

**The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk  
Annual Investment and Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2020/21**

**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 local authority’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.”*
- 1.5 This PCC has not engaged in any commercial investments and has no non-treasury investments.

## 2. Reporting requirements

### Capital Strategy

- 2.1 The CIPFA 2017 Prudential and Treasury Management Codes require, for 2020/21, 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 and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of services
  - an overview of how the associated risk is managed
  - the implications for future financial 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 will be published separately but is included within the PCC's Budget and MTFP report.

### Treasury Management reporting

- 2.4 The PCC is currently required to receive and approve, as a minimum, 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); (Appendix 1)
  - a minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy, (how unfunded capital expenditure is charged to revenue over time); (Appendix 2)
  - 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.

### **3. Treasury Management Strategy for 2020/21**

3.1 The strategy for 2020/21 covers two main areas:

#### **Capital issues**

- the capital expenditure plans and the associated prudential indicators; see Annex 1.
- the minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy. See Annex 2.

#### **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, 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. This also applies to Audit Committee members responsible for scrutiny. Training on the Prudential Code and the Capital Strategy was provided to Audit Committee members in October 2018.

#### **Treasury management consultants**

3.3 The PCC uses Link Asset Services, Treasury solutions as its external treasury management advisors.

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 Asset Services in a joint contract with the PCC for Suffolk. Link Asset Services 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.
- Credit ratings/market information service for the three main credit rating agencies (Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poors).

3.13 Whilst Link Asset Services 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.

3.15 Link Asset Service's Economic Forecast is set out in Annex 3.

#### 4. Investment Strategy 2020/21

4.1 On the assumption that the UK and EU agree a Brexit deal including the terms of trade by the end of 2020 or soon after, then Bank Rate is forecast to increase only slowly over the next few years to reach 1.00% by quarter 1 2023. Bank Rate forecasts for financial year ends (March) are:

- Q1 2021 - 0.75%
- Q1 2022 - 1.00%
- Q1 2023 - 1.00%

4.2 The suggested budgeted investment earnings rates for returns on investments placed for periods up to about three months during each financial year are as follows:

Financial Year	Budgeted Interest Earnings
2019/20	0.75%
2020/21	0.75%
2021/22	1.00%
2022/23	1.25%
2023/24	1.50%
2024/25	1.75%
Later Years	2.25%

The overall balance of risks to economic growth in the UK is probably to the downside due to the weight of all the uncertainties over Brexit, as well as a softening global economic picture.

The balance of risks to increases in Bank Rate and shorter term PWLB rates are broadly similarly to the downside.

In the event that a Brexit deal is agreed with the EU and approved by Parliament, the balance of risks to economic growth and to increases in Bank Rate is likely to change to the upside.

4.3 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.

4.4 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.

4.5 The key requirements of both the Code and the Investment Guidance are to produce an Annual 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.
- Details of Specified and Non-Specified investment types.

## 5. Investment Strategy 2020/21 - Counterparty Criteria

5.1 The PCC works closely with its 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:

<b>UK Banks</b>	<b>Fitch</b>	<b>Standard &amp; Poors</b>	<b>Moody's</b>
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:

<b>Non-UK Banks</b>	<b>Fitch</b>	<b>Standard &amp; Poors</b>	<b>Moody's</b>
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 Barclays 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 & 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, Parish 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 2020/21 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 relies 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 for any counterparty will be maintained in 2020/21 to reflect the level of cash balances and to avoid large deposits with the DMO.
- 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.
- 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 2020/21 – Specified and Non-Specified Investments**

6.1 As determined by CLG'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 (Barclays Bank plc)
- Building Societies (which meet the minimum ratings criteria for Banks);
- Money Market Funds;
- UK Government;
- Local Authorities, Parish 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 2020/21 therefore includes both Specified and Non-Specified Investment institutions.

## **7. Borrowing Strategy 2020/21**

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 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.

