

## **Report to Cabinet**

**Subject:** Prudential Code Indicator Monitoring 2025/26 and Treasury Activity Report for the Period April 2025 to July 2025

**Date:** 4 September 2025

**Author:** Principal Finance Business Partner

### **Wards Affected**

Borough wide

### **Purpose**

To inform Members of the performance monitoring of the 2025/26 Prudential Code Indicators, and to advise Members of the Treasury activity as required by the Treasury Management Strategy.

### **Key Decision**

This is **not** a key decision.

### **Recommendation(s)**

#### **Cabinet are recommended to:**

1. Note the report, together with the Treasury Activity Report 2025/26 for Period 4 at Appendix 1, and the Prudential and Treasury Indicator Monitoring 2025/26 for the period April to July 2025, at Appendix 2.
2. Approve the changes to Prudential Indicators detailed at paragraph 2.7 to align with the latest revenue and capital budgets being reported to members as part of the Budget Monitoring and Virement Report for the period April 2025 to July 2025.

## **1 Background**

- 1.1 The Council is required by regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 to report on its Prudential Code indicators and treasury activity. This report meets the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code) and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Prudential Code).
- 1.2 For 2025/26 the minimum reporting requirements are that the Full Council should receive the following reports:
  - An annual Treasury Strategy in advance of the year (the TMSS, considered by Cabinet on 13 February 2025 and subsequently approved by Full Council on 5 March 2025);
  - A mid-year treasury update report;
  - An annual review following the end of the year describing the activity compared to the Strategy.

In 2024/25 reporting to Cabinet & Full Council was carried out in three four monthly periods (April 2024 to July 2024. August 2024 to November 2024 and December 2024 to March 2025) this was on a trial basis to assess the resource benefits of only providing three periods of monitoring, allowing officers more time to address concerns and consider remedial action. This proved to be successful and will be continued in 2025/26.

Whilst this was a reduction in the number of reports being presented it should be noted that this still exceeds the minimum requirements.

- 1.3 The regulatory environment places responsibility on Members for the review and scrutiny of treasury management policy and activities. This report provides details of the position at 31 July 2025 and highlights compliance with the Council's policies.

## **2 Proposal**

### **2.1 Economic Update - headlines**

#### **Economic Activity & GDP**

- Real GDP fell 0.3% in April, the first decline since October 2024 and largest since October 2023.
- Likely due to unwinding of Q1 boosts from net exports and investment; exports to the US dropped 31%.
- Services output fell 0.4%, offsetting March's gain; manufacturing down 0.9% month on month.
- GDP likely flatlined in Q2, with subdued overseas demand and higher domestic costs from April's tax hikes.

- Bank of England forecasts 0.8% growth for 2025.

### **Inflation & Monetary Policy**

- Core CPI eased from 3.8% to 3.5% in May; headline CPI fell slightly to 3.4%.
- Services inflation dropped from 5.4% to 4.7%, expected to fall to 3.0% by year end.
- Bank of England cut interest rates to 4.25% in May, with a further cut to 4% in August.
- CPI may stay above 3.0% longer due to energy and food price risks; peak expected at 3.8% in September.

### **Labour Market & Wages**

- Employment fell by 109,000 in May, largest non-pandemic drop on record; total fall since October's Chancellor budget is 276,000.
- Job vacancies declined, signalling a weakening labour market.
- Wage growth softened: average earnings growth (excl. bonuses) fell to 5.2%; PAYE median earnings dropped to 5.8% year on year.

### **Retail & Consumer Sentiment**

- Retail sales volumes fell 2.7% in May, reversing April's weather-driven boost.
- Consumer confidence rose slightly (GfK index from -20 to -18), suggesting a modest retail recovery ahead.

### **Public Finances**

- Public sector borrowing in May was £17.7bn, slightly above forecast but £2.9bn below forecast for April/May combined.
- Debt interest payments were £1.1bn below forecast, but rising gilt yields may reverse this trend.
- Chancellor may need to raise £13bn to maintain fiscal headroom, implying likely tax increases.

