

ORIGINATOR: PCC CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

DECISION NUMBER: AC25/06

SUBMITTED TO: AUDIT COMMITTEE – 4 FEBRUARY 2025

SUBJECT: INVESTMENT AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2025/26

SUMMARY:

1. This report presents the updated Investment and Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2025/26, to replace the 2024/25 strategy.
2. The PCC is required to approve the investment and borrowing strategies prior to the start of the financial year. These are incorporated within the attached strategy, which was published alongside the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) on 17 January 2025.
3. The Investment and Treasury Management strategy, which includes Treasury Management Prudential Indicators and Prudential Code Indicators, follows guidance from The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.
4. The latest editions of the Prudential Code and the Treasury Management Code of Practice were issued in December 2021. The main change to the Prudential Code placed a restriction on borrowing funds for financial return. Compliance with the revised Codes was required to be fully implemented from 2023/24.
5. The strategy is updated annually to reflect working practices for the PCC and any changes in regulation, Prudential Code or the Treasury Management Code of Practice. For 2025/26 no significant changes to the strategy are proposed from 2024/25, and the revised Codes were fully implemented from 2023/24.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. It is recommended that the Audit Committee note the contents of this report.

DETAIL OF THE SUBMISSION

1. KEY AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 1.1 The two main functions of the treasury management operation are to ensure adequately planned and appropriate cash flow monitoring and prudential funding of the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) capital spending plans.
- 1.2 PCCs have flexibility in determining a programme of capital investment that is central in the delivery of quality, value for money policing. However, by regulation they are required to have regard to both CIPFA's *Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities* (the Prudential Code) and to CIPFA's *Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross-sectoral Guidance Notes* (the Treasury Management Code).
- 1.3 To demonstrate that the objectives of the Prudential Code have been fulfilled, the Prudential Code sets out indicators that are determined by the PCC and the factors that must be taken into account. They are designed to ensure that the PCC stays within the constraints of prudent investment and borrowing. The Code states that the prime policy objective of treasury management investment activities is the security of funds and that security and liquidity should be considered ahead of yield. The prudential indicators are not designed to be comparative performance indicators.
- 1.4 Revised editions of the Prudential Code and the Treasury Management Code were issued in December 2021. The main emphasis of the changes to the Prudential Code related to the restriction on borrowing funds for a financial return, which came into immediate effect.
- 1.5 Compliance with the revised Codes was fully implemented from 2023/24. No significant changes to the strategy are proposed from 2024/25.
- 1.6 The updated Investment and Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26 replaces the 2024/25 strategy and covers:
 - The treasury management strategy and how investments and borrowings are to be organised, including treasury indicators;
 - An investment strategy showing the parameters on how investments are to be managed;
 - The capital plans including prudential indicators (see Annex 1 of the strategy);
 - A minimum revenue provision policy on how unfunded capital expenditure is charged to revenue over time (see Annex 2 of the strategy).

2. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 There are no financial implications outside of those presented in the strategy.

3. OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

- 3.1 There are no other implications and risks outside of those presented in this report.

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk Investment and Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2025/26

1. Background

- 1.1 The PCC 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 PCC's low risk appetite, providing adequate liquidity initially before considering investment return.
- 1.2 The second main function of the treasury management service is the funding of the PCC's capital plans. These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the PCC, essentially the longer-term cash flow planning, to ensure that the PCC can meet his capital spending obligations. This management of longer-term cash may involve arranging long or short-term loans or using longer-term cash flow surpluses. On occasion, when it is prudent and economic, any debt previously drawn may be restructured to meet PCC risk or cost objectives.
- 1.3 The contribution the treasury management function makes to the PCC is critical, as the balance of debt and investment operations ensure liquidity or the ability to meet spending commitments as they fall due, either on day-to-day revenue or for larger capital projects. The treasury operations will see a balance of the interest costs of debt and the investment income arising from cash deposits affecting the available budget. Since cash balances generally result from reserves and balances, it is paramount to ensure adequate security of the sums invested, as a loss of principal will in effect result in a loss to the General Fund Balance.
- 1.4 CIPFA defines treasury management as:
- ‘The management of the organisation’s borrowing, 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.’
- The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities 2021 edition, CIPFA*
- 1.5 The CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Prudential Code) underpins the system of capital finance. The latest edition of the Prudential Code, published in December 2021, makes important changes that reflect developments since the Prudential Code was last updated in 2017. At the same time a revised Treasury Management Code of Practice was also launched. The revised reporting requirements include changes to the capital strategy, prudential indicators and investment reporting.

