NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2017/18

Report of the Treasurer to the Fire Authority

Date: 24 February 2017

Purpose of Report:

To inform Members of the Authority's Treasury Management Strategy for 2017/18.

To seek approval of the Authority's Minimum Revenue Provision Policy for 2017/18.

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1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Authority to set out its treasury strategy for borrowing and to prepare an annual investment strategy; this sets out the Authority's policies for borrowing, for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments.

1.2 Treasury management is defined as "the management of investments and cash flows, banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks."

1.3 The Authority adopted the CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes 2009 (the Code) on 9 April 2010 (the Code was updated in 2011). It is a requirement of the Code that the Authority creates and maintains:

- A treasury management policy statement, which states the policies, objectives and approach to risk management of its treasury management activities. This statement is given in Appendix A.

- Suitable treasury management practices, setting out how the Authority will seek to achieve those policies and objectives and how activities will be controlled and managed. The Authority's practices were reviewed in 2013/14.

1.4 A report on the Prudential Code for Capital Accounting is also on this agenda. This report sets out the prudential indicators for 2017/18, which are designed to ensure that the Authority's capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable and are in accordance with CIPFA's Prudential Code. This Treasury Management Strategy report is complementary to that Prudential Code report and the proposed prudential and treasury limits for 2017/18 are included in both reports for completeness.

1.5 This report also sets out the Authority's Minimum Revenue Provision policy for 2017/18 for approval by Members in paragraphs 2.51 to 2.54.

1.6 The Authority has appointed Capita Asset Services as its external treasury management adviser. Capita Asset Services has provided the Authority with its view on anticipated interest rates for the forthcoming year.

2. REPORT

TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR 2017/18

2.1 The Local Government Act 2003 (the Act) and supporting regulations requires the Authority to 'have regard to' the CIPFA Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice to set Prudential and

Treasury Indicators for the next three years to ensure that the Authority's capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable.

2.2 The Act therefore requires the Authority to set out its treasury strategy for borrowing and to prepare an annual investment strategy: this sets out the Authority's policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments.

2.3 The suggested strategy for 2017/18 in respect of the following aspects of the treasury management function is based upon Officers' views on interest rates, supplemented with leading market forecasts provided by the Authority's treasury adviser, Capita Asset Services.

2.4 The strategy covers:

- Prudential and treasury indicators;
- The borrowing requirement;
- Prospects for interest rates;
- The borrowing strategy;
- Policy on borrowing in advance of need;
- Debt rescheduling;
- The investment strategy;
- Creditworthiness policy;
- Policy on use of external service providers;
- The Minimum Revenue Provision policy;
- Training of Officers and Members.

2.5 The Authority recognises that whilst there is value in employing external providers of treasury management services in order to acquire access to specialist skills and resources, responsibility for treasury management decisions remains with the organisation at all times. The Authority will therefore ensure that undue reliance is not placed upon external service providers.

BALANCED BUDGET REQUIREMENT

2.6 It is a statutory requirement under Section 33 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for the Authority to produce a balanced budget. In particular, Section 32 requires a local authority to calculate its budget requirement for each financial year to include the revenue costs that flow from capital financing decisions. This includes a statutory requirement to make a prudent provision for an annual contribution from its revenue budget towards the reduction in its overall borrowing requirement. This charge is known as the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). This, therefore, means that increases in capital expenditure must be limited to a level whereby increases in charges to revenue from: -

- Increases in interest charges caused by increased borrowing to finance additional capital expenditure;

- Any increases in running costs from new capital projects, and

- Any increases in the Minimum Revenue Provision are limited to a level which is affordable within the projected income of the Authority for the foreseeable future.

ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

2.7 UK GDP growth rates in 2013, 2014 and 2015 of 2.2%, 2.9% and 1.8% respectively were some of the strongest rates among the G7 countries. The Office of National Statistic's preliminary estimate for GDP growth in 2016 is 2%.

