

APPENDIX A

Capital Strategy 2020/21

1 Introduction

1.1 The CIPFA 2017 Prudential and Treasury Management Codes require 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 associated risk is managed
- The implications for future sustainability

2 Capital Expenditure and Financing

2.1 Capital expenditure is where the Council spends money on assets, e.g. property/ vehicles that will be used for more than one year. In Local Government this includes spending on assets owned by other bodies and loans and grants to other bodies, enabling them to buy assets. The Council has some limited discretion on what counts as capital expenditure, e.g. assets costing below £10,000 are not capitalised and are charged to revenue in the year.

2.2 The Council has incurred £862,000 capital expenditure in 2019/20 to date and may incur further capital expenditure by the end of the year. The Council has approved a Capital Programme for 2020/21 of £1.05 million all of which relates to general fund services. The Council capital expenditure is summarised below:

| Capital expenditure £'000 | 2018/19 Actual | 2019/20 Estimate | 2020/21 Estimate | 2021/22 Estimate | 2022/23 Estimate |
|--|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Services | 2,204 | 1,136 | 1,726 | 926 | 926 |
| Community Housing | 0 | 0 | 2,150 | 2,150 | 0 |
| Commercial activities/ non-financial investments* | 21,379 | 0 | 5,967 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 23,583 | 1,136 | 9,843 | 3,076 | 926 |

* Commercial activities / non-financial investments relate to areas such as capital expenditure on investment properties, loans to third parties etc.

- 2.3** On 4th June 2019 the Council approved funding of £4.3m from a combination of internal borrowing and external borrowing (from the Public Works Loan Board) for Community Housing capital expenditure. The first two community housing schemes are expected to deliver 29 residential units. Borrowing costs will be reimbursed through property sales upon completion of the developments comprising a mix of open market units, discount purchase affordable housing and affordable rented. The capital expenditure of £4.3m has been included in the capital expenditure estimates above (£2.15m in 2020/21 and £2.15m in 2021/22).
- 2.4** In September 2018 (Minute CM34) the Council approved an updated Commercial Property Strategy, which included multiple objectives: (a) to support regeneration and the economic activity of the Borough, the LEP area and the South West Peninsula (in that priority order) (b) to enhance economic benefit (c) to grow business rate income (d) to assist with the financial sustainability of the Council as an ancillary benefit and (e) to help continue deliver and/or improve frontline services in keeping with its adopted strategy and objectives.
- 2.5** In December 2019, the Council revised its Commercial Investment Strategy and the Investment Strategy to enable the Council to invest (and to borrow to invest) in renewable energy. This was approved by Council on 17th December 2019 (Minute CM53). At the Invest to Earn Committee in September 2019 it was resolved to carry out financial, legal and technical due diligence on the business case for investment in a Solar Farm. Capital expenditure estimates have been included in the capital expenditure estimates above to reflect the possible purchase of shares in a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), so as to own, operate or invest in renewable energy. Due diligence work is currently in progress and will be reported back to the Invest to Earn Committee in due course.
- 2.6** The main General Fund capital project to which the Council is currently committed to, is the Leisure Investment of £1.5m which has already happened. The leisure contract sets out for the Council to be reimbursed by the leisure contractor for the borrowing of the Leisure Investment and the income has already been factored into the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Council is currently in discussions with the leisure provider with regards to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the leisure industry.
- 2.7** In September 2019, Council approved an overall Borrowing Limit (for all Council Services) of £50 million.

2.8 Governance

2.8.1 The Head of Finance Practice invites bids for capital funding from all service managers annually on the strict proviso that all bids must go towards meeting a strategic priority. All capital bids are ranked against a prescribed priority criteria which is set out in the bid process. Submitted capital bids are assessed against the categories in each priority. Priority 1 categories include meeting strategic priorities and statutory obligations (e.g. Health and Safety, Disability Discrimination Act etc.) and other capital works required to ensure the existing Council property assets remain open. Priority 2 categories link to good asset management whereby the capital work proposed would either generate capital/revenue income or reduce revenue spending. A capital bid that will enable rationalised service delivery or improvement is also considered a Priority 2 category to meet the Council's aims and objectives. The final capital programme is then presented to Hub Committee and to Council in February each year.