The main objective of the 2021 Codes was to respond to the major expansion of local authority investment activity into the purchase of non-financial investments, particularly property. The Codes require an authority to ensure that: -

- it defines its risk appetite and its governance processes for managing risk.
- Where applicable, it sets out, at a high level, its investment policy in relation to environmental, social and governance aspects.
- it adopts a new liability benchmark treasury indicator to support the financing risk management of the capital financing requirement; this is to be shown in chart form for a minimum of ten years, with material differences between the liability benchmark and actual loans to be explained.
- it does not borrow to finance capital expenditure to invest primarily for commercial return.
- increases in the CFR and borrowing are undertaken solely for purposes directly and primarily related to the functions of the authority. Where any financial returns are related to the financial viability of the project in question, they should be incidental to its primary purpose.
- an annual review is conducted to evaluate whether commercial investments should be sold to release funds to finance new capital expenditure or refinance maturing debt.
- its capital plans and investment plans are affordable and proportionate.
- all borrowing/other long-term liabilities are within prudent and sustainable levels.
- risks associated with commercial investments are proportionate to overall financial capacity to sustain losses.
- treasury management decisions are in accordance with good professional practice.
- reporting to members is done quarterly, including updates of prudential indicators.
- it should assess the risks and rewards of significant investments over the long-term, as opposed to the usual three to five years that most local authority financial planning has been conducted over, to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the authority. (CIPFA has not defined what longer-term means, but it is likely to infer 20-30 years in line with the financing time horizon and the expected life of the assets, while medium-term financial planning, at a higher level of detail, is probably aimed at around a 10-year timeframe and focuses on affordability in particular).
- it has access to the appropriate level of expertise to be able to operate safely in all areas of investment and capital expenditure, and to involve the PCC adequately in making properly informed decisions on such investments.

1.6 This PCC has not engaged in any commercial investments and has no non-treasury investments.

- 1.7 The IFRS16 Leasing Standard was implemented on 1 April 2024, therefore the Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators reported include an estimation of Lease liabilities falling under IFRS16 from this date, which impact on external debt and the Capital Financing Requirement.

2. Reporting Requirements

Capital Strategy

- 2.1 The CIPFA 2021 Prudential and Treasury Management Codes require, for 2025/26, all local authorities to prepare a capital strategy report, which will provide the following:
- a high-level long-term overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing, investments and treasury management activity contribute to the delivery of plans and the provision of services
 - an overview of how the associated risk is managed
 - the implications for future financial and environmental sustainability
- 2.2 The aim of this capital strategy is to ensure that the PCC fully understands the overall long-term policy objectives and resulting capital strategy requirements, governance procedures and risk appetite.
- 2.3 The capital strategy is published in the PCC's medium-term financial plan.

Treasury Management reporting

- 2.4 The PCC is currently required to receive and approve three main treasury reports each year, which incorporate a variety of policies, estimates and actuals.
- a. **Prudential and treasury indicators and treasury strategy** (this report) – The first, and most important report is forward looking and covers:
- the capital plans (including prudential indicators);
 - a minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy (how unfunded capital expenditure is charged to revenue over time);
 - the treasury management strategy (how the investments and borrowings are to be organised), including treasury indicators; and
 - an investment strategy (the parameters on how investments are to be managed).
- b. **A mid-year treasury management report** – This is primarily a progress report and will update the PCC on the capital position, amending prudential indicators as necessary, and whether any policies require revision.
- c. **An annual treasury report** – This is a backward looking review document and provides details of a selection of actual prudential and treasury indicators and actual treasury operations compared to the estimates within the strategy.

- 2.5 The PCC CFO receives weekly Treasury Management Monitoring Reports which includes update on investments, cash flow projections, loans and key prudential and treasury indicators. The PCC receives updates via meetings with the PCC CFO. Treasury performance is also reported to the PCC in monthly budget monitoring reports. The breach of any treasury or prudential indicator would be reported by exception within this section of the budget monitoring reports.

3. Treasury Management Strategy for 2025/26

- 3.1 The strategy for 2025/26 covers two main areas:

Capital issues

- the capital expenditure plans and the associated prudential indicators;
- the minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy.

Treasury management issues

- the current treasury position;
- treasury indicators which limit the treasury risk and activities of the PCC;
- prospects for interest rates;
- the borrowing strategy;
- policy on borrowing in advance of need;
- debt rescheduling;
- the investment strategy;
- creditworthiness policy; and
- the policy on use of external service providers.