- 7.3 Historically, the main source of long term loans was the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), which is part of the UK Debt Management Office (DMO). The maximum period for which loans can be advanced by the PWLB is 50 years. However, on 9 October 2019, HM Treasury increased PWLB rates by 100 basis points, many local authorities will now be viewing the PWLB as a lender of last resort. It is very likely that alternative providers of finance will step into the market for lending to local authorities. It is not certain whether this decision will be reversed if Gilt rates rise within the next year.
- 7.4 External borrowing currently stands at £23.97m (excluding PFI). At 31 March 2019 there was a £28.7m Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) relating to unfunded capital expenditure which had been financed from internal resources. The CFR is estimated to be £32.4m at 31 March 2020, £47.9m at 31 March 2021 and £47.0 at 31 March 2022. Additional long term borrowing is estimated at £10.7m for 2020/21, £0.4m for 2022/23 and £1.0m for 2023/24. The borrowing requirement does not include the funding requirement in respect of assets financed through PFI.
- 7.5 The challenging and uncertain economic outlook outlined by Link Asset Services in Annex 3, together with managing the cost of “carrying 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, taking into account the risks identified in Link Asset Services economic overview (Section 3).
- 7.6 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 Asset Services will monitor prevailing rates for any opportunities during the year. As short term borrowing rates will be considerably 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
- 7.7 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 Capital Financing Requirement 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
- 7.8 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 two 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 31.3.20:

	<b>Actual*</b>	<b>Lower Limit</b>	<b>Upper Limit</b>
Under 12 months	0.7%	0%	15%
12 months and within 24 months	0.8%	0%	15%
24 months and within 5 years	16.3%	0%	45%
5 years and within 10 years	18.8%	0%	75%
10 years and above	63.4%	0%	100%

\* Actual is based on existing balances at 17.12.19

- **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 2020/21, the maximum level of PCC funds invested for periods greater than 365 days will be no more than £4.475m.

## Prudential Code Indicators 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23

### 1. Background

1.1 The Prudential Code for capital investment came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> 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 2017 and is has applied from 2018/19

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
- treasury management (now included within 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

However authorities are now advised to use local indicators, where this would be beneficial, especially if 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 x** (of the PCC's Budget and MTFP report 2020/24). The total estimated payments are:

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	£m	£m	£m
Capital Expenditure Forecast	25.483	3.889	5.554

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		
2020/21 Estimate	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate
5.42%	5.40%	5.36%

- 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 are:

Capital Financing Requirement			
31/03/20 Estimate	31/03/21 Estimate	31/03/22 Estimate	31/03/23 Estimate
£95.027m	£110.182m	£107.872m	£107.539m

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

*“In order to ensure that over the medium term net borrowing will only be for a capital purpose, the PCC should ensure that net external borrowing does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of capital financing requirement in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional capital financing requirement for the current and next two financial years.”*

Net borrowing refers to the PCC's total external borrowing net of any temporary cash investments and must work within this requirement.

- 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 2020/21 and future years limits. For 2020/21 this will be the statutory limit determined under section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2003.

As required by the Code, the PCC is asked to delegate authority to the Chief Finance Officer (OPCCN), 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.

<b>Authorised Limit for External Debt</b>			
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	£m	£m	£m
PWLB borrowing	39.983	38.612	37.902
Other long term liabilities (OCC PFI)	23.994	23.373	22.679
Other long term liabilities (PIC PFI)	33.834	33.049	32.207
Headroom	18.880	18.231	20.129
<b>Total</b>	<b>115.691</b>	<b>113.265</b>	<b>112.916</b>

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

- 2.6 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.

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 Chief Finance Officer (OPCCN), 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.

<b>Operational Boundary Limit for External Debt</b>			
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	£m	£m	£m
PWLB borrowing	39.983	38.612	37.902
Other long term liabilities (OCC PFI)	23.994	23.373	22.679
Other long term liabilities (PIC PFI)	33.834	33.049	32.207
<b>Total</b>	<b>96.811</b>	<b>95.034</b>	<b>92.788</b>

## Annex 2

### Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) MRP Policy and Statement for 2020/21.

#### 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). This method was deemed prudent whilst assets were primarily being internally financed.
- 3.2 As reserves, cash and investment balances have been consumed following the decrease in direct government funding, it is now necessary to externally finance capital expenditure on long life assets. The current preferred financing method is via the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) borrowed on an annuity basis.
- 3.3 Option 3b (Annuity Method) is 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 associated finance. 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 2020/21:
- 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.
  - 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.

## LINK ASSET SERVICES

### ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

**UK. Brexit.** 2019 has been a year of upheaval on the political front as Theresa May resigned as Prime Minister to be replaced by Boris Johnson on a platform of the UK leaving the EU on 31 October 2019, with or without a deal. However, MPs blocked leaving on that date and the EU agreed an extension to 31 January 2020. In late October, MPs approved an outline of a Brexit deal to enable the UK to leave the EU on 31 January; however, even with a Conservative Government overall majority gained at the general election on 12 December, there will still be much uncertainty as the detail of a trade deal will need to be negotiated by the current end of the transition period in December 2020.