2.9 All capital expenditure must be financed, either from external sources (government grants and other contributions), the Council's own resources (revenue, reserves and capital receipts) or debt (borrowing, leasing and Private Finance Initiative). The planned financing of the above capital expenditure is as follows:

| Financing of capital expenditure £'000 | 2018/19 Actual | 2019/20 Estimate | 2020/21 Estimate | 2021/22 Estimate | 2022/23 Estimate |
|--|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Capital Expenditure | 23,583 | 1,136 | 9,843 | 3,076 | 926 |
| Financed by: | | | | | |
| External sources (Capital grants, NHB, S106) | 429 | 901 | 1,299 | 780 | 780 |
| Own resources (Capital receipts, Earmarked reserves) | 330 | 235 | 1,002 | 146 | 146 |
| Net financing need for the year (This is the prudential borrowing required) | 22,824 | 0 | 7,542 | 2,150 | 0 |

- 2.10** Debt is only a temporary source of finance, since loans must be repaid, and this is therefore replaced over time by other financing, usually from revenue which is known as Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). Alternatively, proceeds from selling capital assets (known as capital receipts) may be used to replace debt finance. Planned MRP and use of capital receipts are as follows:

| Replacement of debt finance £'000 | 2018/19 Actual | 2019/20 Estimate | 2020/21 Estimate | 2021/22 Estimate | 2022/23 Estimate |
|--|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| MRP | 494 | 598 | 705 | 731 | 747 |
| Use of capital receipts | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2,900 |

3 Treasury Management

- 3.1** Treasury management is concerned with keeping sufficient but not excessive cash available to meet the Council's spending needs, while managing the risks involved. Surplus cash is invested until required, while a shortage of cash will be met by borrowing, to avoid excessive credit balances or overdrafts in the bank current account.
- 3.2** The Council is typically more cash rich in the short-term as revenue income is received before it is spent, but cash poor in the long-term as capital expenditure is incurred before being financed. The revenue cash surpluses are offset against capital cash shortfalls to reduce overall borrowing.
- 3.3** As at 31 March 2019, the Council had external borrowing of £21.6 million.
- 3.4** The Council currently has £20.6 million in treasury investments, earning an average interest rate of 1.2%. This will be much reduced in 2020/21 with the bank base rate falling to 0.1% in March 2020 – the lowest ever level. Treasury investments are expected to fall to approximately £10 million by 31 March 2020.

3.5 Borrowing Strategy

- 3.5.1** The Council's main objectives when borrowing are to achieve a low but certain cost of finance while retaining flexibility should plans change in future.
- 3.5.2** These objectives are often conflicting, and the Council therefore will seek to strike a balance between cheap short-term loans and long-term fixed rate loans where the future cost is known but higher.
- 3.5.3** Projected levels of the Council's total outstanding debt which comprises borrowing is shown below, compared with the capital financing requirement.

| £'000 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 | 2022/23 |
|-------------------------------|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Actual | Estimate | Estimate | Estimate | Estimate |
| Debt at 31 March | 27,580 | 29,534 | 32,582 | 33,479 | 29,993 |
| Capital Financing Requirement | 26,570 | 25,972 | 32,809 | 34,228 | 30,581 |

