

**TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY UPDATE
2021/22****REPORT OF THE TREASURER****For
Recommendation****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide an update on Treasury Management.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members consider the recommended update 2021/22 Treasury Strategy and note that if Members are content the following will be referred to the Full Authority for approval:

i) Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement

Approve the following MRP statement:

- For capital expenditure incurred before 1st April, 2008 the Authority's MRP policy is to calculate MRP in accordance with former CLG Regulations. This is 4% of the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) except where the Authority makes Voluntary Revenue Payments which is in excess of the amount required by these regulations, based on asset life;
- From 1st April, 2008 the Authority calculates MRP based on asset life for all assets or where prudential borrowing is financed by a specific annuity loan, MRP will be calculated according to the actual annuity loan repayments.
- The Treasurer may determine to make Voluntary Revenue Provision payments to reduce the Authority's overall CFR if it is in the best financial interests of the Authority.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Committee is responsible for reviewing Treasury Management activities prior to referral to the full Authority for approval.
- 3.2 The current Treasury Management Strategy was approved by the Full Authority on 26th March 2021.

3.3 This report covers the following areas:

- Economic background and outlook for interest rates
- Treasury management outturn position for 2020/21
- Treasury Management Strategy 2021/22 mid-year review
- Minimum Revenue Provision 2021/22.

4. **ECONOMIC BACKGROUND AND OUTLOOK FOR INTEREST RATES**

4.1 UK – The UK economy has faced an extended period of economic uncertainty due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Bank of England’s Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) unanimously left monetary policy unchanged at the August meeting, reiterating the view that the inflation surge will prove transitional. Inflation will breach the 2% target level and the MPC forecast this will the reduce moderating back to target in the medium term.

4.2 The Bank of England does not intend to tighten monetary policy until the evidence is clear that spare capacity has been eliminated and that inflation is running at a sustainable 2%.

4.3 At the Chancellor’s Spring Budget 2021 the total package announced was Approximately £70 billion. The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) has estimated a total borrowing of £355 billion in 2020/21, which amounts to 17% of national income. The OBR is forecasting a swifter and more sustained recovery than they anticipated in November 2020, predicting a full recovery to pre-pandemic level by mid-2022, the revised growth forecast up to 2023 are set out in the following table:

Year	March 2021 Growth Forecast	November 2020 Growth Forecast
2021	4.0%	5.5%
2022	7.3%	6.6%
2023	1.7%	2.3%
2024	1.6%	1.7%

4.4 **European Union (EU)** – Both the roll out and take up of vaccines was slow in the EU in the first few months of 2021 but has since been rapidly increasing. This will delay economic recovery. At European Central Bank June meeting they forecast strong economic recovery with growth of 4.6% and 4.7% in 2021 and 2022 respectively as vaccine roll out gathers pace.

4.5 **USA** – Since the Democrats won the elections in late 2020 and gained control of both Congress and the Senate they have passed a \$1,900 billion (8.8% of Gross Domestic Product) stimulus package in March 2021 on top of the \$900 billion fiscal stimulus deal passed by Congress in late December. These, together with the vaccine rollout proceeding swiftly to hit the target of giving a first job to over half of the population within the President’s first 100 days, will promote a rapid easing of restrictions and strong economic recovery during 2021

4.6 **Other Economies** – In China, economic recovery was strong in quarter 2 to 4 of 2020, this enabled China to recover all the contraction in quarter 1 of 2021. Japan, the resurgence of COVID in quarter 1 of 2021, couple with a slow roll out of vaccines, has pushed back economic recovery.