While the Bank of England went through the routine of producing another quarterly Inflation Report, (now renamed the Monetary Policy Report), on 7 November, it is very questionable how much all the writing and numbers are worth when faced with the uncertainties of where the UK will be following the general election. The Bank made a change in their Brexit assumptions to now include a deal being eventually passed. Possibly the biggest message that is worth taking note of from the Monetary Policy Report, was an increase in concerns among MPC members around weak global economic growth and the potential for Brexit uncertainties to become entrenched and so delay UK economic recovery. Consequently, the MPC voted 7-2 to maintain Bank Rate at 0.75% but two members were sufficiently concerned to vote for an immediate Bank Rate cut to 0.5%. The MPC warned that if global growth does not pick up or Brexit uncertainties intensify, then a rate cut was now more likely. Conversely, if risks do recede, then a more rapid recovery of growth will require gradual and limited rate rises. The speed of recovery will depend on the extent to which uncertainty dissipates over the final terms for trade between the UK and EU and by how much global growth rates pick up. The Bank revised its inflation forecasts down – to 1.25% in 2019, 1.5% in 2020, and 2.0% in 2021; hence the MPC views inflation as causing little concern in the near future.

If economic growth were to weaken considerably, the MPC has relatively little room to make a big impact with Bank Rate still only at 0.75%. It would therefore, probably suggest that it would be up to the Chancellor to provide help to support growth by way of a fiscal boost by e.g. tax cuts, increases in the annual expenditure budgets of government departments and services and expenditure on infrastructure projects, to boost the economy. The Government has already made moves in this direction and both of the largest parties made significant promises in their election manifestos to increase government spending. The Chancellor has also amended the fiscal rules in November to allow for an increase in government expenditure. In addition, it has to be borne in mind that even if the post-election Parliament agrees the deal on 31 January 2020, the current transition period for negotiating the details of the terms of a trade deal with the EU only runs until 31 December 2020. This could prove to be an unrealistically short timetable for such major negotiations which leaves open two possibilities; one the need for an extension of negotiations, probably two years, or a no deal Brexit in December 2020.

As for **inflation** itself, CPI has been hovering around the Bank of England's target of 2% during 2019, but fell again in October to 1.5%. It is likely to remain close to or under 2% over the next two years and so it does not pose any immediate concern to the MPC at the current time. However, if there was a no deal Brexit, inflation could rise towards 4%, primarily because of imported inflation on the back of a weakening pound.

With regard to the **labour market**, growth in numbers employed has been quite resilient through 2019 until the three months to September where it fell by 58,000. However, this was about half of what had been expected. The unemployment rate fell back again to a 44 year low of 3.8% on the Independent Labour Organisation measure in September, despite the fall in numbers employed, due

to numbers leaving the work force. Wage inflation has been edging down from a high point of 3.9% in July to 3.8% in August and now 3.6% in September, (3 month average regular pay, excluding bonuses). This meant that in real terms, (i.e. wage rates higher than CPI inflation), earnings grew by about 1.9%. As the UK economy is very much services sector driven, an increase in household spending power is likely to feed through into providing some support to the overall rate of economic growth in the coming months. The other message from the fall in wage growth is that employers are beginning to find it easier to hire suitable staff, indicating that supply pressure in the labour market is easing.

In the **political arena**, the general election result could result in a potential loosening of monetary policy and therefore medium to longer dated gilt yields could rise on the expectation of a weak pound and concerns around inflation picking up although, conversely, a weak international backdrop could provide further support for low yielding government bonds and gilts.

**USA.** President Trump's massive easing of fiscal policy in 2018 fuelled a temporary boost in consumption in that year which generated an upturn in the rate of growth to a robust 2.9% y/y. **Growth** in 2019 has been falling after a strong start in quarter 1 at 3.1%, (annualised rate), to 2.0% in quarter 2 and then 1.9% in quarter 3; it is expected to fall further. The strong growth in employment numbers during 2018 has weakened during 2019, indicating that the economy is cooling, while inflationary pressures are also weakening; CPI inflation fell from 2.3% to 2.0% in September.