4 Investment Strategy

- 4.1** Treasury investments arise from receiving cash before it is paid out again. Investments made for service reasons or for pure financial gain are not generally considered to be part of treasury management.
- 4.2** The Council's policy on treasury investments is to prioritise security and liquidity over yield, i.e. to focus on minimising risk rather than maximising returns. Cash that is likely to be spent in the near term is invested securely, for example with the government, other local authorities or selected high-quality banks, to minimise the risk of loss.
- 4.3** Money that will be held for longer terms is invested more widely including in collective investment schemes (pooled funds whose underlying assets are company shares, bonds, property etc.). One example of which is the CCLA Local Authorities' Property Fund in which the Council is invested to balance the risk of loss against the risk of receiving returns below inflation.
- 4.4** Both near-term and longer-term investments may be held in pooled funds, where an external fund manager makes decisions on which particular investments to buy and the Council may request its money back at short notice.
- 4.5** Further details on treasury investments can be found in the treasury management strategy (Appendix B).
- 4.6 Governance**
- 4.6.1** Decisions on treasury management investment and borrowing are made daily and are therefore delegated to the Corporate Director for Strategic Finance (S151 Officer) and finance staff (where appropriate), who must act in line with the treasury management strategy approved by Council.
- 4.6.2** Semi-annual reports on treasury management activity are presented to the Audit Committee which is responsible for scrutinising treasury management decisions.

5 Investments for Service Purposes

- 5.1** The Council has a £50,000 investment in the South West Mutual Bank which takes the form of shareholding in the bank, with the purpose of encouraging local economic growth.
- 5.2** The Hub Committee Forward Plan highlights that a future report will be brought to Members in 2020/21 to consider the setting up of a Housing Company in the form of a Community Benefit Society (CBS). This has charitable status and would be capable of holding the affordable housing developed by the community housing programme (see 2.3).
- 5.3** The Council is currently undertaking due diligence work on the opportunity for the Council to purchase shares in a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) so as to own, operate or invest in renewable energy generation. This business case would also involve the Council entering into a loan in 2020/21 at a commercial rate with the Special Purpose Vehicle.

5.4 Governance

- 5.4.1** Decisions on service investments are made by the relevant service manager in consultation with the Corporate Director for Strategic Finance (Section 151 Officer) and must meet pre-approved criteria and limits. Most loans and shares are capital expenditure and purchases will therefore also be approved as part of the capital programme.

6 Commercial Investment Strategy

- 6.1** In July 2019 (Minute CM34) the Council approved a Commercial Investment Strategy which replaced the Council's Commercial Property Acquisition Strategy, approved in September 2018. This strategy covers both commercial development on Council-owned land and commercial acquisitions and has multiple objectives:

- to support regeneration and the economic activity of the Borough, the LEP area and the South West Peninsula (in that priority order)
- to enhance economic benefit and create business rates growth
- to assist with the financial sustainability of the Council as an ancillary benefit
- to help continue deliver and/or improve frontline services in line with the Council's adopted strategy and objectives.
- security and liquidity

- 6.2** Recently the Council has prioritised tackling Climate Change by moving a motion to declare a Climate Change Emergency and targeting proactive measures to meet these challenges. As a result of this, in December 2019 the Council approved (Minute CM53) a revised Commercial Investment Strategy in

order to enable the Council to invest (and to borrow to invest) in renewable energy.

6.3 The opportunity for the Council to invest, off market, in shovel ready renewable energy generation assets (large-scale solar) will deliver multiple benefits of:

- attractive investor return
- directly linked to tackling climate change targets and the Council's low carbon agenda
- providing a "hedge" against forward energy price rises
- the opportunity to generate enhanced financial returns in the future from "bolt on" energy storage.

6.4 Each acquisition or development opportunity will be assessed on its fit with meeting the objectives stated above and should deliver one or more of the following outcomes (benefits):

- Job creation or safeguarding
- Health & Wellbeing
- Town centre regeneration
- Tourism / increased footfall / Business rate growth
- Improved asset utilisation
- A minimum yield of 1%
- Climate Change Mitigation

6.5 This Strategy will be achieved by developments on Council owned land and commercial acquisitions within the South West Peninsula. This will include the focussed acquisition of existing commercial property assets including renewable energy investments and the development on Council owned land of new properties which are to be let to third parties.

6.6 Details of the Council's commercial investment strategy can be found in the report approved by Full Council on 17th December 2019 - minute Reference CM53.

