

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Council
DATE	03 July 2024
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Treasury Management Strategy – Year-End Review
REPORT NUMBER	CORS/24/186
DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald
CHIEF OFFICER	Jonathan Belford
REPORT AUTHOR	Neil Stewart
TERMS OF REFERENCE	5 and 6

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Council on Treasury Management activities undertaken during financial year 2023/24.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Council: -

- 2.1 Consider and note the Treasury Management activities undertaken in the 2023/24 financial year as detailed in this report.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

Introduction

- 3.1 The Council approved a Treasury Management Policy for the financial years 2024/25 to 2026/27 on 7 February 2023. Part of this policy is to report a year-end review to full Council.
- 3.2 Historically, the Council's annual programme of capital investment has been funded by Treasury Management activities, such as additional long-term borrowing. It is a requirement of CIPFA "Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services" that Treasury Management is conducted in accordance with good professional practice, which this Council does.

Treasury Management 2023/24

- 3.3 The following is a summary of the significant Treasury Management activities which were undertaken during financial year 2023/24: -
- 3.4 Loans Pool Rate - The Council's average Loans Pool Rate takes account of all loan interest and expenses paid, as well as investment interest received during

the financial year. The Loans Pool Rate for 2023/24 was 3.87%, which can be broken down to 3.84% for interest, and 0.03% for expenses.

- 3.5 Long Term Borrowing – Four new Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) long-term loans totalling £80m were undertaken during financial year 2023/24. Each loan was for £20m and the average interest rate of the new borrowing was 4.27%.
- 3.6 PWLB Interest Rates – In October 2019 HM Treasury introduced a major change to PWLB public sector lending rates. There was an immediate increase to all PWLB borrowing rates of 100 basis points, adding an additional 1% to interest rates. This change meant that HM Treasury set its rates at an average of 180 basis points over the relevant gilt price.
- 3.7 The increase to lending rates was reversed in late November 2020, after a consultation exercise with local authorities and was announced as part of the UK government’s autumn spending review.
- 3.8 Short Term Borrowing - In 2016, the Council made the deliberate decision to run down its external temporary borrowing (short-term loans from other Local Authorities). This was due to the level of funds received from the Bond Issuance. External temporary borrowing has since been built back up to a manageable level, with available rates currently below long-term borrowing levels. As of 31st March 2024, £311m of temporary borrowing was held from other local authorities. This level will be reduced and replaced by long-term PWLB borrowing as interest rates permit in 2024/25.
- 3.9 North East Scotland Pension Fund – The Council’s Loans Fund has an ongoing Temporary Loan from the North-East of Scotland Pension Fund. This represents the Pension Fund’s excess level of cash funds on hand, which is driven by the Pension Fund’s cashflow requirements. This Temporary Loan is a means of earning the Pension funds a fair short-term interest rate from these funds, rather than a means of borrowing for the Loans Fund. As of 31st March 2024, the balance of the temporary loan was £41.2m.
- 3.10 Investments - As of 31st March 2024, the Council had temporary investments totalling £38.4m at an average rate of 5.23%. Investments were made in line with the current Counterparty List to the following institutions: -
- Clydesdale Bank £10.3m
 - Santander UK £10.0m
 - Federated Hermes MMF £18.1m
- 3.11 Common Good Fund Investment - A decision was taken by the Council in 2021 to invest £30m of Common Good cash in a Multi-Asset Income fund, which generates greater income for the fund, when compared with traditional fixed-term bank deposits. Several funds were considered for this purpose, and after a period of meetings and further due diligence, the decision was taken to proceed with Fidelity International’s Multi-Asset Income fund.

To date this fund has raised £3.4m in interest at an average rate of around 4.1%.

3.12 Retail Price Index (RPI) – At the time of writing, the latest RPI rate (April 24) was 3.3%, a fall of 1% from the previous month. Rises to this rate have particular relevance to the Council in relation to its 2016 Bond issuance. Increases in the RPI rate are used to calculate indexation, which is paid alongside half yearly repayments of the Bond debt.

3.13 Moody's Credit Rating - In late October 2023, Moody's downgraded the credit rating of its rated local authorities, including Aberdeen. The rating fell to A2, from A1, with an outlook of Stable. The annual review meeting regarding the Council's credit rating took place on 23rd February 2024, with no changes made to the credit rating at that time. A copy of the Moody's Credit Opinion is attached at Appendix 1.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Treasury Management activities influence the loans pool interest rates and aims to minimise the cost of borrowing. This directly impacts on costs chargeable to the Council's revenue budgets through the interest rates that are applied to capital financing costs. Whilst the level of borrowing a Council can undertake is now devolved from the Scottish Government to individual Councils, it will still be constrained by the requirement for capital investment to be affordable, sustainable and prudent. The main test of affordability will be whether the capital financing costs can be contained within the revenue budgets.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report, however it should be noted that the issuance of the Bonds requires the Council to comply with the Market Abuse Regulations, the Disclosure and Transparency Rules, the Listing Rules and ongoing obligations as set out in the London Stock Exchange Admission and Disclosure Standards.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	No significant risks identified			

Compliance	No significant risks identified			
Operational	No significant risks identified			
Financial	Loss of deposit in a failed bank or financial institution	The Council has strict lending criteria, only financial institutions with the highest credit ratings are included on the Council's Counterparty list. The list is compiled in conjunction with the Council's Treasury	L	Yes
Reputational	No significant risks identified			
Environment / Climate	No significant risks identified			

8. OUTCOMES

8.1 The proposals in this report have no impact on the Council Delivery Plan

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	It is confirmed by Chief Officer - Finance that no Integrated Impact Assessment is required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not Required

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 CIPFA "Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services "; CIPFA "The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities"; Link Asset Services "Treasury Management Annual Investment Strategy"; Scottish Government "The Investment of Money by Scottish Local Authorities".

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Moody's Credit Opinion

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