2.8 The outcome of the EU referendum vote in June 2016 caused an immediate fall in confidence indicators and business surveys, which were interpreted by the Bank of England in its August Inflation Report as pointing to an impending sharp slowdown in the economy. This led to the implementation of a package of measures that included a cut in the Bank Rate from 0.5% to 0.25% and a renewal of quantitative easing. The Inflation Report also indicated that a further cut in the Bank Rate would be likely. However, the following monthly business surveys in September showed a sharp recovery in confidence, so that it is now generally expected that the economy will continue to grow reasonably strongly through the second half of 2016 and also in 2017, albeit at a slower pace than in the first half of 2016. As a result of this the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting on 3 November left the Bank Rate and other monetary policy measures unchanged.

2.9 The latest MPC decision included a forward view that the bank rate could either go up or down depending on how economic data evolves in the coming months. The view of the Authority's treasury adviser remains that the bank rate will remain unchanged at 0.25% until the first increase to 0.5% which is likely to take place in quarter 2 of 2019. However, a cut in bank rate is not ruled out if economic growth were to take a significant dip downwards.

2.10 The August quarterly inflation report was based on a pessimistic forecast of near to zero GDP growth in quarter 3, in reaction to the result of the referendum on UK membership of the European Union. However, consumers appear to have adopted a "business as usual" approach until the actual impact of the UK's withdrawal from the EU becomes clearer and there has been no sharp downturn in spending. This approach has aided the UK economy, as it is consumer spending which underpins the services sector which comprises around 75% of UK GDP. The GfK index (a leading consumer confidence index) showed a fairly strong recovery in October to -3 after an initial sharp plunge in July to -12 following the referendum result. However, by December it had fallen back to -7 indicating a return to pessimism about future prospects among consumers, probably based mainly around concerns about rising inflation eroding purchasing power.

2.11 The Chancellor has said he will do 'whatever is needed' to promote growth; this could involve fiscal policy (e.g. cutting taxes, increasing investment allowances for businesses) and/or an increase in government spending on infrastructure and housing etc. This will mean that the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement (PSBR) deficit elimination timetable is likely to slip further into the future as promoting growth, and ultimately boosting tax revenues in the longer term, will be a more urgent priority. This was confirmed in the Chancellor's Autumn statement in November, when it was announced that the target of achieving a budget surplus in 2020 would be eased. The statement also included some increases in infrastructure spending.

2.12 The Bank of England's November Inflation Report included an increase in the peak forecast for inflation from 2.3% to 2.7% during 2017. This increase is largely due to the sharp fall in the value of sterling since the referendum, although during November sterling had recovered some of this fall to end up 15% down against the dollar and 8% down against the euro (as at the MPC meeting date of 15.12.16). This depreciation will feed through into a sharp increase in the cost of imports and materials used in production in the UK. The MPC has warned that if wage inflation were to rise significantly as a result of these cost pressures to consumers, then they would take action to raise the Bank Rate.

2.13 It is clear that consumer disposable income will come under pressure, as the latest employers' survey is forecasting median pay rises for the year ahead of 1.1% at a time when inflation will be rising significantly higher than this.

2.14 Gilt yields, and consequently Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) rates, have been very volatile during 2016. The year began with 10 year gilt yields at 1.88%, falling to a low point of 0.53% during August, and rising again towards the end of the year. The rebound since August is due to the sharp rise in growth expectations since the initial pessimistic forecasts which led to the decision to cut the Bank Rate. Inflation expectations also rose sharply as a result of the continuing fall in the value of sterling.

2.15 The result of the US presidential election in November is expected to lead to a strengthening of US growth if the President's election promise of a major increase in expenditure on infrastructure is implemented. This policy is also likely to strengthen inflationary pressures as the US economy is already working at near full capacity. In the first week after the US election, there was a major shift in investor sentiment away from bonds to equities, especially in the US, and this dragged UK gilt yields and EU bond yields higher. Some economists are of the opinion that this is the start of an expected unwinding of bond prices which were pushed to unrealistically high levels (and conversely yields pushed down) by the artificial and temporary power of quantitative easing. Other economists view it as an overreaction to the US election result which is likely to be reversed.

2.16 Eurozone GDP growth in the first three quarters of 2016 has been 0.5%, 0.3% and 0.3%. Forward indications are that economic growth in the EU is likely to continue at moderate levels. Economic growth in China has been slowing and this, in turn, has been denting economic growth in emerging market countries dependent on exporting raw materials to China.