4.7 **Interest Rate Forecasts**

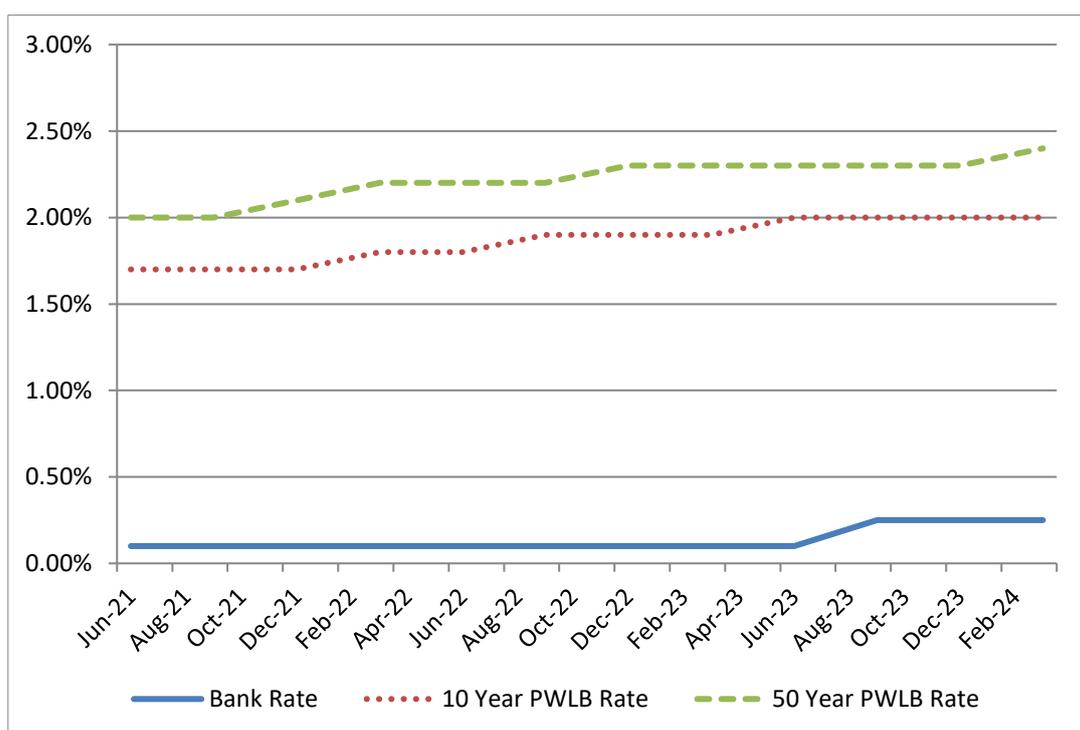
4.8 Link Asset Services (the Authority’s Treasury Management advisors) continue to update their interest rate forecasts to reflect statements made by the Governor of the Bank of England and changes in the economy

4.9 PWLB rates have increased marginally. It is not anticipated that the Bank Rate will increase from the current level of 0.1% until quarter 2 of 2023/24 and then only to 0.25%.

4.10 The PWLB has also restricted lending to fund investment in property with the primary aid of generating investment income. The economic downturn has highlighted the risk of this type of investment – which the Authority has never pursued owing to these risks.

4.11 Economic and interest rate forecasting remains difficult with so many influences impacting on the economy. The forecasts made by Link Asset Services may be liable to further amendment depending on how the political and economic developments transpire over the next year. Significant risks to the forecasts are that COVID vaccines do not work to combat new strains, which could lead to further lockdowns causing long-term scarring of the economy.

4.12 Interest Rate Forecast up to March 2024



4.13 As summarised above interest rate remain historically low and no significant increases are currently anticipated in the short term.

5. TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN POSITION 2020/21

5.1 Capital Expenditure and Financing 2020/21

5.2 The Authority's approved capital programme was funded from a combination of the Capital Investment Programme Reserve, Capital Receipts and Borrowing.

5.3 Actual capital expenditure forms one of the required prudential indicators. As shown at Appendix A, the total amount of capital expenditure for the year was £1.720m.

5.4 The Authority's underlying need to borrow is called the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). This figure is the accumulated value of capital expenditure which is not funded from revenue or capital resources. Each year the Authority is required to apply revenue resources to reduce this outstanding balance (termed the Minimum Revenue Provision).

5.5 Whilst the Authority's CFR sets a limit on the level of borrowing, the Authority can manage the actual borrowing position by either:

- borrowing externally to the level of the CFR; or
- choosing to use temporary internal cash flow funds instead of borrowing; or
- a combination of the two.

5.6 The Authority's CFR for the year was £9.315m as shown at Appendix A.

5.7 The Authority can also borrow for future planned increases in the CFR up to 3 years in advance, when this is deemed to be appropriate.

5.8 The Authority's total long term external borrowing as at 31st March, 2021 was £9.1m, which funds the CFR up to 2021/22.

