model and credit control
Building Control	Currently £107k, provision for it to increase up to £172k	To support the formation of the company. The Council is also a shareholder in the company, owning 1/8th of the shares.	Insignificant in the context of overall cash balances.	Regular monitoring of financial forecasts and business plans. The continuation of the company to provide Building Control services is more significant than the value of the loan.
Wholly owned Property Company	Tbc, up to £50k	Current intention is that any loan would be for cashflow purposes to enable the company to become established. Therefore, assumed at a maximum of £50k, although expected to be less than this. This may need to be reviewed and the Strategy updated if the company funding model changes (e.g. providing a loan to the company to purchase property itself).	As above.	Any loan mau be secured against the property assets of the company. An equity investment would provide less security and increase expected credit loss. However, it may enable the company to be more profitable, and therefore increase returns. Expected credit loss would be looked at in more detail in advance of any investment being granted and linked to the planned use of those funds.
Stevenage Leisure Ltd	£308K	To purchase Technogym Equipment, which enables the provision of fitness activities at the Leisure Centres.	As above.	The Covid-19 pandemic affected the financial performance of SLL, and a repayment holiday was agreed. Whilst SLL has returned to paying a full management fee during 2023/24, they have not been able to make loan repayments. The end of the contract in March 2024 is likely to affect the prospect of being repaid. The Council will keep this debt under review.

When the Council invests its surplus cash, it seeks to find reliable counterparties to ensure that the amount invested (and the interest earned) is returned. The Council has decided that it is prepared to take on a higher level of risk than recommended by its treasury advisers in relation to unrated Building Societies and the duration of its investments. This risk is mitigated by reviewing published information in relation to unrated Building Societies (i.e. “Pillar 3” reports). Whilst the Council has in the past been fairly highly exposed to Building Societies, it has rebalanced this exposure during the last couple of years to make greater use of other investment types.

The following criteria are used to determine the list of counterparties:

- UK Local Authorities- as they are able to raise additional funds from taxation
- UK Government- Debt Management Office provides highly liquid investments at the lowest risk as backed by the UK Government
- UK Banks and Building Societies with a Fitch Credit rating of BBB (long-term)/ F3 (short-term) or greater- as they have been subject to UK 'stress tests' and also have a high credit rating
- Part-nationalised UK banks- as they have been subject to UK 'stress tests' and the UK government has an increased interest in not allowing them to fail.
- The Council's own banker (Lloyds) that it uses for transactional purposes. Although if its credit rating falls below BBB then any balances will be kept to a minimum (i.e. for cashflow purposes only)
- Non-UK banks with a UK subsidiary that have a Fitch Credit rating of BBB (long-term)/ F3 (short-term) or greater, and are subject to the same stress tests as UK banks
- Non-UK banks where the Country has a AA- rating and the institution has an A+ and above rating. The Service Director: Resources will exclude any countries with concerns over Governmental, Social and Human Rights issues.
- Unrated UK Building Societies- as organisations have to pay to obtain a rating; most Building Societies do not get one. They do produce annual reports known as Pillar 3 reports, and these will be used to assess their credit worthiness. Furthermore, the Council will only invest in Building Societies that have assets of at least £300m, which limits the potential exposure.
- Money Market funds that are AAA rated.
- Property funds that hold property within the UK.
- Ultra Short Dated Bond Funds- These funds invest in fixed income instruments with very short maturity dates, usually up to one year. This generally provides better returns than money market funds. Whilst this does introduce some capital risk, this is minimised by the short-term nature of such investments. Where AAA rated.
- Multi-asset Funds- These funds invest in a variety of assets including equities, bonds and cash and can be spread over a broad range of strategies, styles, sectors and regions. Risk is diversified by the spread of investments held.

All investments will be denominated in Sterling.

The Council will seek to appropriately diversify its investments across a range of types and counterparties. This means that if there were any security or liquidity issues with a particular type of investment or counterparty, the Council would still have access to the majority of its funds. The limits are initially based on a percentage of total funds but are converted to actual values to make the administration of investments more efficient. The values are calculated by applying the percentages to the expected average balance during the year (2024/25)* and then rounded up to the nearest £1m. If these limits are set too low then it limits the investment opportunities available and also increases the administration as there is then a need to find more places to invest available funds. The limits are shown in table 17 below.