**The Fed** finished its series of increases in rates to 2.25 – 2.50% in December 2018. In July 2019, it cut rates by 0.25% as a 'midterm adjustment' but flagged up that this was not intended to be seen as the start of a series of cuts to ward off a downturn in growth. It also ended its programme of quantitative tightening in August, (reducing its holdings of treasuries etc). It then cut rates by 0.25% again in September and by another 0.25% in its October meeting to 1.50 – 1.75%. At its September meeting it also said it was going to **start buying Treasuries again**, although this was not to be seen as a resumption of quantitative easing but rather an exercise to relieve liquidity pressures in the repo market. Despite those protestations, this still means that the Fed is again expanding its balance sheet holdings of government debt. In the first month, it will buy \$60bn, whereas it had been reducing its balance sheet by \$50bn per month during 2019. As it will be buying only short-term (under 12 months) Treasury bills, it is technically correct that this is not quantitative easing (which is purchase of long term debt).

Investor confidence has been badly rattled by the progressive ramping up of increases in tariffs President Trump has made on Chinese imports and China has responded with increases in tariffs on American imports. This **trade war** is seen as depressing US, Chinese and world growth. In the EU, it is also particularly impacting Germany as exports of goods and services are equivalent to 46% of total GDP. It will also impact developing countries dependent on exporting commodities to China. However, in early November, a phase one deal was agreed between the US and China to roll back some of the tariffs which gives some hope of resolving this dispute.

**EUROZONE.** **Growth** has been slowing from +1.8 % during 2018 to around half of that in 2019. Growth was +0.4% q/q (+1.2% y/y) in quarter 1, +0.2% q/q (+1.2% y/y) in quarter 2 and then +0.2% q/q, +1.1% in quarter 3; there appears to be little upside potential in the near future. German GDP growth has been struggling to stay in positive territory in 2019 and fell by -0.1% in quarter 2; industrial production was down 4% y/y in June with car production down 10% y/y. Germany would be particularly vulnerable to a no deal Brexit depressing exports further and if President Trump imposes tariffs on EU produced cars.

**The European Central Bank (ECB)** ended its programme of quantitative easing purchases of debt in December 2018, which then meant that the central banks in the US, UK and EU had all ended the phase of post financial crisis expansion of liquidity supporting world financial markets by quantitative easing purchases of debt. However, the downturn in EZ growth in the second half of 2018 and into 2019, together with inflation falling well under the upper limit of its target range of 0 to 2%, (but it

aims to keep it near to 2%), has prompted the ECB to take new measures to stimulate growth. At its March meeting it said that it expected to leave interest rates at their present levels “at least through the end of 2019”, but that was of little help to boosting growth in the near term. Consequently, it announced a **third round of TLTROs**; this provides banks with cheap borrowing every three months from September 2019 until March 2021 that means that, although they will have only a two-year maturity, the Bank was making funds available until 2023, two years later than under its previous policy. As with the last round, the new TLTROs will include an incentive to encourage bank lending, and they will be capped at 30% of a bank’s eligible loans. However, since then, the downturn in EZ and world growth has gathered momentum; at its meeting on 12 September, it cut its deposit rate further into negative territory, from -0.4% to -0.5%, and announced a **resumption of quantitative easing purchases of debt for an unlimited period**; (at its October meeting it said this would start in November at €20bn per month - a relatively small amount compared to the previous buying programme). It also increased the maturity of the third round of TLTROs from two to three years. However, it is doubtful whether this loosening of monetary policy will have much impact on growth and, unsurprisingly, the ECB stated that governments will need to help stimulate growth by ‘growth friendly’ fiscal policy.

On the political front, Austria, Spain and Italy have been in the throes of **forming coalition governments** with some unlikely combinations of parties i.e. this raises questions around their likely endurance. The latest results of German state elections has put further pressure on the frail German CDU/SDP coalition government and on the current leadership of the CDU. The results of the Spanish general election in November have not helped the prospects of forming a stable coalition.

**CHINA.** Economic growth has been weakening over successive years, despite repeated rounds of central bank stimulus; medium term risks are increasing. Major progress still needs to be made to eliminate excess industrial capacity and the stock of unsold property, and to address the level of non-performing loans in the banking and shadow banking systems. In addition, there still needs to be a greater switch from investment in industrial capacity, property construction and infrastructure to consumer goods production.

**JAPAN** - has been struggling to stimulate consistent significant GDP growth and to get inflation up to its target of 2%, despite huge monetary and fiscal stimulus. It is also making little progress on fundamental reform of the economy.