2.17 Capita Asset Services has provided a forecast on the bank interest rate, which draws on current City forecasts:

Capita Asset Services Bank Rate Forecasts	
As at 31 March 2017	0.25%
As at 31 March 2018	0.25%
As at 31 March 2019	0.25%
As at 31 March 2020	0.75%

2.18 Economic and interest rate forecasting remains difficult with so many external influences weighing on the UK. The above forecast will be liable to further amendment depending on how economic data and developments in financial markets transpire over the next year. Geopolitical developments, especially in the EU, could also have a major impact.

MANAGEMENT OF CASH RESOURCES

2.19 The Authority uses a main current account, an investment account and a number of local petty cash accounts. All of these accounts are held with Barclays Bank PLC and are managed online. This system allows the Authority to make transfers to and from accounts in real time and thus allows the current account balance to be maintained at a minimum level. All surplus funds are held either in the investment account for short periods or are lent to institutional borrowers over longer periods.

2.20 The bank overdraft level is £200,000 and this is usually sufficient. There are occasions when the overdraft exceeds £200,000 and temporary arrangements are made with the bank to increase the limit to £500,000. The Prudential Code report included an overdraft limit of £500,000 within the authorised limit to allow for such instances. It is proposed that the overdraft facility remains at a level of £200,000.

2.21 Part of the treasury management operation is to ensure that cash flows are adequately planned, with cash being available when it is needed. A 3 year cash flow projection is prepared together with a 3 month rolling cash flow forecast. The 3 month forecast is updated regularly and this process reveals when cash surpluses are likely to arise.

2.22 The current bank account is checked on a daily basis and the balance is transferred to the investment account (Business Premium Account) if the interest rate is favourable.

2.23 Cash management processes have been examined by internal auditors and have been shown to be robust.

BORROWING STRATEGY

2.24 The prudential indicators for borrowing are set out in Appendix B. Background information relating to these indicators is contained within the Prudential Code for Capital Finance 2017/18 report which is elsewhere on this agenda.

2.25 The capital financing requirement is the sum of money required from external sources to fund capital expenditure i.e. the Authority's underlying need to borrow or lease. For 2017/18 this figure is estimated at £28,407,000. This figure is comprised of capital expenditure incurred historically by the Authority that has yet to be financed by capital receipts, grants, or contributions from revenue including MRP charges, plus estimated capital expenditure and capital financing for 2016/17 and 2017/18.

2.26 The Authority's strategy in the past has been to borrow funds from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB). The PWLB is an agent of HM Treasury and its function is to lend money from the National Loans Fund to local authorities and other prescribed bodies. Its interest rates are generally favourable compared to those applicable to borrowings from other sources within the marketplace. Following a period of consultation, the government has announced that it intends to abolish the PWLB and transfer its functions for lending to local authorities to the Treasury, with operational responsibility delegated to the Debt Management Office. However, this is not expected to have a tangible impact on the Authority's ability to borrow from the government at preferential rates and, as this change has yet to be implemented, this report will continue to refer to "the PWLB". In 2007/08, a £4m loan was borrowed from a bank, with a fixed interest rate which was lower than the equivalent PWLB rate. It is therefore proposed that the Authority continues to borrow primarily from the PWLB, but considers fixed rate market borrowing when market rates are lower than PWLB rates. In addition to this, the Authority may also consider loans from the UK's Municipal Bond Agency, which is currently in the process of being set up and is likely to be offering loans to local authorities in the near future.

2.27 The loan of £4m referred to in paragraph 2.26 is structured as a "Lender Option Borrower Option (LOBO)" loan. This means that on 7 March 2013 and on that anniversary every five years, the lender may revise the interest rate, which is currently 4.13%. The Authority may choose to repay the loan without penalty if the amended interest rate is not advantageous. If the lender does exercise the option to revise the interest rate, the strategy will be to either agree to continue the loan with the revised interest rate or to repay the loan and replace it with new, long term debt at a lower rate depending on which is the most advantageous option for the Authority. As the interest rate was not changed on 7 March 2013, the next opportunity for a revision is 7 March 2018.

2.28 Over the next three years, it is anticipated that the Authority will need to borrow up to £8m to finance the capital programme and to replace up to £4.5m of maturing loans.