These elements cover the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003, the CIPFA Prudential Code, The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), MRP Guidance, the CIPFA Treasury Management Code and MHCLG Investment Guidance.

Training

- 3.2 The CIPFA Code requires the responsible officer to ensure that officers with responsibility for treasury management receive adequate training in treasury management.

Treasury management consultants

- 3.3 The PCC uses Link Treasury Services Ltd as its external treasury management advisors. In May 2024 the Link Group was acquired by Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group Inc and it is planned that from 20 January 2025 Link Treasury Services will be known as MUFG Corporate Markets. The current contract with Link expires on 31 August 2025.

- 3.4 The PCC recognises that responsibility for treasury management decisions remains with the organisation at all times and will ensure that undue reliance is not placed upon the services of our external service providers. All decisions will be undertaken with regard to all available information, including, but not solely, our treasury advisers.
- 3.5 It is also recognised that there is value in employing external providers of treasury management services in order to acquire access to specialist skills and resources. The PCC will ensure that the terms of their appointment and the methods by which their value will be assessed are properly agreed and documented and subjected to regular review.

The Treasury management function

- 3.6 The CIPFA Code defines treasury management activities as ‘the management of the PCC’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.’
- 3.7 The PCC 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 PCC, and any financial instruments entered into to manage these risks.
- 3.8 The PCC 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.
- 3.9 The PCC is required to operate a balanced budget, which broadly means that cash raised during the year will meet its cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operations ensures this cash flow is adequately planned, with cash being available when it is needed. Surplus monies are invested in low risk counterparties, providing adequate liquidity before considering investment return.
- 3.10 A further function of the treasury management service is to provide for the borrowing requirement of the PCC, essentially the longer term cash flow planning, typically 30 years plus, to ensure the PCC can meet its capital spending obligations. This management of longer term cash may involve arranging long or short term loans, or using internal cash balances on a temporary basis. Debt previously borrowed may be restructured to meet PCC risk or cost objectives.
- 3.11 The PCC has delegated responsibility for treasury management decisions taken within the approved strategy to the PCC CFO. Day-to-day execution and administration of investment and borrowing decisions is undertaken by Specialist Accountants based in the Joint Finance Department for Suffolk and Norfolk Constabularies.

- 3.12 External treasury management services continue to be provided by Link Treasury Services Ltd in a joint contract with the PCC for Norfolk. Link Treasury Services Ltd provides a range of services which include:
- Technical support on treasury matters and capital finance issues;
 - Economic and interest rate analysis;
 - Debt services which includes advice on the timing of long-term borrowing;
 - Debt rescheduling advice surrounding the existing portfolio;
 - Generic investment advice on interest rates, timing and investment instruments; and
 - Credit ratings/ market information service for the three main credit rating agencies (Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poor's).
- 3.13 Whilst Link Treasury Services Ltd provide support to the treasury function, under market rules and in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice, the final decision on treasury matters remains with the PCC.
- 3.14 Performance will continue to be monitored and reported to the PCC as part of the budget monitoring report.

4. Investment Strategy 2025/26

- 4.1 The primary objective of the investment strategy is to invest prudently, having regard of the security and liquidity of investments before seeking to obtain higher rates of interest return. This is in line with both CIPFA and MHCLG guidance noted in paragraph's 4.4 and 4.5 below. The risk of incurring losses from defaults on repayments is mitigated by investing in high quality counterparties which have high credit agency ratings and by setting a maximum limit on the amount that can be invested in any one counterparty.
- 4.2 The Bank Rate at the time of drafting this Strategy stands at 4.75%. Link Treasury Services Ltd currently predicted that the Bank Rate will decrease over the planning period as follows:
- **Q1 2025** – 4.50%
 - **Q1 2026** – 3.75%
 - **Q1 2027** – 3.50%
- However, these forecasts are likely to be revised within a relatively short timeframe due to several social, economic and political reasons.
- 4.3 The suggested budgeted investment earnings rates for returns on investments placed for periods up to about three months during each financial year and provided by Link Treasury Services Ltd are as follows:

Financial Year	Budgeted Interest Earnings
2024/25 (remainder)	4.60%
2025/26	4.10%
2026/27	3.70%
2027/28	3.50%
2028/29	3.50%
Later Years	3.50%

4.4 There are 3 key considerations to the treasury management investment process. MHCLG's Investment Guidance ranks these in the following order of importance:

- security of principal invested;
- liquidity for cash flow, and
- investment return (yield).