**WORLD GROWTH.** Until recent years, world growth has been boosted by increasing **globalisation** i.e. countries specialising in producing goods and commodities in which they have an economic advantage and which they then trade with the rest of the world. This has boosted worldwide productivity and growth, and, by lowering costs, has also depressed inflation. However, the rise of China as an economic superpower over the last thirty years, which now accounts for nearly 20% of total world GDP, has unbalanced the world economy. The Chinese government has targeted achieving major world positions in specific key sectors and products, especially high tech areas and production of rare earth minerals used in high tech products. It is achieving this by massive financial support (i.e. subsidies) to state owned firms, government directions to other firms, technology theft, restrictions on market access by foreign firms and informal targets for the domestic market share of Chinese producers in the selected sectors. This is regarded as being unfair competition that is putting western firms at an unfair disadvantage or even putting some out of business. It is also regarded with suspicion on the political front as China is an authoritarian country that is not averse to using economic and military power for political advantage. The current trade war between the US and China therefore needs to be seen against that backdrop. It is, therefore, likely that we are heading into a period where there will be a **reversal of world globalisation and a decoupling of western countries** from dependence on China to supply products. This is likely to produce a backdrop in the coming years of weak global growth and so weak inflation. Central banks are, therefore, likely to come under more pressure to support growth by looser monetary policy measures and this will militate against central banks increasing interest rates.

The trade war between the US and China is a major concern to **financial markets** due to the synchronised general weakening of growth in the major economies of the world, compounded by fears that there could even be a recession looming up in the US, though this is probably overblown. These concerns resulted in **government bond yields** in the developed world falling significantly during 2019. If there were a major worldwide downturn in growth, central banks in most of the major economies will have limited ammunition available, in terms of monetary policy measures, when rates are already very low in most countries, (apart from the US). There are also concerns about how much distortion of financial markets has already occurred with the current levels of quantitative easing purchases of debt by central banks and the use of negative central bank rates in some countries. The latest PMI survey statistics of economic health for the US, UK, EU and China have all been predicting a downturn in growth; this confirms investor sentiment that the outlook for growth during the year ahead is weak.

## INTEREST RATE FORECASTS

Link Asset Services Interest Rate View														
	Dec-19	Mar-20	Jun-20	Sep-20	Dec-20	Mar-21	Jun-21	Sep-21	Dec-21	Mar-22	Jun-22	Sep-22	Dec-22	Mar-23
Bank Rate View	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25
3 Month LIBID	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.80	0.90	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.10	1.20	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30
6 Month LIBID	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.90	1.00	1.10	1.10	1.20	1.30	1.40	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50
12 Month LIBID	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.10	1.20	1.30	1.30	1.40	1.50	1.60	1.70	1.70	1.70	1.70
5yr PWLB Rate	2.30	2.40	2.40	2.50	2.50	2.60	2.70	2.80	2.90	2.90	3.00	3.10	3.20	3.20
10yr PWLB Rate	2.60	2.70	2.70	2.70	2.80	2.90	3.00	3.10	3.20	3.20	3.30	3.30	3.40	3.50
25yr PWLB Rate	3.20	3.30	3.40	3.40	3.50	3.60	3.70	3.70	3.80	3.90	4.00	4.00	4.10	4.10
50yr PWLB Rate	3.10	3.20	3.30	3.30	3.40	3.50	3.60	3.60	3.70	3.80	3.90	3.90	4.00	4.00

The interest rate forecasts provided by Link Asset Services above are **predicated on an assumption of an agreement being reached on Brexit between the UK and the EU**. On this basis, while GDP growth is likely to be subdued in 2019 due to all the uncertainties around Brexit depressing consumer and business confidence, an agreement is likely to lead to a boost to the rate of growth in subsequent years which could, in turn, increase inflationary pressures in the economy and so cause the Bank of England to resume a series of gentle increases in Bank Rate. Just how fast, and how far, those increases will occur and rise to, will be data dependent. The forecasts in this report assume a modest recovery in the rate and timing of stronger growth and in the corresponding response by the Bank in raising rates.

- In the event of an **orderly non-agreement exit**, it is likely that the Bank of England would take action to cut Bank Rate from 0.75% in order to help economic growth deal with the adverse effects of this situation. This is also likely to cause short to medium term gilt yields to fall.
- If there was a **disorderly Brexit**, then any cut in Bank Rate would be likely to last for a longer period and also depress short and medium gilt yields correspondingly. Quantitative easing could also be restarted by the Bank of England. It is also possible that the government could act to protect economic growth by implementing fiscal stimulus.