## **2.2 Interest rate forecast**

Our Treasury Management advisors, MUFG, provided their quarterly forecast of interest rates. These are shown in the table below. PWLB rates in the table are based on the Certainty Rate which include a 0.2% reduction on the standard rates. The current bank rate is 4.0% which is earlier than forecast. However, the current trend of the rates is suggesting a further reduction to 3.75% or 3.50% in 2025/26. Any movement below a 4.0% Bank Rate will, nonetheless, be very much dependent on inflation data releases in the coming months.

Interest Rate Forecasts								
Bank Rate	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27	Jun-27
MUFG CM	4.25%	4.00%	3.75%	3.75%	3.75%	3.50%	3.50%	3.50%
Cap Econ	4.00%	3.75%	3.50%	3.25%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%
5Y PWLB RATE								
MUFG CM	4.80%	4.70%	4.60%	4.50%	4.40%	4.40%	4.30%	4.20%
Cap Econ	4.60%	4.30%	4.30%	4.20%	4.10%	4.10%	4.10%	4.10%
10Y PWLB RATE								
MUFG CM	5.10%	5.00%	4.90%	4.80%	4.70%	4.70%	4.60%	4.50%
Cap Econ	5.30%	5.10%	4.90%	4.80%	4.70%	4.60%	4.60%	4.60%
25Y PWLB RATE								
MUFG CM	5.60%	5.50%	5.40%	5.30%	5.20%	5.10%	5.00%	5.00%
Cap Econ	5.90%	5.40%	5.30%	5.10%	5.00%	4.80%	4.80%	4.80%
50Y PWLB RATE								
MUFG CM	5.30%	5.20%	5.10%	5.00%	4.90%	4.80%	4.70%	4.70%
Cap Econ	5.60%	5.30%	5.10%	5.00%	4.80%	4.70%	4.70%	4.70%

## 2.3 Treasury Management Strategy

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2025/26, which includes the Annual Investment Strategy, was approved by Council on 5 March 2025, and sets out the Council's investment priorities as:

- Security of capital;
- Liquidity;
- Yield.

Whilst the Council will always seek to obtain the optimum return (yield) on its investments, this will at all times be commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity. In the current economic climate it is considered appropriate either to keep investments short term to cover cash flow needs, or to extend the period up to 12 months with highly rated financial institutions, selected by the use of the MUFG creditworthiness methodology (see below) which includes consideration of sovereign ratings.

Investment counterparty limits for 2025/26 are generally **£3m** per individual counterparty, however a higher limit of **£4m** per Money Market Fund is considered prudent since such funds are already by definition highly diversified investment vehicles. There is no limit on Investment with the Debt Management Office (DMO) since this represents lending to central government. The Chief Financial Officer has delegated authority to vary these limits as appropriate, and then to report any change to Cabinet as part of the next report.

Members are advised that no new variations have been made during period 1 to 4 of 2025/26.

Limits with investment counterparties have not exceeded the prevailing levels approved by the CFO during the period 1 April to 31 July 2025.

Credit ratings advice is taken from MUFG and the Chief Financial Officer has adopted the MUFG credit rating methodology for the selection of investment counterparties. This employs a sophisticated modelling approach utilising credit ratings from all three of the main rating agencies to give a suggested maximum

duration for investments. Accordingly it does not place undue reliance on any one agency's ratings.

The methodology subsequently applies an "overlay" to take account of positive and negative credit watches and/or credit outlook information, which may increase or decrease the suggested duration of investments. It then applies a second overlay based on the credit default swap spreads for institutions, the monitoring of which has been shown to give an early warning of likely changes in credit ratings. It also incorporates sovereign ratings to ensure selection of counterparties from only the most creditworthy countries. The current Treasury Strategy permits the use of any UK counterparties subject to their individual credit ratings under the MUFG methodology. It also permits the use of counterparties from other countries with a minimum sovereign rating of AA minus. For information, the UK currently has a rating of AA minus.