Each deposit is considered in the context of these 3 factors, in that order.

4.5 MHCLG's Investment Guidance requires local authorities and PCCs to invest prudently and give priority to security and liquidity before yield, as described above. In order to facilitate this objective, the guidance requires the PCC to have regard to CIPFA's Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Sector.

4.6 The key requirements of both the Code and the Investment Guidance are to produce annually an Investment and Treasury Strategy covering the following:

- Guidelines for choosing and placing investments;
- Counterparty criteria and identification of the maximum period for which funds can be committed;
- Counterparty monetary and time limits; and
- Details of Specified and Non-Specified investment types.

5. Investment Strategy 2025/26 - Counterparty Criteria

5.1 The PCC works closely with his external treasury advisors to determine the criteria for high quality institutions.

5.2 The criteria for providing a pool of high-quality investment counterparties for inclusion on the PCC's 'Approved Authorised Counterparty List' is provided below

- **UK Banks** which have the following minimum ratings from at least one of the three credit rating agencies:

UK Banks	Fitch	Standard & Poor's	Moody's
Short Term Ratings	F1	A-1	P-1
Long Term Ratings	A-	A-	A3

- **Non-UK Banks** domiciled in a country which has a minimum sovereign rating of AA+ and have the following minimum ratings from at least one of the credit rating agencies:

Non-UK Banks	Fitch	Standard & Poor's	Moody's
Short Term Ratings	F1+	A-1+	P-1
Long Term Ratings	AA-	AA-	Aa3

- **Part Nationalised UK Banks** – Royal Bank of Scotland Group (including Nat West). These banks are included while they continue to be part nationalised or they meet the minimum rating criteria for UK Banks above.
- **The PCC's Corporate Banker** – If the credit ratings of the PCC's corporate banker (currently Lloyds Bank plc) fall below the minimum criteria for UK Banks above, then cash balances held with that bank will be for account operation purposes only and balances will be minimised in terms of monetary size and time.
- **Building Societies** – The PCC will use Building Societies which meet the ratings for UK Banks outlined above.
- **Money Market Funds (MMFs)** – which are rated AAA by at least one of the three major rating agencies. MMF's are 'pooled funds' investing in high-quality, high-liquidity, short-term securities such as treasury bills, repurchase agreements and certificate of deposit. Funds offer a high degree of counterparty diversification that include both UK and Overseas Banks.
- **UK Government** – including the Debt Management Account Deposit Facility and Sterling Treasury Bills. Sterling Treasury Bills are short-term (up to six months) 'paper' issued by the UK Government. In the same way that the Government issues Gilts to meet long term funding requirements, Treasury Bills are used by Government to meet short term revenue obligations. They have the security of being issued by the UK Government.
- **Local Authorities, PCCs etc.** – Includes those in England and Wales (as defined in Section 23 of the Local Government Act 2003) or a similar body in Scotland or Northern Ireland.

5.3 All cash invested by the PCC in 2025/26 will be either Sterling deposits (including certificates of deposit) or Sterling Treasury Bills invested with banks and other institutions in accordance with the Approved Authorised Counterparty List.

5.4 The Code of Practice requires local authorities and PCCs to supplement credit rating information. Whilst the above criteria rely primarily on the application of credit ratings to provide a pool of appropriate counterparties for use, additional market information will be used to inform investment decisions. This additional market information

includes, for example, Credit Default Swap rates and equity prices in order to compare the relative security of counterparties.

- 5.5 The current maximum lending limit of £10m (excluding interest accrued but unpaid) for any counterparty will be maintained in 2025/26 to reflect the level of cash balances and to avoid large deposits with the UK Debt Management Office (DMO). Where there is a surplus of cash due to unplanned cashflows, in order to keep within the counterparty limit with the PCC's bankers, the PCC will place investments using other secure liquid financial instruments, e.g. Money Market Funds.
- 5.6 In addition to individual institutional lending limits, 'Group Limits' will be used whereby the collective investment exposure of individual banks within the same banking group is restricted to a group lending limit of £10m (excluding interest accrued but unpaid).
- 5.7 The strategy permits deposits beyond 365 days (up to a maximum of 2 years) but only with UK banks which meet the credit ratings at paragraph 5.2. Deposits may also be placed with UK Part Nationalised Banks and Local Authorities for periods of up to 2 years.
- 5.8 A reasonable amount will be held on an instant access basis in order for the PCC to meet any unexpected needs. Instant access accounts are also preferable during periods of credit risk uncertainty in the markets, allowing the PCC to immediately withdraw funds should any concern arise over a particular institution.

