

## REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR – FINANCE, INFRASTRUCTURE & IMPROVEMENT

### MONITORING OF 2024/25 PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

1. To provide an update to the County Council's current position in terms of capital expenditure, external debt, financing costs as a percentage of net revenue stream and the capital financing requirement relative to the Prudential Code indicators identified in the 2024/25 budget report.

#### Background

2. The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities was developed by CIPFA as a professional code of practice to support local authorities in determining their programmes for capital investment. Local authorities are required by regulation to have regard to the Prudential Code under Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003. Individual local authorities are responsible for deciding the level of their affordable borrowing, having regard to the Prudential Code. The Executive Summary of the Code states that "The objectives of the Prudential Code are to ensure, within a clear framework, that the capital investment plans of local authorities are affordable, prudent and sustainable, and that treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice."
3. In particular, the Prudential Code requires the Council to be aware of the impact of financing capital expenditure on its overall revenue expenditure position. The costs of financing additional capital expenditure are the interest payable to external lenders and the amounts set aside to reduce the level of borrowing. In deciding whether or not borrowing is affordable, prudent and sustainable, the most important consideration is whether, over the term of the borrowing, these costs can be met from the revenue budget without unacceptable consequences.

#### Prudential Indicators

##### 4. Monitoring Requirements

Under the Prudential Code, an authority is required to establish indicators that are sufficiently robust and credible for it to be able to use them to form a judgement as to whether its proposed capital investment is affordable, prudent and sustainable. The Prudential Code requires that the prudential indicators are monitored regularly throughout the year and that the actual values of some of them are reported at year end.

This report is concerned only with prudential indicators relating to capital investment.

##### 5. Overview of Prudential Indicators

The following prudential indicators, whose actual values must be reported at year end, relate to affordability and prudence.

**6. Estimate of capital expenditure**

In any year, the level of capital expenditure is likely to deviate from the estimate in the budget report as a result of new additions to the Capital Programme, cancellations of schemes, and slippage, acceleration and changing specifications of projects. The Capital Programme is monitored on a monthly basis and variations to the Capital Programme are reported to Finance Committee.

**7. Estimate of the capital financing requirement (CFR)**

The capital financing requirement is a measure of the Authority's underlying need to borrow for capital purposes. This relates to capital expenditure which has not yet been financed by capital receipts, capital grants or contributions from revenue income. This is not the same as external debt since the Authority manages its position in terms of borrowings and investments in accordance with its integrated treasury management strategy and practices. For example, rather than borrowing from an external body, the Authority may judge it prudent to make use of cash that it has already invested for long-term purposes, such as reserves, for 'internal borrowing'. This means that there is no immediate link between the need to borrow to pay for capital spending and the level of external borrowing.

In order to ensure that, over the medium term, net borrowing will only be for a capital purpose, the local authority should ensure that net debt does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the capital financing requirement for the current and next two financial years. This is a key indicator of prudence.

**8. External debt**

External debt includes gross borrowing and other long-term liabilities.

**9. Operational boundary for external debt**

The operational boundary is the estimated maximum level of external debt in the most likely (i.e. prudent, but not worst-case) scenario. The operational boundary is a key management tool for in-year monitoring. It will probably not be significant if the external debt temporarily breaches the operational boundary on occasions due to variations in cash flow. However, a sustained or regular trend above the operational boundary would be significant and would require investigation and possible action (e.g. to ensure that borrowing, other than temporary borrowing, is not undertaken for purposes other than funding approved capital expenditure).

**10. Authorised limit for external debt**

The authorised limit is the intended absolute limit for external debt and exceeds the operational boundary by an amount that provides sufficient headroom for events such as unusual cash movements. If it appears that the authorised limit might be breached, the Service Director – Finance, Infrastructure and Improvement has a duty to report this to the County Council for appropriate action to be taken.

**11. Financing costs as a percentage of net revenue stream**

The Prudential Code requires the Council to be aware of the impact of financing capital expenditure on its overall revenue expenditure position. The relevant indicator is the financing costs of capital expenditure expressed as a percentage of the net revenue stream, where:

- the costs of financing capital expenditure are interest payable to external lenders less interest earned on investments plus amounts set aside to reduce the level of borrowing; and
- the net revenue stream is the amount of the revenue budget to be met from government grants and local taxpayers.