The MUFG modelling approach combines all the various factors in a weighted scoring system and results in a series of colour coded bands which indicate the creditworthiness of counterparties. The colour bandings are as follows:

- Yellow 5 years (UK Government debt or its equivalent)
- Dark pink 5 years for Ultra Short Dated Bond Funds (credit score 1.25)
- Light pink 5 years for Ultra Short Dated Bond Funds (credit score 1.50)
- Purple 2 years
- Blue 1 year (nationalised or semi nationalised UK banks only)
- Orange 1 year
- Red 6 months
- Green 100 days
- No colour not to be used

Significant downgrades by the Ratings agencies have not materialised since the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis in March 2020. Where changes were made these were generally limited to "outlooks". However, as economies re-opened some instances of previous reductions were reversed.

Credit ratings are monitored weekly and the Council is also alerted to interim changes by its use of the MUFG creditworthiness service, however ratings under the methodology, including sovereign ratings, will not necessarily be the sole determinant of the quality of an institution. Other information sources used will include the financial press, share price and other such information pertaining to the banking sector in order to establish the most robust scrutiny process on the suitability of potential investment counterparties.

**The ultimate decision on what is prudent and manageable for the Council will be taken by the Chief Financial Officer under the approved scheme of delegation.**

## 2.4 Treasury Activity during Period 1 to 4 of 2025/26

The Treasury Activity Report for the period ended 31 July 2025 is attached at Appendix 1, in accordance with the Treasury Management Strategy.

Members will note that investment interest of £224,958 was generated from MMF activity, term deposits with banks and building societies, and the property fund, during the period from 1 April to 31 July 2025. This represents an overall equated rate for the Council of 4.33% which is marginally higher than the compounded Sterling Overnight Index Average (SONIA) rate, which averaged 4.26%.

During the period from 1 April to 31 July 2025, significant use was made of the Council's three Money Market Funds (MMFs). These are AAA rated investment vehicles which allow the pooling of many billions of pounds into highly diversified funds, thus reducing risk. The current rates of return on these funds are around 4% which remain generally higher than overnight treasury deposit rates, and slightly higher than the rate obtainable from the Debt Management Office (DMO).

The Council made an investment of £1m in the CCLA Local Authority Property Fund (LAPF) on 1 December 2017. The LAPF is a local government investment scheme approved by the Treasury under the Trustee Investments Act 1961 (section 11). Dividends are treated as revenue income and have in previous years averaged around 4%.

The fund increased slightly by £1,406 between 1 April 2025 and 30 June 2025. A dividend of £9,983 was also received in the first quarter of the year.

This investment allows the Council to introduce a property element into its investment portfolio without the risks associated with the direct purchase of assets. It should be noted however that the capital value is **not** guaranteed and can fall as well as rise. The certificated value of the investment at 30 June 2025 was £895,412 which was lower than the original investment of £1m, this represents a £104,588 loss. However, this investment is regarded as a long-term commitment and fluctuations should be expected. A recent meeting with the CCLA suggested that the investment is expected to increase over the course of the next few years and dividends continue to be received of approximately £40k per annum.

Interest rates are still favourable, however they have started to fall due to the reductions in the bank rate. As loans mature every effort is made to replace them at favourable rates. As regards investments, security and liquidity will always be the overriding factors in the Council's treasury management. As stated in 2.2 above, MUFG currently forecast that the Bank Rate will fall to 3.75% by March 2026.

At the start of 2025/26 the Bank of England base rate stood at 4.50%, this was then reduced by The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) on 8 May 2025 to

4.25%, with a further reduction down to 4.00% on the 7 August 2025. This has had a negative impact on investment interest received by the Council on 31 July 2025, however, currently, the budget estimate of £1.1m for 2025/26 remains achievable, if required a revised calculation of interest will be included in the August to November 2025 Treasury report.

## 2.5 New borrowing

At 31 July 2025 no new borrowing had been undertaken.

Advice will be taken from MUFG with regard to the amount and timing of any additional borrowing, and should conditions become advantageous, some borrowing in advance of need will also be considered by the Chief Financial Officer. The Council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) represents its underlying need to borrow to finance capital investment. Due to favourable interest rates, borrowing in advance of need is sometimes desirable, with the result that the CFR can differ to the actual borrowing planned in the year.

Councils may not borrow in advance of need purely to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed. However, prudent early borrowing for a demonstrable service objective is permitted. Serious consideration must be given to the cost of carrying any additional borrowing during the period prior to it being required for the financing of capital expenditure since this places a further burden on the General Fund.