6. Investment Strategy 2025/26 – Specified and Non-Specified Investments

- 6.1 As determined by MHCLG's Investment Guidance, Specified Investments offer 'high security and high liquidity'. They are Sterling denominated and have a maturity of less than one year or for a longer period but where the PCC has the right to be repaid within one year if he wishes. Institutions of high credit quality are deemed to be Specified Investments where the possibility of loss of principal or investment income is small. From the pool of high-quality investment counterparties identified in Section 5, the following are deemed to be Specified Investments:
- Banks: UK and Non-UK;
 - Part Nationalised UK Banks;
 - The PCC's Corporate Banker (Lloyds Bank plc)
 - Building Societies (which meet the minimum ratings criteria for Banks);
 - Money Market Funds;
 - UK Government; and
 - Local Authorities, PCCs etc.

- 6.2 Non-Specified Investments are those investments that do not meet the criteria of Specified Investments. From the pool of counterparties identified in Section 5, they include:
- Any investment that cannot be recalled within 365 days of initiation.
- 6.3 The categorisation of 'Non-Specified' does not in any way detract from the credit quality of these institutions but is merely a requirement of the government's guidance.
- 6.4 The PCC's proposed strategy for 2025/26 therefore includes both Specified and Non-Specified Investment institutions.

7. Borrowing Strategy 2025/26

- 7.1 Capital expenditure can be funded immediately by applying capital receipts, capital grants or revenue contributions. Capital expenditure in excess of available capital resources or revenue contributions will increase the PCC's borrowing requirement. The PCC's need to borrow is measured by the Capital Financial Requirement (CFR), which simply represents the total outstanding capital expenditure, which has not yet been funded from either capital or revenue resources.
- 7.2 The objective of the PCC's borrowing strategy is to secure required capital financing at a low interest cost whilst achieving certainty of those costs over the period for which funds are required and keeping within the limits of the prudential indicators.
- 7.3 For the PCC, borrowing principally relates to long term loans (i.e. loans in excess of 365 days). The borrowing strategy includes decisions on the timing of when further monies should be borrowed.
- 7.4 Historically, the main source of long-term loans has been the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), which is part of the UK DMO. The maximum period for which loans can be advanced by the PWLB is 50 years. Lending by the PWLB is now on the proviso that CFOs' confirm that the authority does not intend to buy investment assets primarily for yield at any point in the next three years. The 2021 revision to the Prudential Code now includes the requirement in paragraph 51 that an authority must not borrow to invest primarily for financial return. Paragraph 51 states:

'The Prudential Code determines that certain acts or practices are not prudent activity for a local authority and incur risk to the affordability of local authority investment:

- In order to comply with the Prudential Code, an authority must not borrow to invest primarily for financial return.
- It is not prudent for local authorities to make any investment or spending decision that will increase the capital financing requirement, and so may lead to new borrowing, unless directly and primarily related to the functions of the authority and where any financial returns are either related to the financial viability of the project in question or otherwise incidental to the primary purpose.'

- 7.5 External borrowing currently stands at £5.56m (excluding Private Finance Initiative (PFI) obligations and obligations under right-of-use leases (ROU leases)). At 31 March 2024 and excluding PFI and ROU Leases there was a £14.1m CFR relating to unfunded capital expenditure which had been financed from internal resources. The CFR is estimated to be £16.4m at 31 March 2025, £20.0m at 31 March 2026 and £20.1m at 31 March 2027. Additional long term borrowing is estimated at £0.0m for 2025/26, £0.0m for 2026/27 and £0.7m for 2027/28. This reflects the PCC's decisions to transfer budget surpluses to reserves to fund capital expenditure rather than borrow externally. The borrowing requirement does not include the funding requirement in respect of assets financed through PFI and ROU Leases
- 7.6 The challenging and uncertain economic outlook, together with managing the cost of debt requires a flexible approach to borrowing. The PCC, under delegated powers, will take the most appropriate form of borrowing depending on the prevailing interest rates at the time and any risks identified.
- 7.7 The level of outstanding debt and composition of debt, in terms of individual loans, is kept under review. The PWLB provides a facility to allow the restructure of debt, including premature repayment of loans, and encourages local authorities and PCCs to do so when circumstances permit. This can result in net savings in overall interest charges. The PCC CFO and Link Treasury Services Ltd will monitor prevailing rates for any opportunities during the year. As short-term borrowing rates have historically been considered cheaper than longer term fixed interest rates, there may be potential opportunities to generate savings by switching from long-term debt to short-term debt. However, these savings will need to be considered in the light of the current treasury position and the size of the cost of debt repayment (premiums incurred). Consideration will also be given to identify if there is any residual potential for making savings by running down investment balances to repay debt prematurely as short-term rates on investments are likely to be lower than rates paid on current debt.
- 7.8 The PCC has flexibility to borrow funds in the current year for use in future years, but will not borrow more than or in advance of its needs purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed. Any decision to borrow in advance will be within forward approved CFR estimates, and will be considered carefully to ensure that value for money can be demonstrated and that the PCC can ensure the security of such funds.
- 7.9 The PCC will continue to use the most appropriate source of borrowing at the time of making application, including; the PWLB, commercial market loans, Local Authorities and the Municipal Bond Agency.