5.9 Prudential Indicators and Compliance Issues 2020/2021

5.10 Details of each Prudential Indicator are shown at Appendix A. Some of the prudential indicators provide either an overview or specific limits on treasury activity. The key Prudential Indicators to report at outturn are described below

5.11 The **Authorised Limit** is the "Affordable Borrowing Limit" required by Section 3 of the Local Government Act 2003. The Authority does not have the power to borrow above this level. Appendix A demonstrates that during 2020/2021 the Authority has maintained gross borrowing within the Authorised Limit.

5.12 **Gross Borrowing and the CFR** – In order to ensure that borrowing levels are prudent, over the medium term the Authority’s external borrowing, must only be for a capital purpose. Gross borrowing should not exceed the CFR for 2020/21 plus the expected changes to the CFR over 2021/22 and 2022/23. The Authority has complied with this Prudential Indicator.

5.13 **The Treasury position at 31st March 2021**

5.14 The table below shows the treasury position for the Authority as at the 31st March, 2021 compared with the previous year:

Treasury position	31st March 2020		31st March 2021	
	Principal	Average Rate	Principal	Average Rate
Fixed Interest Rate Debt				
- PWLB	£7.3m	2.91%	£7.1m	2.91%
- Market Loans (LOBOs)	£2.0m	3.95%	£2.0m	3.95%
Total Long Term Debt	£9.3m	3.13%	£9.1m	3.14%
Total Investments	(£7.2m)	0.13%	(£6.3m)	0.19%
Net Debt Position	£2.1m		£2.8m	

A LOBO (Lender Option, Borrower Option) loan was taken out in March 2007 at which time interest rates for comparative PWLB loans were 4.3%.

5.15 A key performance indicator shown in the above table is the low average interest rate for external debt of 3.14% for debt held as at 31st March, 2021, compared to historic PWLB (Public Works Loans Board) rates.

5.16 The Authority’s investment policy is governed by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) guidance, which has been implemented in the annual investment strategy approved by Authority.

5.17 The Authority does not rely solely on credit ratings and takes a more pragmatic and broad based view of the factors that impact on counterparty risk. As part of the approach to maximising investment security the Authority has also kept investment periods short (i.e. in most cases up to 6 months but to a maximum of 1 year). In practice no investments were made for 1 year. The downside of this prudent approach is that the Authority achieved slightly lower investment returns than would have been possible if investments were placed with organisations with a lesser financial standing and for longer investment periods. However, during 2020/21 the risk associated with these higher returns would not have been prudent.

5.18 A prudent approach will continue to be adopted in order to safeguard the Authority’s resources.

5.19 Regulatory Framework, Risk and Performance 2020/21

5.20 The Authority's treasury management activities are regulated by a variety of professional codes, statutes and guidance:

- The Local Government Act 2003 (the Act), which provides the powers to borrow and invest as well as providing controls and limits on this activity;
- The Act permits the Secretary of State to set limits either on the Authority or nationally on all local authorities restricting the amount of borrowing which may be undertaken (although no restrictions have been made since this power was introduced);
- Statutory Instrument (SI) 3146 2003, as amended, develops the controls and powers within the Act, and requires the Authority to undertake any borrowing activity with regard to the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities;
- The SI also requires the Authority to operate the overall treasury function with regard to the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services;
- Under the Act the MHCLG has issued Investment Guidance to structure and regulate the Authority's investment activities;
- Under section 238(2) of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 the Secretary of State has taken powers to issue guidance on accounting practices. Guidance on Minimum Revenue Provision was issued under this section on 8th November, 2007.

5.21 The Authority has complied with all of the above relevant statutory and regulatory requirements which limit the levels of risk associated with Treasury Management activities.

6. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2021/22 MID-YEAR REVIEW

6.1 The 2020/21 Treasury Management Strategy was approved on the 26th, March, 2021. The Authority's borrowing and investment position as at 31st July 2021 is summarised as follows:

	£m	Average Rate
LOBO Loan #	2.0	3.95%
PWLB Loans	7.1	2.92%
Gross Debt	9.1	3.14%
Investments	(17.2)	0.06%
Net Investment	(8.1)	

A LOBO (Lender Option, Borrower Option) loan was taken out in March 2007 at which time interest rates for comparative PWLB loans were 4.3%.