## 2.6 Debt rescheduling

When the current day PWLB rate for the same term is higher than that being paid on an existing loan there is the potential for a discount to be receivable if the loan is repaid prematurely.

However, debt rescheduling opportunities are limited in the current economic climate, and due to the structure of PWLB interest rates. Advice in this regard will continue to be taken from MUFG. No debt rescheduling has been undertaken during the period from 1 April to 31 July 2025.

## 2.7 Compliance with Prudential and treasury indicators

It is a statutory duty for the Council to determine and keep under review the affordable borrowing limit. The Council's approved Prudential and Treasury Indicators (affordability limits) are included in the Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) approved by Full Council on 5 March 2025.

During the financial year to date the Council has at all times operated within the majority treasury limits and Prudential Indicators set out in the Council's TMSS, and in compliance with the Council's Treasury Management Practices. The Prudential and Treasury Indicators as at 31 July 2025 are shown at Appendix 2.

The Prudential Indicator relating to Capital Expenditure has been exceeded due to the carry forward of budget from 2024/25 which was approved by members as part of the Budget Outturn and Budget Carry Forwards 2024/25 report. The changes in the Capital Programme for 2025/26 are being reported to members via the Budget Monitoring and Virement Report for the period April 2025 to July 2025, it is proposed that this indicator is increased from £6,413,400 to £10,159,800.

The Prudential Indicator relating to the ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream is currently at 2.30% which is under the approved indicator of 3.85% due to a decrease in the original budget of the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP), the change in the MRP budget is being reported to members as part of the Budget Monitoring and Virement Report for the period April 2025 to July 2025.

All other treasury limits and Prudential Indicators have been achieved for the period April to July 2025

A) Prudential Indicators:

These indicators are based on estimates of expected outcomes, and are key indicators of “affordability”. They are monitored on a regular basis, and Appendix 2 compares the approved indicators with the projected outturn for 2025/26, and shows variances on the indicators, as described below:

a. Capital Expenditure

The latest projected outturn shows that total capital expenditure is expected to be £10,159,800. This differs to the approved indicator of £6,413,400 due to the inclusion of approved carry-forward requests from 2024/25 and variations on the current year’s capital programme.

b. Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)

The CFR represents the historic outstanding capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for from capital or revenue resources, and is essentially a measure of the Council’s underlying borrowing need. The CFR does not increase indefinitely since the minimum revenue provision (MRP) is a statutory annual revenue charge for the economic consumption of capital assets.

At 31 July the projected closing CFR for 2025/26 is £21,052,378. This differs slightly to the approved indicator of £21,226,000.

c. Gearing ratio

The concept of “gearing” compares the total underlying borrowing need (the CFR) to the Council’s total fixed assets and the gearing ratio can provide an early



indication where debt levels are rising relative to long term assets held.

The projected gearing ratio at 31 July 2025 is 45%, which is in line with the approved indicator and is broadly comparable with the average gearing ratio for councils of a similar size.

d. Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream

This indicator identifies the trend in the cost of borrowing net of investment income against the net revenue stream. Financing costs represent the element of the Council's budget to which it is committed even before providing any services.

The projected outturn of 2.30% for service-related expenditure is lower than the approved indicator of 3.85% due to reduced Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) costs for 2025/26.

e. Maximum gross debt

The Council must ensure that its gross debt does not, except in the short term, exceed the opening capital financing requirement, plus estimates of any additional CFR for 2025/26 and the following two financial years. This allows flexibility for early borrowing for future years, but ensures that borrowing is not undertaken for revenue purposes. The Council's gross debt at 31 July 2025 was £10.812m, which was within the approved indicator.

g. Ratio of internal borrowing to CFR

The Council is currently maintaining an "internal borrowing" position, i.e. the underlying borrowing need (CFR) has not yet been fully funded with loan debt as cash supporting the Council's reserves and balances is being used as a temporary measure.

The current projected outturn for internal borrowing is 49%, which is higher than the approved indicator of 45%. This is due to not taking expecting to take out any additional long-term borrowing for the Vehicle Replacement Programme and the Temporary Accommodation scheme which are expected to be funded from internal borrowing. Although the rate is currently projected at 49% we know this will reduce during the year due to slippage in the capital programme. It is proposed that this indicator is temporarily increased to 50%, whilst advice will be sought from our Treasury Management advisors about the optimal time to undertake new borrowing. Cashflow and liquidity will be monitored closely, and an update will be provided in the period 8 report.