8. Treasury Management Prudential Indicators

- 8.1 In addition to the key treasury indicators included in the Prudential Code and reported separately, there are three treasury management indicators. The purpose of the indicators is to restrict the activity of the treasury function to within certain limits, thereby managing risk and reducing the impact of an adverse movement in interest

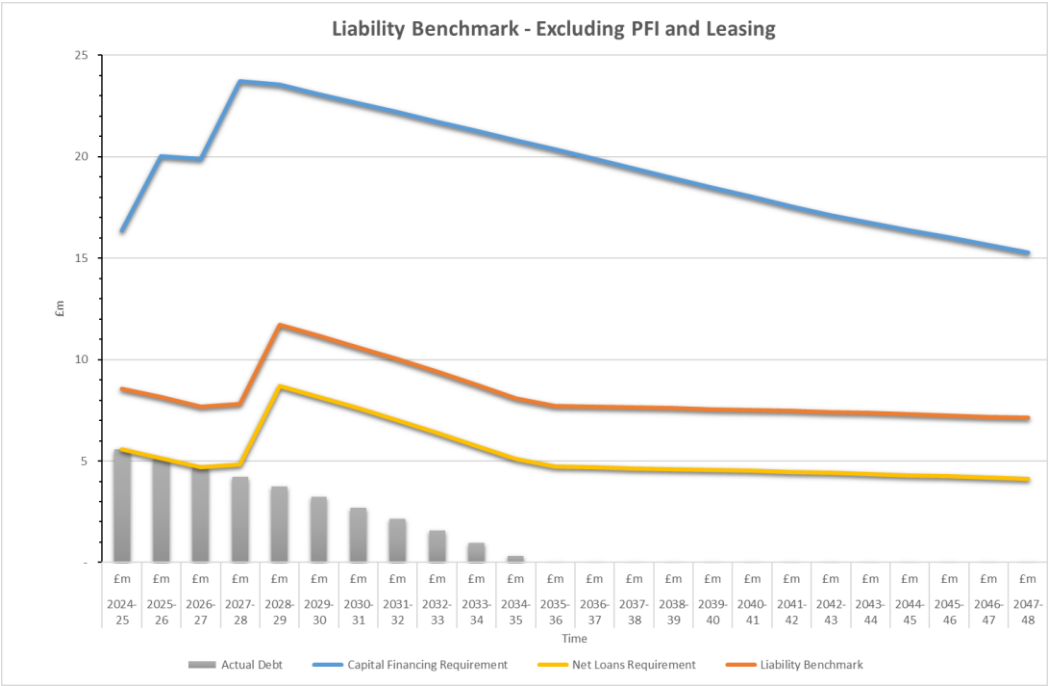
rates. However, if these indicators are too restrictive, they will impair the opportunities to reduce costs/ improve performance. The Indicators are:

- **Maturity Structures of Borrowing** – These gross limits are set to reduce the PCC's exposure to large fixed rate sums falling due for refinancing and require upper and lower limits. It is recommended that the PCC sets the following limits for the maturity structures of its borrowing at 31 March 2025:

	Actual*	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Under 12 months	7.6%	0%	15%
12 months and within 24 months	8.0%	0%	15%
24 months and within 5 years	26.2%	0%	45%
5 years and within 10 years	52.3%	0%	75%
10 years and above	5.9%	0%	100%

* Actual is based on existing balances at 31 December 2024.