<http://mg.swdevon.lan/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=271&MId=1276&Ver=4>

6.7 Risk Management and Due Diligence

6.7.1 The Council accepts there is a higher risk on commercial investment than with treasury investments. Financial risk will be weighed up against social and economic benefits of the investment. The principal risk exposures include variances resulting in a disruption or fall in income streams, fall in capital value which is either site-specific or due to general market conditions, deterioration in the credit quality of the tenant.

6.7.2 The Authority assesses the risk of loss before entering into and whilst holding property investments/property opportunities by carrying out appropriate due diligence checks and implementing mitigation measures in managing risk:

- The tenants need to be of good financial standing (this is assessed using Dun & Bradstreet credit rating reports and annual accounts). The number of tenants e.g. sole tenant or multi tenanted will be assessed.
- The property condition such as date of construction and any imminent or significant refurbishment or modernisation requirements (forecast capital expenditure).
- How the property investment, financial or non-specified investment meets the Council's multiple objectives as set out in the Council's strategy e.g. liquidity, renewable energy, economic regeneration, business growth.
- The lease must meet certain standards, such as being in a commercial popular location and have a number of years left on the lease providing a certain and contractually secure rental income stream into the future. Any break clauses will be assessed along with the number of unexpired years, bank guarantees and rent reviews.
- The location will be either within West Devon Borough Council's boundary, the LEP area or the South West Peninsula (in that priority order), as set out in the Commercial Investment Strategy (apart from renewable energy investment which may have a wider geographic spread). The population of the catchment area, the economic vibrancy and known or anticipated market demand as well as proximity to travel infrastructure and other similar properties will be assessed.
- Rental income paid by the tenant must exceed the cost of repaying the borrowed money from the Public Works Loan Board (which is itself funded by the Government). The surplus is then an ancillary benefit which supports the Council's budget position and enables the Council to continue to provide services for local people.
- The gross and net yield are assessed against the Council's criteria.
- The prevailing interest rates for borrowing at the time.
- Debt proportionality considerations.
- The life and condition of the property is assessed by a valuer and the borrowing is taken out over the life of the asset. The amount of management and maintenance charges are assessed as well as the ease of in-house management. 10% of all rental income (or an amount as deemed prudent) is put into a Maintenance and Management Reserve to cover any longer-term maintenance issues.
- The potential for property growth in terms of both revenue and capital growth will be assessed.