**12. Prudential Indicators: Monitoring against 2024/25 Budget**

The following table shows monitoring against those indicators that were approved for 2024/25 in the Budget Report to Council in February 2024.

Indicator	Comments														
<p><b>Estimated capital expenditure</b> (excluding Schools Devolved Formula Capital and schools' capital expenditure funded from their own revenue budget)</p> <p>2024/25 Budget: £161.296m 2024/25 Actual: £151.486m</p>	<p>Capital programme is £9.810m less than anticipated, as explained in the table:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="791 891 1385 1055"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="791 891 1251 922">Reason</th> <th data-bbox="1251 891 1385 922">£m</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="791 922 1251 954">Slippage from 2023/24 to 2024/25</td> <td data-bbox="1251 922 1385 954">18.673</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="791 954 1251 1016">Re-phasing/slippage approved in-year</td> <td data-bbox="1251 954 1385 1016">(28.483)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="791 1016 1251 1055"><b>TOTAL</b></td> <td data-bbox="1251 1016 1385 1055"><b>(9.810)</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Reason	£m	Slippage from 2023/24 to 2024/25	18.673	Re-phasing/slippage approved in-year	(28.483)	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>(9.810)</b>						
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<p><b>Estimated capital financing requirement</b> (taking into account PFI Finance Lease Liabilities)</p> <p>2024/25 Budget: £836m 2024/25 Actual: £850m</p>	<p>The actual level of the capital financing requirement was £14m more than the indicator, as explained in the table:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="791 1305 1385 1843"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="791 1305 1251 1337">Reason</th> <th data-bbox="1251 1305 1385 1337">£m</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="791 1337 1251 1491">Borrowing and capital receipts below budgeted level in 2023/24 (primarily due to slippage of expenditure funded by borrowing)</td> <td data-bbox="1251 1337 1385 1491">(24)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="791 1491 1251 1554">Variance in capital receipt income</td> <td data-bbox="1251 1491 1385 1554">8</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="791 1554 1251 1617">Impact of the implementation of new IFRS16 standard</td> <td data-bbox="1251 1554 1385 1617">51</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="791 1617 1251 1771">Borrowing below budgeted level in 2024/25 (primarily due to slippage of capital expenditure funded by borrowing and maximisation of capital grant usage)</td> <td data-bbox="1251 1617 1385 1771">(22)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="791 1771 1251 1803">Other</td> <td data-bbox="1251 1771 1385 1803">1</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="791 1803 1251 1843"><b>TOTAL</b></td> <td data-bbox="1251 1803 1385 1843"><b>14</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Reason	£m	Borrowing and capital receipts below budgeted level in 2023/24 (primarily due to slippage of expenditure funded by borrowing)	(24)	Variance in capital receipt income	8	Impact of the implementation of new IFRS16 standard	51	Borrowing below budgeted level in 2024/25 (primarily due to slippage of capital expenditure funded by borrowing and maximisation of capital grant usage)	(22)	Other	1	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14</b>
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Indicator	Comments
<p><b>External debt</b> (incl. PFI Finance Lease Liabilities)</p> <p>Authorised limit for external debt: £665m</p> <p>Operational boundary for external debt: £640m</p> <p>Total actual debt at 31/03/25: £605m</p>	<p>The actual level of external debt was below both the authorised limit of £665m and the operational boundary of £640m throughout 2024/25.</p>
<p><b>Financing costs as a percentage of net revenue stream</b> (incl. impact of PFI Finance Lease Liabilities)</p> <p>2024/25 Budget: 8.6%</p> <p>2024/25 Actual: 7.1%</p>	<p>The total of actual financing costs as a percentage of net revenue stream was below the budgeted figure as a result of higher than expected interest received which reflects the higher than expected Bank of England base rate.</p>

### 13. Summary

The Prudential Code indicators will continue to be monitored and reported against budgeted figures.