- **Upper Limits to the Total of Principal Funds Invested for Greater than 365 Days** – This limit is set with regard to the PCC's liquidity requirements. It is estimated that in 2025/26, the maximum level of PCC funds invested for periods greater than 365 days will be no more than £4.9m.
- **Liability Benchmark** – This is a new indicator arising from the 2021 Revised Treasury Management Code of Practice. The liability benchmark is an essential risk management tool. The optimum position is for total borrowing to be on the liability benchmark line. Borrowing above that level will be reflected in increased investment balances and introduce the cost of carry (i.e. the difference between interest payable on the surplus borrowing balance and the interest that can be earned on that balance through investment) and additional credit risk implications, although this may be needed to anticipate interest rate movements and secure affordable borrowing.



Annex 1

Prudential Code Indicators 2025/26, 2024/25 and 2023/24

1. Background

1.1 The Prudential Code for capital investment came into effect on 1 April 2004. It replaced the complex regulatory framework, which only allowed borrowing if specific government authorisation had been received. The Prudential system is one based on self-regulation. All borrowing undertaken is self-determined under the Prudential Code. A revised Prudential Code was published in December 2021 and was applied in full from the 2023/24 financial year.

1.2 Under Prudential arrangements the PCC can determine the borrowing limit for capital expenditure. The government does retain reserve powers to restrict borrowing if that is required for national economic reasons.

1.3 The key objectives of the Code are to ensure, within a clear framework, that capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable. The Code specifies indicators that must be used and factors that must be taken into account. The Code requires the PCC to set and monitor performance on:

- capital expenditure;
- affordability;
- external debt; and
- treasury management (now included within the treasury management strategy).

1.4 The required indicators are:

- Capital Expenditure Forecast;
- Capital Financing Requirement;
- Actual External Debt;
- Authorised Limit for External Debt;
- Operational Boundary Limit for External Debt; and
- Net income from commercial and service investments to net revenue stream ratio.

However authorities are now advised to use local indicators, where this would be beneficial, especially if they carry out commercial activities.

1.5 Once determined, the indicators can be changed so long as this is reported to the PCC.

1.6 Actual performance against indicators will be monitored throughout the year. All the indicators will be reviewed and updated annually.

2. The Indicators

- 2.1 The **Capital Expenditure Payment Forecast** is detailed in Appendix D of the PCC's Budget and MTFP report 2025/29. The total estimated payments are:

	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£m	£m	£m
Capital Expenditure Forecast	15.601	6.421	10.855
ROU Leases	0.000	0.000	0.000

The PCC is being asked for approval to an overall capital programme based on the level of capital financing costs contained within the draft revenue budget.

- 2.2 The **ratio of capital financing costs to net revenue budget** shows the estimated annual revenue costs of borrowing (net interest payable on debt and the minimum revenue provision for repaying the debt), as a proportion of annual income from local taxation and non-specific government grants. The estimates include PFI MRP and interest costs. Estimates of the ratio of capital financing costs to net revenue budget for future years are:

Ratio of Capital Financing Costs to Net Revenue Budget		
2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate	2027/28 Estimate
1.62%	1.56%	1.72%

- 2.3 The **capital financing requirement** represents capital expenditure not yet financed by capital receipts, revenue contributions or capital grants. It measures the underlying need to borrow for capital purposes, although this borrowing may not necessarily take place externally. Estimates of the end of year capital financing requirement for future years and include PFI and ROU lease obligations.

Capital Financing Requirement			
31/03/25 Estimate	31/03/26 Estimate	31/03/27 Estimate	31/03/28 Estimate
£m	£m	£m	£m
36.913	40.145	39.661	42.803

- 2.4 The guidance on **net borrowing for capital purposes** advises that:

'In order to ensure that over the medium term gross debt will only be for a capital purpose, the local authority should ensure that gross external debt does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the capital financing requirement in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional capital financing requirement for the current and next two financial years.'

The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities 2021 edition, CIPFA

- 2.5 The Code defines the **authorised limit for external debt** as the sum of external borrowing and any other financing long-term liabilities e.g. finance leases. It is

recommended that the PCC approve the 2025/26 and future years limits. For 2025/26 this will be the statutory limit determined under section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2003.

- 2.6 As required by the Code, the PCC is asked to delegate authority to the PCC CFO, within the total limit for any individual year, to effect movement between the separate limits for borrowing and other long-term liabilities. Any such changes made will be reported to the PCC.