6.2 As part of the Treasury Strategy for 2021/22 the Authority set a number of prudential indicators. Compliance against these indicators is monitored on a regular basis and there are no breaches to report.

- 6.3 The CFR and Capital Expenditure Financed by Borrowing will vary from the original estimate approved by the Fire Authority in January 2021 owing to planned capital expenditure being re-phased between financial years.

7. BORROWING STRATEGY 2021/22

- 7.1 Following the development and implementation of the Asset Management Plan (AMP) the Authority's CFR has risen and is forecast to continue to rise. Therefore it was recognised that a proactive borrowing strategy would need to be adopted to finance the borrowing element of the AMP and to secure historically low interest rates.
- 7.2 As outlined in paragraph 5.7, decisions to borrow to the forecast CFR up to 2020/21 have already been made.
- 7.3 These decisions ensured the borrowing costs associated with AMP are minimised in the long term and can be sustained within the existing revenue budget of £0.8m (including using the recommended Capital Funding Phasing Reserve) over the period of the current Medium Term Financial Strategy and Integrated Risk Management Plan.
- 7.4 Owing to the borrowing decisions in previous years to pre fund the borrowing requirement, no additional borrowing was needed in 2019/20 or 2020/21. However in 2021/22 it is anticipated that approximately £1.5m of additional funding will be necessary to fund the current approved AMP. A decision to borrow in advance of need may be taken by the Treasurer if it is in the best interests of the Authority to do so.

8. INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2021/22

- 8.1 The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) issued investment guidance in 2010, updated in 2017, and this forms the structure of the Authority's policy. The key intention of the Guidance is to maintain the current requirement for authorities to invest prudently and that priority is given to security and liquidity before interest return. The Authority has adopted the CIPFA publication Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes and applies its principles to all investment activity. In accordance with the Code, the Treasurer has produced Treasury Management Practices covering investment counterparty policy which requires approval each year.
- 8.2 The primary objectives of the Authority's investment strategy in order of importance are:
- safeguarding the re-payment of the principal and interest of its investments on time;
 - ensuring adequate liquidity;
 - investment return.

8.3 Counterparty Selection Criteria

- 8.4 The Authority's criteria for providing a pool of high quality investment counterparties uses the credit rating information produced by the three major ratings agencies (Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poor's) and is supplied by our treasury consultants. All active counterparties are checked against criteria outlined below to ensure that they comply with the criteria. Any counterparty failing to meet the criteria would be omitted from the counterparty list. Any rating changes, rating watches (notification of a likely change), rating outlooks (notification of a possible longer term change) are provided to officers almost immediately after they occur and this information is considered on a daily basis before investments are made. For instance a negative rating watch applying to a counterparty at the minimum criteria will be suspended from use, with all others being reviewed in light of market conditions.
- 8.5 The **lowest common denominator** method of selecting counterparties and applying limits is used. This means that the application of the Authority's minimum criteria will apply to the lowest available rating for any institution. For instance if an institution is rated by two agencies, one meets the Authority's criteria, the other does not, the institution will fall outside the lending criteria.
- 8.6 The Treasurer will continue to adopt a vigilant approach resulting in what is effectively a 'named' list. This consists of a select number of counterparties that are considered to be the lowest risk.
- 8.7 There are no proposed changes to existing counter parties and the table below shows the proposed limits in 2021/22 for the Authority:

Category	Fitch	Moody's	Standard & Poor's	Proposed Counterparty Limit	Proposed Time Limit
A	F1+/AA-	P-1/Aa3	A-1+/AA-	£5m	1 year
B	F1/A-	P-1/A3	A-1/A-	£3m	1 year
C	Debt Management Office/Treasury Bills/Gilts			£14m	1 year
D	Nationalised Banks and Banks covered by UK Government Guarantee			£5m	1 year
E	Other Local Authorities Individual Limits per Authority: - £3m County, Metropolitan or Unitary Councils - £1.5 District Councils, Police or Fire Authorities			£15m	1 year
F	Three Money Market Funds (AAA) with maximum investment of £1.5m per fund			£4.5m	Liquid (instant access)