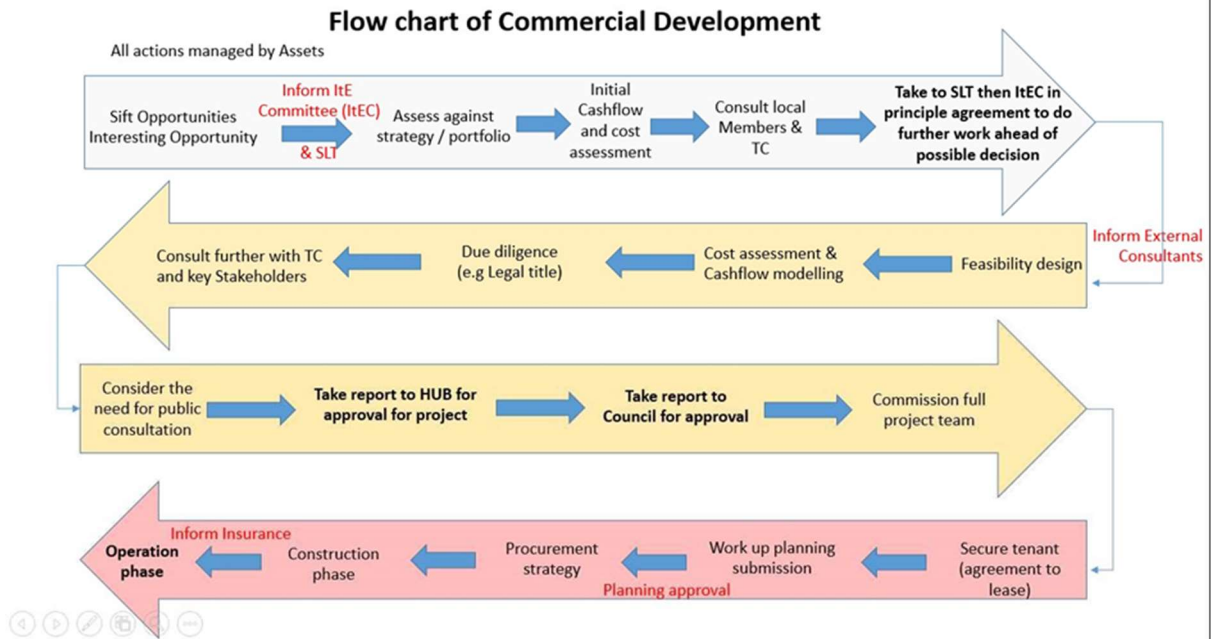
- The risks are determined by the property sector e.g. office, retail, industrial, associated with specific properties and the mix of sectors within the Council's portfolio.
- Details of acquisition costs e.g. stamp duty land tax, legal costs
- The documented exit strategy for a purchase/new build.
- The legal and technical due diligence checks will also identify any specific problems such as anomalies in the title deed, restrictive use classes, indemnities, local competition, construction or refurbishment requirements.
- The Council engages the use of external advisors to assist in undertaking elements of the due diligence checks such as technical, legal, accounting, property and taxation advice.
- The Council undertakes sensitivity analysis of the interest repayments on its borrowing requirements as a percentage of its available reserves to ensure there is sufficient coverage in the event that rental income is below that forecasted. This ensures that the Council has the available reserves to enable service delivery to be maintained in the short to medium term, whilst alternative solutions are implemented.

6.7.3 Risk of loss shall be assessed on a case by case basis as part of the acquisition due diligence and will be a criteria considered throughout the approval process. Risk of loss during the management phase of the investment shall be reported in accordance with the criteria below. In accordance with Para 23-25 of Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments, quantitative indicators or risk and portfolio performance will be reported to Audit Committee. The frequency of this reporting is anticipated to be every 6 months and will include the following indicators (as applicable):

- Rental value by property
- Rental value by tenant
- Sector split by purchase price
- Purchase price
- Rental income profile
- Tenant lease length
- Gross Yield
- Management, Maintenance and Risk Mitigation Reserve (MMRM)
- Current value
- In the case of a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), relevant criteria shall be reported depending on the nature of the SPV.

6.8 Governance

- 6.8.1** Acquisitions must conform to the adopted Commercial Investment Strategy. Any deviation from the agreed Strategy will require Council approval.
- 6.8.2** The Council's Senior Leadership Team will initially consider each proposal (development or acquisition of property or renewables) as an initial step and recommend that the proposal proceeds in principle.
- 6.8.3** The Invest To Earn Committee will consider and evaluate (in accordance with this Strategy) proposals for commercial acquisition of assets on a case by case basis, and will make any necessary recommendations to the Head of Paid Service and Section 151 Officer who will make a decision in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Invest to Earn Committee.
- 6.8.4** The Council will consider debt proportionality (the amount borrowed to date against the net service expenditure ratio) on a case by case basis for each acquisition as part of the decision making process. Investment indicators are set out within the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.
- 6.8.5** The Council undertakes sensitivity analysis of the interest repayments on its borrowing requirements as a percentage of its available reserves to ensure there is sufficient coverage in the event that rental income is below forecast, or if energy prices are below that forecasted in the case of a solar farm. The Council also sets aside 10% annually of all rental income and income from energy prices into a Maintenance, Management and Risk Mitigation (MMRM) Reserve. This is part of the Council's contingency arrangements.
- 6.8.6** Specialists will be commissioned to act on behalf of the Council to source suitable properties and manage the acquisition due diligence process.
- 6.8.7** Before a final decision is made to proceed with a commercial acquisition, local ward Members will be briefed and be able to share their views with the Invest to Earn Committee.
- 6.8.8** Development proposals on Council owned land must also conform to the objectives of the Commercial Investment Strategy.
- 6.8.9** Unlike commercial acquisitions however, they shall not benefit from the same scheme of delegation. Instead, approvals must be sought through the Hub Committee and Full Council process. Decisions on in area development shall consider, as appropriate, the views of the local Members and key stakeholders (Town Council / Parish Council) as one of many aspects of any projects brought forward.