2.29 Capita Asset Services' view on future PWLB interest rates is:

	Mar 17	Jun 17	Sep 17	Dec 17	Mar 18	Mar 19	Mar 20
5 yr PWLB	1.60%	1.60%	1.60%	1.60%	1.70%	1.80%	2.00%
10 yr PWLB	2.30%	2.30%	2.30%	2.30%	2.30%	2.50%	2.70%
25 yr PWLB	2.90%	2.90%	2.90%	3.00%	3.00%	3.20%	3.40%
50 yr PWLB	2.70%	2.70%	2.70%	2.80%	2.80%	3.00%	3.20%

The table above has been adjusted for the PWLB certainty rate, which is a 20 basis points reduction in the interest rate for Authorities such as this one which have applied for it.

2.30 As stated in paragraph 2.18, economic forecasting is particularly difficult at this time. Gilt yields, and therefore PWLB rates, are influenced by geopolitical developments as well as developments in financial markets. Downside risks to current forecasts for UK gilt yields and PWLB rates currently include:

- Monetary policy action by the central banks of major economies reaching its limit of effectiveness and failing to stimulate significant sustainable growth, combat the threat of deflation and reduce high levels of debt in some countries, combined with an inability of national governments to effectively promote growth through structural reforms, fiscal policy, and investment expenditure.
- Political uncertainty arising from major national polls, as elections are due to take place France, Germany and the Netherlands during 2017, and continuing political instability in Spain and Italy.
- A resurgence of the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis, and stress arising from disagreement between EU countries on free movement of people, how to manage the large influx of immigrants, and how to deal with terrorist threats.
- Geopolitical risks in Europe, the Middle East and Asia causing a significant increase in safe haven cash flows.
- UK economic growth and increases in inflation being weaker than currently anticipated.
- Weak growth or recession in the UK's main trading partners.

2.31 Upside risks to current forecasts for UK gilt yields and PWLB rates, especially for longer term PWLB rates, include:

- UK inflation rising to significantly higher levels than in the wider EU and in the US, causing an increase in the inflation premium in gilt yields.
- A rise in US Treasury yields as a result of Federal funds rate increases and rising inflation expectations in the USA, dragging UK gilt yields upwards.
- The pace and timing of increases in the Federal funds rate causing a fundamental reassessment by investors of the relative risks of holding

bonds as opposed to equities, and leading to a major switch from bonds to equities.
- A downward revision to the UK's sovereign credit rating undermining investor confidence in holding sovereign debt (i.e. gilts).

2.32 In view of the above forecast the Authority's borrowing strategy will be based upon the following information.

- A combination of capital receipts, internal funds and borrowing will be used to finance capital expenditure in 2017/18 and beyond.

- Three PWLB loans will mature in the medium term (£2m in 2017/18 and £1m and £1.5m in 2018/19). These will need to be replaced with new borrowing and it is estimated that new borrowing in the period 2017/18 to 2019/20 will be in the region of £8m.

- Capita Asset Services' view is that PWLB rates are likely to rise over the next three years. It may therefore be advantageous to take out new loans earlier in the period, as this will have a lesser impact on the revenue budget for the periods of the loans. However if this is in advance of the need to spend, there will be a cost of capital impact as referred to in paragraph 2.36 below.

- PWLB rates on loans of less than ten years duration are expected to be lower than longer term PWLB rates. However, the existing debt maturity profile of the Authority will also be taken into account when decisions are made regarding the duration of new borrowing. The Authority will strive to seek a balance between securing the most advantageous rate whilst ensuring that it is not unduly exposed to re-financing risk.

- Consideration will also be given to borrowing fixed rate market loans at 0.25% – 0.50% below the PWLB target rate and to maintaining an appropriate balance between PWLB and market debt in the debt portfolio.

- PWLB Maturity loans will continue to be taken if the overall cost of such loans is less than the equivalent Annuity loans. If this strategy results in a short term breach of the Gross Borrowing and Capital Financing Requirement indicator, then the reasons for this will be explained to members of the Authority.

2.33 The Authority is currently maintaining an under-borrowed position. This means that the capital financing requirement has not been fully funded with loan debt; instead the cash supporting the Authority's reserves and balances is being used as a temporary measure. The use of cash balances in this way is known as "internal borrowing", and this strategy is prudent as investment returns are low and counterparty risk is still an issue that needs to be considered. However, the Authority recognises that internal borrowing itself poses a different kind of risk, as there is a chance that balances may need to be replenished at a time when interest rates are higher. In this respect, internal borrowing is effectively variable rate debt. The Authority will therefore aim to build cash levels up again in the future in order to ensure that reserves and balances are “cash-backed” to an appropriate level, however the timing of this will very much depend on the prevailing economic conditions and the Authority’s ability to ensure the security of funds.