However, there would appear to be a majority consensus in the Commons against any form of non-agreement exit so the chance of this occurring has diminished.

### The balance of risks to the UK

- The overall balance of risks to economic growth in the UK is probably to the downside due to the weight of all the uncertainties over Brexit, as well as a softening global economic picture.

- The balance of risks to increases in Bank Rate and shorter term PWLB rates are broadly similarly to the downside.
- In the event that a Brexit deal was agreed with the EU and approved by Parliament, the balance of risks to economic growth and to increases in Bank Rate is likely to change to the upside.

One risk that is both an upside and downside risk, is that all central banks are now working in very different economic conditions than before the 2008 financial crash as there has been a major increase in consumer and other debt due to the exceptionally low levels of borrowing rates that have prevailed since 2008. This means that the neutral rate of interest in an economy, (i.e. the rate that is neither expansionary nor deflationary), is difficult to determine definitively in this new environment, although central banks have made statements that they expect it to be much lower than before 2008. Central banks could therefore either over or under do increases in central interest rates.

#### **Downside risks to current forecasts for UK gilt yields and PWLB rates currently include:**

- **Brexit** – if it were to cause significant economic disruption and a major downturn in the rate of growth.
- **Bank of England** takes action too quickly, or too far, over the next three years to raise Bank Rate and causes UK economic growth, and increases in inflation, to be weaker than we currently anticipate.
- A resurgence of the **Eurozone sovereign debt crisis**. In 2018, Italy was a major concern due to having a populist coalition government which made a lot of anti-austerity and anti-EU noise. However, in September 2019 there was a major change in the coalition governing Italy which has brought to power a much more EU friendly government; this has eased the pressure on Italian bonds. Only time will tell whether this new coalition based on an unlikely alliance of two very different parties will endure.
- Weak capitalisation of some **European banks**, particularly Italian banks.
- **German minority government**. In the German general election of September 2017, Angela Merkel's CDU party was left in a vulnerable minority position dependent on the fractious support of the SPD party, as a result of the rise in popularity of the anti-immigration AfD party. The CDU has done badly in recent state elections but the SPD has done particularly badly and this has raised a major question mark over continuing to support the CDU. Angela Merkel has stepped down from being the CDU party leader but she intends to remain as Chancellor until 2021.
- **Other minority EU governments**. Austria, Sweden, Spain, Portugal, Netherlands and Belgium also have vulnerable minority governments dependent on coalitions which could prove fragile.
- **Austria, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary** now form a strongly anti-immigration bloc within the EU. There has also been rising anti-immigration sentiment in Germany and France.
- In October 2019, the IMF issued a report on the World Economic Outlook which flagged up a synchronised slowdown in world growth. However, it also flagged up that there was **potential for a rerun of the 2008 financial crisis**, but this time centred on the huge debt binge accumulated by corporations during the decade of low interest rates. This now means that there are corporates who would be unable to cover basic interest costs on **some \$19trn of corporate debt in major western economies**, if world growth was to dip further than just a minor cooling. This debt is mainly held by the shadow banking sector i.e. pension funds, insurers, hedge funds, asset managers etc., who, when there is \$15trn of corporate and government debt now yielding negative interest rates, have been searching for higher returns in riskier assets. Much of this debt is only marginally above investment grade so any rating downgrade could force some holders into a fire sale, which would then depress prices further and so set off a spiral down. The IMF's answer is to suggest imposing higher capital charges on lending to corporates and for central banks to regulate the investment operations of the shadow banking sector. In October 2019, the deputy Governor of the Bank of England also

flagged up the dangers of banks and the shadow banking sector lending to corporates, especially highly leveraged corporates, which had risen back up to near pre-2008 levels.

- **Geopolitical risks**, for example in North Korea, but also in Europe and the Middle East, which could lead to increasing safe haven flows.

#### **Upside risks to current forecasts for UK gilt yields and PWLB rates**

- **Brexit** – if agreement was reached all round that removed all threats of economic and political disruption between the EU and the UK.
- The **Bank of England is too slow** in its pace and strength of increases in Bank Rate and, therefore, allows inflationary pressures to build up too strongly within the UK economy, which then necessitates a later rapid series of increases in Bank Rate faster than we currently expect.
- **UK inflation**, whether domestically generated or imported, returning to sustained significantly higher levels causing an increase in the inflation premium inherent to gilt yields.

**Link Asset Services  
November 2019 (updated)**