8.9 Specified and Non-Specified Investments

- 8.10 MHCLG regulations classify investments as either Specified or Non-Specified. Specified Investment is any investment not meeting the Specified definition.
- 8.11 The investment criteria outlined above is different to that used to define Specified and Non-Specified investments. This is because it is intended to create a pool of high quality counterparties for the Authority to use rather than defining what its investments are.
- 8.12 Specified Investments are sterling investments of not more than one-year maturity, or those which could be for a longer period but where the Authority has the right to be repaid within twelve months if it wishes. These are low risk assets where the possibility of loss of principal or investment income is small. These would include investments with:
- The UK Government (such as the Debt Management Office, UK Treasury Bills or a Gilt with less than one year to maturity).
 - Other Local Authorities.
 - Pooled investment vehicles (such as Money Market Funds) that have been awarded a high credit rating (AAA) by a credit rating agency.
 - A body that has been awarded a high credit rating by a credit rating agency (such as a bank or building society). This covers bodies with a minimum rating of A- (or the equivalent) as rated by Standard and Poor's, Moody's or Fitch rating agencies. Within these bodies, and in accordance with the Code, the Authority has set additional criteria to set the time and amount of monies which will be invested in these bodies.
- 8.13 Non-specified Investments are any other type of investment (i.e. not defined as Specified above). The identification and rationale supporting the selection of these other investments and the maximum limits to be applied are set out below. Non-specified investments would include any investments with:
- Building societies not meeting the basic security requirements under the specified investments. The operation of some building societies does not require a credit rating, although in every other respect the security of the society would match similarly sized societies with ratings.
 - Any bank or building society that has a minimum long term credit rating of A- for deposits with a maturity of greater than one year (including forward deals in excess of one year from inception to repayment).

9. MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION

- 9.2 MHCLG Regulations require the Authority to approve **an MRP Statement** in advance of each year, which determines the annual loan repayment charge to the revenue budget. The currently approved MRP statement is as follows:

- For capital expenditure incurred before 1st April, 2008 the Authority's MRP policy is to calculate MRP in accordance with former CLG Regulations. This is 4% of the Capital Financing Requirement except where the Authority makes Voluntary Revenue Payments which is in excess of the amount required by these regulations, based on asset life;
- From 1st April, 2008 the Authority calculates MRP based on asset life for all assets or where prudential borrowing is financed by a specific annuity loan, MRP will be calculated according to the actual annuity loan repayments.

9.3 It is recommended that this policy is amended to include the following additional provision

- Authorise the Treasurer to make VRP payments to reduce the Authority's overall CFR if it is in the best interests of the Authority to do so. Such VRP payments can then potentially be offset against future MRP charges if this is in the Authority's interests.

9.4 The flexible use of VRP will ensure the CFR is repaid within the original timescale, whilst providing the potential opportunity to either effectively take a MRP holiday - whilst repaying the CFR within the approved timeframe, or repay the CFR early to achieve a permanent saving. This flexibility will support managing the budget and services over a period of financial uncertainty. At present no VRP payments have been made. Any future VRP payments will be reported as part of future Treasury Management reports.

9.5 **CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice**

9.6 The Authority has adopted the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice. Confirmation of this is the first prudential indicator.

9.7 **Treasury Management Advisors**

9.8 The Authority uses Link Asset Services – Treasury Solutions as its external treasury management advisors.

9.9 The Authority recognises that responsibility for treasury management decisions remains with the organisation at all times and will ensure that undue reliance is not placed upon our external service providers.

9.10 It also recognises that there is value in employing external providers of treasury management services in order to acquire access to specialist skills and resources. The Authority 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.

9.11 **Markets in Financial Instruments Directive (MIFID II)**

- 9.12 On 3rd January 2018 an updated version of the European Union’s Markets in Financial Instruments Directive (known as MIFID II) came into effect. It is designed to offer greater protection for investors and inject more transparency into financial markets. Under MIFID II all local authorities are classified as “retail” counterparties and had to consider whether to opt up to “professional” status and for which type of investments. The Fire Authority opted up to professional status in order to maintain the Authority’s ability to operate effectively under the new regime.

CHRIS LITTLE
TREASURER TO THE AUTHORITY

Appendix A

Prudential Indicators 2020/21 Outturn

1. Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream

This indicator shows the proportion of the total annual revenue budget that is funded by the local tax payer and Central Government, which is spent on servicing debt. This is slightly lower than the estimate owing to a change in the profile of funding sources compared to what was originally forecast.