6.9 Debt Proportionality

- 6.9.1 The commercial property strategy considers the risks of investment and the Council engaged Treasury Management advisors to analyse the level of debt proportionality to the Council's finances (e.g. levels of reserves, asset base and level of interest costs as a percentage of income).
- 6.9.2 Commercial property acquisitions expand the Council's balance sheet and interest costs will form a higher percentage of locally derived income. It would absorb a high level of reserves if there are shortfalls in or disruption to the income stream required to meet the additional expenditure.
- 6.9.3 Sensitivity analysis on the level of debt interest against the Council's level of reserves is considered as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and as part of the budget proposals each year. This ensures that the Council has the available reserves to enable service delivery to be maintained in the short to medium term, whilst alternative solutions are implemented.
- 6.9.4 In order that commercial investments remain proportionate to the size of the Council, borrowing for the Commercial Investment Strategy is subject to an overall limit (for all Council services) of £50 million.
- 6.9.5 The Council set an upper limit on External Borrowing (for all Council services) as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy of £50 million. Interest payments at 3% would equate to 35% of available reserves. At an interest rate of 3.5%, interest payments would equate to 40.1% of available reserves (Appendix G to the Budget Proposals report for 2020/21 – Council 18th February 2020).

6.10 Liquidity

6.10.1 Compared with other investment types, property is relatively difficult to sell and convert to cash at short notice and can take a considerable period to sell in certain market conditions. To ensure that the invested funds can be accessed when they are needed, for example to repay capital borrowed, the Authority will spread its liquidity profile across its portfolio and also have a spread of the sector in which the Council invests. The Council also documents potential exit strategies as part of its due diligence checks.

6.10.2 Liquidity will be a factor in determining the amount of rent set aside in the Maintenance Management and Risk Mitigation Reserve for each investment. This will be reviewed with the same frequency as the risk reporting procedure set out in the Council's Commercial Investment Strategy.

7 Asset Management

7.1 To ensure that capital assets continue to be of long-term use, the Council has an asset management strategy in place.

7.2 When a capital asset is no longer needed, it may be sold so that the proceeds, known as capital receipts, can be spent on new assets or to repay debt.

7.3 The Council is currently also permitted to spend capital receipts on service transformation projects until 2021/22. Repayments of capital grants, loans to third parties for capital expenditure and investments also generate capital receipts.

7.4 The Council estimates to receive nil capital receipts in the coming financial year as follows:

| Capital Receipts £'000 | 2018/19 actual | 2019/20 forecast | 2020/21 budget | 2021/22 budget | 2022/23 budget |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Asset sales | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 4,300 |
| Loans repaid | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 4,300 |

8 Liabilities

8.1 In addition to the current debt of £29.5m detailed above, the Council is committed to making future payments to cover its pensions liability. The Pensions Reserve for the net defined benefit liability was £23.8m at 31 March 2019.

8.2 Governance

- 8.2.1 Decisions on incurring new discretionary liabilities are taken by Head of Practice in consultation with the Corporate Director for Strategic Finance (Section 151 Officer).
- 8.2.2 The risk of liabilities crystallising and requiring payment is monitored as part of the budget monitoring and reported to the Hub Committee quarterly.

9 Revenue Budget Implications

- 9.1 Although capital expenditure is not charged directly to the revenue budget, interest payable on loans and MRP are charged to revenue, offset by any investment income receivable. The net annual charge is known as financing costs; this is compared to the net revenue stream i.e. the amount funded from Council Tax, business rates and general government grants.