* This is the balance taken from table 15 above of the average closing balance 23/24 and 24/25 £24.72m

Table 17

Investment Type	Maximum amount in that type of investment (£m)	Maximum amount in group (£m)	Maximum amount with any individual counterparty (£m)	Rationale and details
Debt Management Office (UK Government)	No limit			Short-term investment with UK Government that is therefore the lowest possible risk
UK Local Authorities	No limit	n/a	4	15% with any one counterparty, no limit on total with Local Authorities due to tax raising powers
UK Banks and UK subsidiaries of foreign banks that are subject to the same stress tests as UK banks (excluding Lloyds current account)- includes Deposits and Certificates of Deposit	13	4	3	Rating F3 or above (short-term) or BBB or above (long-term) and part nationalised banks. 10% with any one counterparty, 15% with institutions in the same banking group, 60% with banks in total
Lloyds Current Account		n/a	5	Used for cashflow purposes
Non-UK banks- includes deposits and Certificates of deposit		6	3	AA- or above Country rating and A+ or above institution rating. Maximum of 10% with any one counterparty. Maximum of 20% in non-UK banks. 60% in banks in total.
UK Building Societies- assets of £300m to £1bn	n/a	15	1	Review of Pillar 3 reports and KPMG report on comparative profits. 10% with any one counterparty subject to maximum of £1m. Maximum of 60% with UK Building Societies and Property Funds combined.
UK Building Societies- assets of over £1bn			2	As above, but £2million
Rated UK Building Societies			3	Rating F3 or above (short-term) or BBB or above (long-term). 10% with any one counterparty.
UK Property Funds	1		1	Due to long-term nature of investment 10% of 2028/29 year end cash balance to be invested in any one fund or combination of funds. No durational limits.
Money Market Funds	6	n/a	3	AAA rated. Maximum of 20% in MMFs and 10% with any one fund.
Ultra-Short Dated Bond Funds	3		1	AAA rated. Maximum of 10% in USDBFs and £1M with any one fund.
UK Multi-Asset Funds	1		1	Due to long-term nature of investment 10% of 2028/29 year end cash balance to be invested in any one fund or combination of funds. No durational limits.

The Council will primarily limit its liquidity risk by only investing money until it thinks it will next need it. On top of this it will also have a general limit on investments that are greater than 1 year (365 days). This limit is based on 25% of total investments but is again reflected as an absolute value of **£7m**, which is based on 25% of the expected average level of balances during the year (rounded up to nearest £1m). Investments with a set term of greater than 2 years will be subject to approval by the Chief Finance Officer, which will include a consideration of how much the investment will be as a percentage of total funds at the date it matures. It will be ensured that this is less than 25% of the estimated balance. No fixed investment term will exceed 5 years.

Investment funds (money market funds, multi-asset funds and property funds) do not have a set term and funds can be requested to be withdrawn at any time. Investment balances will be kept under review to ensure that they do not exceed the maximum amount set by this or subsequent treasury strategies. However, there is no time limit on the period that funds can be held invested for. For property funds there are both up-front set up and exit costs. Furthermore, the capital value of these funds also fluctuates over time. So, whilst in general it is possible to exit these funds at any time, there are likely to be more optimum times to do so. Therefore, it is expected that the period of investment could exceed 5 years. For multi-asset funds, the capital value of these funds also fluctuates over time. So, whilst in general it is possible to exit these funds at any time, there are likely to be more optimum times to do so. Therefore, it is expected that the period of investment could exceed 5 years.

Within the investment market, the opportunity for ‘green’ and ESG (environmental, social and governance) investments is starting to emerge. In some cases these can are offer returns that are similar to, or the same as, non-green/ ESG alternatives for the same level of risk. Subject to these investments being compliant with other aspects of the treasury strategy, then these investments will be prioritised over non-green/ ESG alternatives. In some cases these will be with counterparties that the Council is not registered with, so it may take time to register with them.

Where the Council makes use of credit ratings these will be assessed immediately prior to placing an investment. The Council then receives alerts whenever ratings change and will monitor these alerts to see if an investment has fallen below the minimum criteria. For fixed term investments, it generally will not be possible to do anything in relation to a rating change. Although for a significant drop, enquiries will be made as to the exit costs involved. If these are not significant then the Council will end the investment early. For open term investments, the Council will seek to disinvest, although it will consider any exit costs.

There is a link between the interest rates that the Council can expect to achieve on its investments and the Bank of England base rate. Our treasury advisors (Link) have provided the following forecasts of base rates over the next 3 years. Using this and the investment limits above, we have estimated an average interest rate that the Council will achieve on its investments in each year.

Table 18

Year	Forecast of Bank of England Base Rate as at end of the year (%)	Forecast of average interest earned on investments (%)
2024/25	4.0	4.50
2025/26	3.0	2.94
2026/27	2.5	2.50

The 2026/27 rate is then used for investments in subsequent years.

Combining these average interest rates with expected balances, gives a forecast of the interest that will be earned in each year. Although the Council has retained the option to invest in longer term Property and Multi-asset funds, these type of investments are unlikely to happen so have not been assumed in calculating the forecast interest returns.