Authorised Limit for External Debt			
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£m	£m	£m
PWLB borrowing	5.139	4.695	4.948
Other long term liabilities (PIC PFI and ROU Lease Liabilities)	20.004	19.661	18.975
Headroom	17.009	17.288	21.020
Total	42.152	41.644	44.943

These proposed limits are consistent with the capital programme. They provide headroom to allow for operational management, for example unusual cash movements.

- 2.7 The Code also requires the PCC to approve an **operational boundary limit for external debt** for the same time period. The proposed operational boundary for external debt is the same calculation as the authorised limit without the additional headroom. The operational boundary represents a key management tool for in year monitoring.
- 2.8 Within the operational boundary, figures for borrowing and other long-term liabilities are separately identified again. The PCC is asked to delegate authority to the PCC CFO, within the total operational boundary for any individual year, to make any required changes between the separately agreed figures for borrowing and other long-term liabilities. Any changes will be reported to the PCC.

Operational Boundary Limit for External Debt			
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£m	£m	£m
PWLB borrowing	5.139	4.695	4.948
Other long term liabilities (PIC PFI and ROU Lease Liabilities)	20.004	19.661	18.975
Total	25.143	24.356	23.923

Annex 2

Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)

MRP Policy and Statement for 2025/26.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The PCC is required to make a charge against the revenue budget each year in respect of capital expenditure financed by borrowing or credit arrangement. The annual charge is set aside for the eventual repayment of the loan and is known as the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). This is separate from any annual interest charges that are incurred on borrowing.
- 1.2 The Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 amend the way in which MRP can be calculated so that each authority must consider what is 'prudent'. The regulations are backed up by statutory guidance which gives advice on what might be considered prudent.

2. Options for Making Prudent Provision

- 2.1 Four options are included in the guidance, which are those likely to be most relevant for the majority of local government bodies. Although other approaches are not ruled out, local government bodies must demonstrate that they are fully consistent with the statutory duty to make prudent revenue provision.

Option 1 - Regulatory Method

Authorities may continue to use the formulae put in place by the previous regulations.

Option 2 - Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) Method

Under this option, MRP is equal to 4% of the non-housing CFR at the end of the preceding financial year.

Option 3 - Asset Life Method

This is to make provision over the estimated life of the asset for which the borrowing is undertaken. This could be done by:

- a. Charging MRP in equal instalments over the life of the asset.
- b. Charge MRP on an annuity basis, where MRP is the principal element for the year of the annuity required to repay over the asset's useful life the amount of capital expenditure financed by borrowing or credit arrangements. The authority should use an appropriate interest rate to calculate the amount. Adjustments to the calculation to take account of repayment by other methods during repayment period (e.g. by the application of capital receipts) should be made as necessary.

Option 4 - Depreciation

MRP is deemed to be equal to the provision required in accordance with depreciation accounting in respect of the asset on which expenditure has been financed by

borrowing or credit arrangements. This should include any amount for impairment charged to the income and expenditure accounts.

2.2 The regulations make a distinction between capital expenditure incurred before 1 April 2008 and capital expenditure incurred from 1 April 2008 in terms of the options available.

2.3 Options 1 and 2 are to be used for capital expenditure incurred pre April 2008. Options 3 and 4 are to be used for Capital expenditure incurred post April 2008.

3. MRP Policy

3.1 Before 1 April 2019 the option adopted for expenditure incurred after 1 April 2008 was Option 3a (Equal Instalment method).

3.3 Option 3b (Annuity Method) was adopted for capital expenditure chargeable as MRP for the first time after 1 April 2019. The principal reason for this change was for the charge to revenue to reflect the capital repayment basis on the current preferred financing method vis the Public Works Loans Board borrowed on an annuity basis. This method will therefore adopt a similar MRP basis as those assets financed through lease or PFI arrangements.

3.4 The revised Statutory Guidance released on 2 February 2018 stipulates that this change in policy cannot be applied retrospectively to assets placed in service prior to the date the revised policy was introduced. Therefore, Option 3a still applies to capital expenditure chargeable as MRP for the first time prior to 1 April 2019.

4. Recommendations

4.1 It is proposed that the following MRP policy is adopted as follows for 2025/26:

- Capital expenditure incurred before April 2008 is treated in accordance with Option 1 of the regulatory guidance;
- Capital expenditure chargeable as MRP for the first time from 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2019 is treated in accordance with Option 3(a) of the regulatory guidance; and
- Capital expenditure chargeable as MRP for the first time after 1 April 2019 is treated in accordance with Option 3(b) of the regulatory guidance.