2020/21 Estimate £'000		2020/21 Outturn £'000
2.71%	Ratio of Financing costs to net revenue stream	2.80%

2. Capital Expenditure

This indicator shows the total capital expenditure for the year and the outturn reflects the actual phasing of capital expenditure.

2020/21 Estimate £'000		2020/21 Outturn £'000
1,559	Capital Expenditure	1,720

The actual is higher than estimated owing to the phasing of capital expenditure between years.

3. Capital Expenditure Financed from Borrowing

This shows the borrowing required to finance the capital expenditure programme.

2020/21 Estimate £'000		2020/21 Outturn £'000
1,399	Capital Expenditure Financed by Borrowing	1,278

The actual is lower than estimated owing to the phasing of capital expenditure between years.

4. Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)

CFR is used to determine the minimum annual revenue charge for capital expenditure repayments (net of interest). It is calculated from the Authority's Balance Sheet and is shown below. Forecasts for future years are directly influenced by the capital expenditure decisions taken and the actual amount of revenue that is set aside to repay debt.

2020/21 Estimate £'000		2020/21 Outturn £'000
9,867	Capital Financing Requirement	9,315

The capital financing requirement is lower than estimated owing to the phasing of capital expenditure.

5. Authorised Limit for External Debt

The authorised limit determines the maximum amount the Authority may borrow at any one time. The authorised limit covers both long term borrowing for capital purposes and borrowing for short term cash flow requirements. The authorised limit is set above the operational boundary to provide sufficient headroom for operational management and unusual cash movements. In line with the Prudential Code, the level has been set to give the authority flexibility to borrow up to three years in advance of need if more favourable interest rates can be obtained.

2020/21 Limit £'000		2020/21 Peak £'000
14,000	Authorised limit for external debt	9,255

6. Operational Boundary for External Debt

The operational boundary is the most likely prudent, but not worst case scenario, level of borrowing without the additional headroom included within the authorised limit. The level is set so that any sustained breaches serve as an early warning that the Authority is in danger of overspending or failing to achieve income targets and gives sufficient time to take appropriate corrective action.

2020/21 Limit £'000		2020/21 Peak £'000
12,000	Operational boundary for external debt	9,255

7. Interest Rate Exposures

This indicator is designed to reflect the risk associated with both fixed and variable rates of interest, but must be flexible enough to allow the Authority to make best use of any borrowing opportunities.

2020/21 Limit £'000	Upper limits on fixed and variable interest rate exposure	2020/21 Peak £'000
100% 75%	Fixed Rates Variable Rates	78% 22%

8. Maturity Structure of Borrowing

This indicator is designed to reflect and minimise the situation whereby the Authority has a large repayment of debt needing to be replaced at a time of uncertainty over interest rates, but as with the indicator above, it must also be flexible enough to allow the Authority to take advantage of any borrowing opportunities.

	Upper Limit	Lower Limit	Actual by Maturity Date	Actual by soonest call date
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Under 12 months	8,000	0	143	143
12 month to 2 years	10,000	0	120	2,120
2 years to 5 years	10,000	0	298	298
5 years to 10 years	10,000	0	557	557
10 years to 20 years	10,000	0	1,388	1,388
20 years to 30 years	10,000	0	1,856	1,856
30 years to 40 years	10,000	0	2,893	2,893
40 years to 50 years	10,000	0	0	0
50 years to 60 years	10,000	0	0	0
60 years to 70 years	10,000	0	2,000	0

The Authority's current outstanding borrowing includes a LOBO (Lender Option Buyer Option) loan which provide fixed interest rates for defined periods and also defined dates for reviewing interest rates, known as 'call dates'. A change to the Prudential Code requires that the call date is reflected in the Maturity Structure indicator above rather than maturity date. However the likelihood of a LOBO being 'called' at present is very low and both methods are presented above for completeness.

9. Investments over Maturing over One Year

This sets an upper limit for amounts invested for periods longer than 364 days. The limit was not exceeded as a prudent approach to investment has been taken owing to uncertainties in the economy. This is in line with the Treasury Management Strategy. Consequently all investments made during the year were limited to a maximum of one year.

	1 year £000	2 year £000	3 year £000
Maximum Limit	5,000	0	0
Actual	0	0	0