Proportion of financing costs to net revenue stream

| | 2018/19 actual | 2019/20 forecast | 2020/21 budget | 2021/22 budget | 2022/23 budget |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Financing costs (£'000) | 1,004,142 | 1,256,821 | 1,601,205 | 1,604,209 | 1,478,215 |
| Proportion of net revenue stream | 13.7% | 17.8% | 22.2% | 21.9% | 21.8% |

- 9.2 Further details on the revenue implications of capital expenditure are included in the Revenue Budget.

9.3 Sustainability

- 9.3.1 Due to the very long-term nature of capital expenditure and financing, the revenue budget implications of expenditure incurred in the next few years will extend for up to 50 years into the future.
- 9.3.2 The Corporate Director of Strategic Finance (S151 Officer) is satisfied that the proposed capital programme is prudent, affordable and sustainable and it is fully integrated with the Council's 2020/21 Medium Term Financial Strategy, Treasury Management Strategy and Investment Strategy and other strategic plans. The Capital Strategy is compiled in line with the requirements of the 2017 CIPFA Prudential Code and 2017 Treasury Management Code. The risks associated with the Commercial Property Strategy are covered within the Investment Strategy.

- 9.3.3** The delivery of the individual capital schemes on the plan is directly linked to the original approval of the capital project supported by each project having a project lead who is responsible for the delivery of the project (appropriate skills, contracting, planning etc.) and the subsequent achievement of the objectives of that project.
- 9.3.4** Members, via the Hub Committee meetings receive quarterly budget monitoring reports on the Council's Capital Programme. Through these updates, which are driven by the requirement of financial reporting, Members can review and challenge the delivery of projects and any changes to both the timing and expenditure of the capital project.
- 9.3.5** If subsequent to the capital project being completed there are variations to the income expected to be generated from that asset, this will be reported as a variance in the quarterly budget monitoring reporting and if ongoing will be included in the following year's revenue budget proposals.
- 9.3.6** The Council's Senior Leadership Team has oversight for the delivery of and challenge to the Capital Strategy and Capital Programme.

9.4 Affordability

- 9.4.1** Affordability is critical in applying the capital strategy and approving projects for inclusion in the capital programme. This is either demonstrated by a report on the project being presented to Hub/Council for approval supported by a business case identifying the expenditure and funding, appraisal of alternative options and the risks and rewards for the approval of the scheme, or by delegated procedures set out within the commercial property strategy (containing this information).
- 9.4.2** All projects need to have a clear funding source. If external funding such as an external grant is to be used, there needs to be a clear funding commitment.
- 9.4.3** Affordability of each project needs to be clear, not only for the funding of the capital spend, but also to cover any ongoing costs of the operation and funding of that capital spend.
- 9.4.4** Where borrowing is to be used the affordability is of greater importance and the affordability has to include the interest costs of that borrowing and the provision for the repayment of the borrowing (MRP). This repayment is matched to a prudent asset life and any income streams estimated to fund this asset must be sustainable. The rules around the governance of this borrowing are outlined in the Prudential Code (as summarised above).

9.4.5 At no stage should the asset value be lower than the value of outstanding debt unless there is a clear plan to mitigate that shortfall or to sell that asset.

9.5 Risks

9.5.1 The risks associated with a significant Capital Programme and a significant level of borrowing can be mitigated through all capital projects being supported by a business case, having adequate project management and/or project boards, suitable skills for the delivery of the project, tax planning, cash flow, clear operational plan for the use of the asset, security and due diligence on loans and purchases, use of external advice where appropriate, project contingencies, full tender process and regular and transparent reporting to Members.

9.5.2 There are clear links from the capital strategy to both the treasury management strategy, prudential indicators, authorised borrowing limits and the revenue budget. These are also subject to review and oversight by Members at the Audit Committee and Council. For any new borrowing, and this is a greater risk as the value of borrowing increases, this does increase the Council's overall liabilities that will need to be repaid in the future.