B) Treasury Management Indicators:

These indicators are based on limits, beyond which activities should not pass

without management action. They include two key indicators of affordability and four key indicators of prudence.

Affordability:

a. Operational boundary for external debt

This is the limit which external debt is not “normally” expected to exceed. In most cases, this would be a similar figure to the CFR, but it may be lower or higher depending on the levels of actual debt, and must allow for unusual cash flow movements.

b. Authorised limit for external debt

This limit represents a control on the “maximum” level of borrowing. It is the statutory limit determined under s3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003 and represents the limit beyond which external debt is prohibited. The Authorised Limit must be set, and revised if necessary, by Full Council. It reflects a level of external debt which, while not desirable, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable in the longer term. The Government retains an option to control either the total of all councils’ plans, or those of a specific council, although this power has not yet been exercised.

Prudence:

c. Upper limits for the maturity structure of borrowing

These are set to reduce the Council’s exposure to large fixed rate sums falling due for refinancing.

d. Maximum new principal sums to be invested during 2025/26 for periods in excess of one year (365 days)

All such investments are classified as “non-specified”. This indicator is subject to the overall limit for non-specified investments set out in the TMSS, and to the overall limit per counterparty.

e. Interest rate exposure

The latest Treasury Management Code requires a statement in the TMSS explaining how interest rate exposure is managed and monitored by the Council, and this is repeated below:

*The Council has a general preference for fixed rate borrowing in order to minimise uncertainty and ensure stability in the charge to revenue, however it is acknowledged that in certain circumstances, some variable rate borrowing may be prudent, for*

*example if interest rates are expected to fall. The Council's investments are generally for cashflow purposes and accordingly a mix of fixed and variable rates will be used to maximise flexibility and liquidity. Interest rate exposure will be managed and monitored on a daily basis by the Chief Financial Officer.*

Local indicators for the proportions of fixed and variable rate loans, have been retained by the Council for information purposes.

Appendix 2 shows the actual position as at 31 July 2025, and demonstrates that all activities are contained within the currently approved limits.

### **3 Risk Management**

The CIPFA Prudential Code and Treasury Management Code (both updated in 2021) have placed greater importance on risk management. Where a local authority changes its risk appetite (for example, moving surplus cash into or out of certain types of investment funds or other investment instruments) then this change in risk appetite should be brought to Members attention in treasury management update reports.

There have been no changes in risk appetite and there are no other significant treasury management issues that have arisen since approval of the TMSS on 5 March 2025 that need to be brought to the attention of Members.

There are a number of risks inherent within any treasury management strategy, the most significant risks include:

- Reporting is not compliant with statutory guidelines.
- Investment and borrowing activity is outside the approved TM framework.
- Long term borrowing is taken at rates that are not advantageous.
- Investment of principal sums with insecure counterparties.
- Investment returns are volatile and may not meet budgeted amounts.
- Borrowing is not affordable.

These risks are mitigated by the controls included in the TMSS and are detailed at section 2.3 - Treasury Management Strategy above.

### **4 Alternative Options**

An alternative option is to fail to present a Prudential Code Indicator Monitoring and Treasury Activity Report, however this would contravene the requirement of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS).

### **5 Financial Implications**

No specific financial implications are attributable to this report.

## **6 Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **7 Equalities Implications**

There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

## **8 Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications**

There are no carbon reduction/environmental sustainability implications arising from this report.

## **9 Appendices**

1. Treasury Activity Report 2025/26 for Period 1 to 4 (31 July 2025).
2. Prudential and Treasury Indicator Monitoring 2025/26 for Period 1 to 4 (31 July 2025).

## **10 Background Papers**

None identified.

## **11 Reasons for Recommendation**

To comply with the requirements of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement.

### **Statutory Officer approval:**

**Approved by:** Chief Financial Officer  
**Date:** 26 August 2025

**Approved by:** Monitoring Officer  
**Date:** 26 August 2025