Table 19

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Forecast of average balance available for investment (£m)- short to medium term	25.6	20.6	18.3	10.4	7.3
Forecast of interest earned (£m)*	1.152	0.604	0.458	0.260	0.183
Current interest assumed in the revenue budget.	1.021	0.533	0.490	0.471	0.471

The Council is required to set a prudential indicator that estimates financing costs (cost of borrowing less income from investments) as a percentage of its net revenue budget.

Prudential Indicator 8: Forecast of Financing Costs as a percentage of net revenue budget

Year	Cost of borrowing £m	Less: Forecast of interest earned £m	Net Financing costs £m	Net Revenue Budget £m	Financing Costs as a % of Net Revenue Budget £m
2023/24	0.037	3.014	-2.977	17.404	-17.105
2024/25	0.570	1.112	-0.542	20.265	-2.675
2025/26	0.755	0.583	0.171	19.576	0.874
2026/27	1.196	0.456	0.740	18.971	3.901
2027/28	1.345	0.249	1.096	19.070	5.747
2028/29	1.442	0.162	1.280	18.828	6.798

Part 6- Overall Risk Considerations

The risk exposures for each of the elements of this strategy are generally independent, and therefore can be considered in isolation.

The Council's investments assets generally comprise of ground leases on commercial properties that are all within North Hertfordshire. A property fund generally invests in building (and land) assets that provide higher yields, and also diversifies across the United Kingdom. They also currently tend to focus on industrial, warehouses and office buildings. This means that there is limited cross-over in risk exposure, and before investing in a property fund (current investments are zero) the Council would review the current investments of the selected fund. Furthermore, this strategy limits any investment in a property fund to a maximum of £1m.

Part 7- Glossary

A number of definitions are included in the strategy when they are first referenced. These are not duplicated here. This part provides list of other terms used in this report, as well as those used in the statutory guidance.

Borrowing- a written or oral agreement where the Council temporarily receives cash from a third party (e.g. a Bank, the Public Works Loan Board or another Local Authority) and promises to return it according to the terms of the agreement, normally with interest.

Investment: This covers all of the financial assets of the Council as well as other non-financial assets that the Council holds primarily or partially to generate a profit; for example, investment property portfolios. This will include investments that are not managed as part of normal treasury management processes or under treasury management delegations. Furthermore, it also covers loans made by the Council to one of its wholly-owned companies or associates, to a joint venture, or to a third party. The term does not include pension funds or trust fund investments, which are subject to separate regulatory regimes.

Within this strategy, the term investment is used in the following contexts:

- Capital investment- expenditure to acquire or improve a capital asset.
- Investment properties- assets that are held for the purpose of generating an income.
- Cash/ treasury investments- the cash that the Council has, which is made up of revenue reserves, capital reserves and the effects of cashflow timings. These amounts are invested to manage the risks of holding cash and to generate investment income.

Financial investments: These are made up of Cash/ Treasury investments and loans. This term is defined within the statutory guidance (as specified investments, loans and unspecified investments) but has not been directly used in this strategy. Part 5 of the Strategy is focused on these investments.

Specified Investment: These are essentially short-term Cash/ Treasury investments. To be a specified investment, it needs to meet the following criteria:

- The investment is denominated in sterling and any payments or repayments in the respect of the investment are payable only in sterling.
- The investment is not a long term investment. This means that the local authority has contractual right to repayment within 12 months, either because that is the expiry term of the investment or through a non-conditional option.
- It is not capital expenditure.
- The investment is considered to be high quality or is with the UK Government, another Local Authority or a Parish/ Community Council.

High Quality investment: These are investments (specified and non-specified) which are assessed on the priority basis of security, liquidity and yield. Where relevant they make use of relevant additional information, such as credit ratings. The investments set out in part 5 are considered by the Council to be 'high quality'.

- The investment is denominated in sterling and any payments or repayments in the respect of the investment are payable only in sterling.
- The investment is a long term investment. This means that the local authority has contractual right to repayment in greater than 12 months.
- It is not capital expenditure.
- The investment is considered to be high quality or is with the UK Government, another Local Authority or a Parish/ Community Council.

Unspecified investment: In the statutory guidance, these are financial assets that are not specified investments or loans. This creates a circular definition. The Council considers that they meet the following definition:

Loan: a written or oral agreement where the Council temporarily transfers cash to a third party, joint venture, subsidiary or associate who promises to return it according to the terms of the agreement, normally with interest. This definition does not include a loan to another local authority, which is classified as a specified investment. The Council will meet the following conditions when providing such loans:

- Total financial exposure to these type of loans is proportionate;
- An allowed "expected credit loss" model has been used as set out in Accounting Standards
- Appropriate credit control arrangements are in place to recover overdue repayments; and
- The total level of loans by type is in accordance with the limits set out in this Strategy.