9.5.3 In addition, this increases the Council's level of fixed interest and repayment costs that it will incur each year. In 2020/21 the borrowing liability is estimated at £29m with ongoing financing costs of the borrowing of approx. £1.2m. This is a clear risk that all Members need to be aware of.

9.5.4 However this risk for assets is mitigated by a robust business case and a MRP that will repay the borrowing costs over a (prudent) asset life. Any variations from this are set out in the MRP Policy (section 2.5 of the Treasury Management Strategy). Any variation in expected income is an issue, however given the wide range of operational assets and different income streams this helps to mitigate this risk.

9.5.5 As outlined above in the position statement, investment properties have a different type and level of risk. Risk arises from both variations in income streams (tenant non-renewal etc.) and from asset values (impact economic conditions and retail trends etc.). The Council has established a clear strategy, criteria and a governance route for these purchases which has included member training, second opinion on asset values, due diligence, site visits, surveys etc.

9.5.6 There are risks (and rewards) associated with the purchase of these type of assets, therefore all Members need to have sight of and understand the risks and rewards inherent in these commercial investments (development opportunities).

10 Knowledge and Skills

- 10.1** The Council employs professionally qualified and experienced staff in senior positions with responsibility for recommending capital expenditure, borrowing and investment decisions to Members.
- 10.2** As at March 2020, the Council is in the process of recruiting to the post of Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service). There is a separate report on the 21 April 2020 Council agenda.
- 10.3** The Corporate Director of Strategic Finance (S.151 Officer) is a Chartered Accountant (ICAEW) with 16 years of experience of being a S151 Officer (Chief Finance Officer). In addition, the Corporate Director for Strategic Finance holds a BSc in Mathematics and has previously worked in the private sector for accountancy firms.
- 10.4** The Director of Place & Enterprise is a Chartered Civic Engineer with 17 years of experience. In addition, the Director of Place & Enterprise holds a MSc in Construction Law.
- 10.5** The Estates Specialist is a Chartered Surveyor, qualified for over 14 years, with an Estate Surveying degree. In addition they are a Registered Valuer.
- 10.6** The Monitoring Officer is a qualified solicitor with 21 years public sector experience and private practice prior to that.
- 10.7** Where Council staff do not have the knowledge and skills required, use is made of external advisers and consultants that are specialists in their field. The appropriate expertise is always resourced in relation to any financial, legal and asset related due diligence required. A list is below:-
- Savills – Property Agents
 - JLL – Property and Technical Consultants
 - CCD Properties Limited – Development Specialists
 - Arcadis – Building Surveyors and Engineers
 - Everose – Technical Advisors (renewable energy)
 - Womble Bond Dickinson – Solicitors
 - TLT - Solicitors
 - Link Services – Treasury Management Advisors
 - Arlingclose – Treasury Management Advisors
 - APSE (Energy) – Local Government Advisors
 - KPMG – Financial Advisors (renewable energy)
- 10.8** This approach is more cost effective than employing such staff directly, and ensures that the Council has access to knowledge and skills commensurate with its risk appetite.

- 10.9** In 2018 some external training from a LGIU (Local Government Information Unit) Associate on Local Government Finance (including commercialism) was arranged for all Members as well as some internal training events facilitated by the S151 Officer and the Group Manager for Business Development on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy which included an update on commercial property investment. The Council's Members' Services are consulted when organising all training in order to maintain training and development plans for Councillors.
- 10.10** Following the District Elections in May 2019, a comprehensive Members' Induction Programme was undertaken in May 2019. This included specific financial and treasury management training. External treasury management training (by Link Services) was arranged for all Members in March 2020 to ensure Members have up to date skills to continue to make capital and treasury management decisions.
- 10.11** The purpose of this training was to ensure elected Members involved in the investments decision making process have appropriate capacity, skills and information to enable them to: 1. take informed decisions as to whether to enter into a specific investment; 2. to assess individual assessments in the context of the strategic objectives and risk profile of the local authority; and 3. to enable them to understand how the quantum of these decisions have changed the overall risk exposure of the local authority.