2.34 Officers, in conjunction with treasury advisors, will continually monitor both the prevailing interest rates and market forecasts, adopting the following responses to a change in position:

- If it were felt that there was a significant risk of a sharp **fall** in long and short term rates (e.g. due to a marked increase of risks around relapse into recession or of risks of deflation), then long term borrowings will be postponed, and potential rescheduling from fixed rate funding into short term borrowing will be considered.

- If it were felt that there was a significant risk of a much sharper **rise** in long and short term rates than that currently forecast, perhaps arising from an acceleration in the start date and in the rate of increase in central rates in the USA and UK, an increase in world economic activity or a sudden increase in inflation risks, then the portfolio position will be re-appraised with the likely action that fixed rate funding will be drawn whilst interest rates are still lower than they will be in the next few years.

2.35 The Authority’s gross debt position is projected to be £23.3m by the end of 2016/17, but investments of approximately £5.6m are expected to be in place at 31 March 2017, giving a net debt position of around £17.7m. Currently, investment interest rates are substantially lower than debt interest rates so the use of reserves rather than borrowing to finance capital expenditure over the past three years has resulted in better value for money in the short term (see paragraph 2.33 for more details). However, the Authority recognises that there will be requirement to borrow in the medium term when the cash from surplus reserves has been exhausted. Interest rates are forecasted to rise slowly over the next three years, and the Authority will monitor rate changes closely when determining when the time is right to borrow.

2.36 The Authority will not borrow more than or in advance of its needs purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed, although this scenario is unlikely anyway given that current borrowing rates are higher than current investment interest rates, creating a cost of capital impact. Any decision to borrow in advance will be considered carefully to ensure value for money can be demonstrated and that the Authority can ensure the security of funds invested. In determining whether borrowing will be undertaken in advance of need the Authority will:

- Ensure that borrowing is only undertaken to finance the capital programme approved within the current Medium Term Financial Strategy;

- Ensure the ongoing revenue liabilities created, and the implications for the future plans and budgets have been considered;

- Evaluate the economic and market factors that might influence the manner and timing of any decision to borrow;

- Consider the alternative interest rate bases available, the most appropriate periods to fund and repayment profiles to use.

2.37 Where the Authority has made a decision to defer long term borrowing either in order to benefit from a forecasted reduction in interest rates or to avoid unnecessary carrying costs, it may undertake short term borrowing to alleviate temporary cash shortages caused by internally borrowing cash balances to support capital expenditure.

2.38 The rescheduling of debt involves the early repayment of existing borrowings and their replacement with new loans. As short term borrowing rates will be cheaper than longer term fixed interest rates, this would indicate a potential to generate savings by switching from long to short term debt. However, a premium would be payable which may negate the savings, and the loan maturity profile of the Authority indicates that this would increase exposure to interest rate risk. It is therefore unlikely that rescheduling of debt will take place in 2017/18 although this will be kept under review should circumstances change. Rescheduling will be considered for the following reasons:

- The generation of cash savings and / or discounted cash flow savings;

- Enhancing the balance of the portfolio by amending the maturity profile.

Any rescheduling of debt will be reported to Members at the earliest meeting following its action.

INVESTMENT STRATEGY

2.39 The Authority will have regard to the CLG's Guidance on Local Government Investments ("the Guidance") issued in March 2004, the Audit Commission's report on Icelandic investments and the 2011 revised CIPFA Treasury Management in Public Services Code of Practice and Cross Sectoral Guidance. The Authority's investment priorities are:

(a) the security of capital and
(b) the liquidity of its investments.

The Authority will also aim to achieve the optimum return on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity. The risk appetite of this Authority is low in order to give priority to security of its investments. The borrowing of monies purely to invest or on-lend and make a return is unlawful and this Authority will not engage in such activity.