Item No	Referred from:	FINANCE, AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE
5D	Date:	31 JANUARY 2024
	Title of item:	REVENUE BUDGET 2024/25
To be considered alongside agenda item:		10

The report considered by the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee at the meeting held on 31 January 2024 can be viewed here: [Agenda for Finance, Audit and Risk Committee on Wednesday, 31st January, 2024, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council (north-herts.gov.uk)]

RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET:

(1) That Cabinet approves the decrease in the 2023/24 working budget of £301k, as detailed in table 7.

That Cabinet recommends to Council that it:

(2) Notes the position on the Collection Fund and how it will be funded.

(3) Notes the position relating to the General Fund balance and that due to the risks identified a minimum balance of £2.48 million is recommended.

(4) Notes the net revenue savings that are likely to be required in future years, combined with the Chief Finance Officer's section 25 report (Appendix D) which provides a commentary on the risks and reliability of estimates contained in the budget.

(5) Approves the revenue savings and investments as detailed in Appendix B.

(6) Approves a net expenditure budget of £20.265m, as detailed in Appendix C.

(7) Approves a Council Tax increase of 2.99%, which is in line with the provisions in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS: To ensure that all relevant factors are considered in arriving at a budget and Council Tax level for 2024/25. To ensure that the budget is aligned to Council priorities for 2024/25 as set out in the Council Plan.

Audio recording – 47 minutes 42 seconds

The Service Director – Resources presented the report entitled 'Revenue Budget 2024-25' and highlighted that:

- Recommendations were made to Cabinet in December following Member workshops, regarding which proposals to take forward. This report provided more detail on the risks and consequences of these.
- The draft budget was reviewed by Cabinet in January and some additional details had been added to the capital report highlighted at 8.3 of the report. The majority of the additions were capital related, which had implications to the revenue budget, there were also some additional revenue items.

- There was an announcement last week about raising the core spending funding to 4% and this was noted at 8.5 of the addendum.
- The additional value of the core spending fund was still to be released but an assumption of £173K had been made whilst waiting for confirmation. It was hoped that this would be received in time for Full Council in February 2024.
- There was an estimated general funding forecast in Table 2, the details were our best estimates for future years.
- It was anticipated that in future years there would be less funding available and therefore the Council would come under greater financial pressure. The projections for the next five years were detailed in Appendix D.
- The impact of other sources of funding was highlighted in Table 3 and detailed how these would impact on the general fund. Specific reserves for funding various projects were shown in Table 4.
- The minimum level of the general balance was formulated from a percentage of net revenue expenditure, a percentage of budget income and specific risk as detailed at 8.20 of the report. Full details of specific risks and the risk level could be found in Appendix A.
- Table 7 detailed the updated budget position of 2023-24 as at the end of November.
- Careline had made a positive impact on the income of the Council.
- Parking income had reached a plateau and was not expected to recover to pre covid levels.
- The impact of the flow through form capital was detailed in paragraphs 8.24 and 8.25.
- A Section 25 Report was included as Appendix D, which included estimates and assumptions on items that affected the budget and their certainties.
- Appendix C showed the impact for future years and highlighted the level of savings that were likely to be required to achieve a balanced budget.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Terry Hone
- Councillor Sean Nolan
- Independent Person John Cannon

In response to questions the Service Director – Resources stated:

- The services provided by Careline were fully funded by Herts County Council and their social care clients and by private clients.
- There was a zero cost to North Herts Council for Careline, and it was providing some contribution towards overheads.
- There were savings set out in the 2024-25 budget and Careline had been included in those savings. Looking forward to future years, work was ongoing on the funding gaps including any implications of the new waste contract and any inflation impacts.
- The new Leisure contractor had a structure that provided VAT and Business Rate efficiency (similar to the current contractor) and the impact of those efficiencies had been built into the contract price.
- The post May 2024 administration would need to work quickly to consider proposals that would need to be agreed for budget setting in February 2025 and to keep the Council in a sustainable position, which would involve difficult decisions.
- As part of the additional funding (4% Core Spending Power increase) there would be a requirement to provide a return to the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities on Council efficiency. The details of this were not yet known.
- The quarterly monitoring report detailed the impact of risks including those that did not have a notional allocation as part of the recommended minimum balance calculation. The year end monitoring report would highlight the actual results of the risks against the risk forecast.

- An adjustment for the recently approved Members Allowances Scheme would need to be provided for the Council version of this report.

Councillor Tom Plater proposed and Councillor Tamsin Thomas seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee provided comments on and recommended the Revenue Budget 2024/25 to Cabinet.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET:

(1) That Cabinet approves the decrease in the 2023/24 working budget of £301k, as detailed in table 7.

That Cabinet recommends to Council that it:

(2) Notes the position on the Collection Fund and how it will be funded.

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REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS: To ensure that all relevant factors are considered in arriving at a budget and Council Tax level for 2024/25. To ensure that the budget is aligned to Council priorities for 2024/25 as set out in the Council Plan

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