2.40 Investment opportunities will arise when there are temporary cash surpluses. In accordance with guidance from CIPFA, and in order to minimise the risk to investments, the Authority sets a minimum acceptable credit quality of counterparties for investment. To determine the institutions with which investments may be placed, the Authority uses the creditworthiness service provided by Capita Asset Services. This service uses a sophisticated modelling approach with credit ratings from all three rating agencies - Fitch, Moodys and Standard and Poors forming the core element. It is recognised that ratings should not be the sole determinant of the quality of an institution, and Capita's creditworthiness service does not rely solely on the current credit ratings of counterparties but also uses the following as overlays:

- Credit watches and credit outlooks from credit rating agencies;
- Credit Default Swap (CDS) spreads to give early warning of likely changes in credit ratings;
- Sovereign ratings to select counterparties from only the most creditworthy countries;
- Information from the financial press and share price information.

2.41 The modelling approach combines credit ratings, credit watches, credit in a weighted scoring system which is then combined with an overlay of CDS spreads. The end product is a series of colour code bands which indicate the relative creditworthiness of counterparties and enable diversification in investments. These colour codes are used by the Authority to determine both the credit-worthiness of institutions and the duration for investments. It is regarded as an essential tool, which the Authority would not be able to replicate using in house resources.

2.42 The selection of counterparties with a high level of creditworthiness will be achieved by selection of institutions down to a minimum durational band within Capita's weekly credit list of potential counterparties. The Authority will therefore use counterparties within the following durational bands:

- Blue 1 year (only applies to nationalised or semi nationalised UK Banks)
- Orange 1 year
- Red 6 months
- Green 100 days

Institutions within the "purple band" (24 months), the "yellow band" (5 years) or with no colour band will not be used.

2.43 The Authority has determined that it will only use approved counterparties from countries with a minimum sovereign credit rating of AA from Fitch Ratings (or equivalent from other agencies if Fitch does not provide). The list of countries that qualify using this credit criteria as at the date of this report are shown in Appendix C. This list will be added to or deducted from by Officers should ratings change in accordance with this policy. The UK currently has a sovereign rating of AA and has been placed on "negative outlook" which raises the potential for it to be downgraded further within the next eighteen months if the economic outlook for the UK deteriorates. If the UK were to be downgraded to AA- this would remove the option of investing with UK institutions under the current Treasury Management Strategy. Given that the Authority's banker is a UK bank this could cause some difficulty. The

Finance and Resources Committee therefore approved a recommendation in January 2017 that, if the UK is downgraded to AA- status, the Authority's strategy will be to continue with existing banking arrangements and to retain current investments with UK institutions. The Authority will then need to reconsider its investment strategy in a further report to Members, with any immediate requirements in the interim to be agreed between the Treasurer and the Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee.

2.44 The latest credit list provided by Capita will be made available to Members at the meeting.

2.45 In accordance with its low risk appetite, the Authority may undertake the following types of "specified" investments:

- Deposits with the Debt Management Office (Government);
- Term deposits with Banks and Building Societies;
- Call deposits with Banks and Building Societies;
- Term Deposits with uncapped English and Welsh local authority bodies;
- Triple-A rated Money Market Funds;
- UK Treasury Bills;
- Certificates of Deposit.

2.46 The risks associated with investing will be reduced if investments are spread e.g. over counterparties or over countries. The Authority will therefore aim to limit its investment with any single counterparty to £2m. It is, however, difficult to impose any further spreading requirement due to the relatively small size of the Authority's investments and the fact that investment institutions will often only accept a minimum investment sum, which may render any such policy unworkable. Despite this Officers will, wherever possible, avoid the concentration of investments with one counterparty or group.

2.47 The majority of past investments have been for periods of 3 months or less. In the current financial climate no term deposit investments with other counterparties, such as UK semi-nationalised banks and local authorities, will be made for more than 1 year without the prior approval of the Treasurer and the Chair of Finance and Resources Committee. The Authority will avoid locking into longer term deals while investment rates are down at historically low levels unless exceptionally attractive rates are available which make longer term deals worthwhile.

2.48 All credit ratings will be monitored via a weekly update from Capita Asset Services. The Authority is alerted to changes to ratings of all three agencies as and when they occur through its use of the Capita creditworthiness service. If a downgrade results in the counterparty/investment scheme no longer meeting the Authority's minimum criteria, its further use as a new investment will be withdrawn immediately. In addition to the use of Credit Ratings the Authority will be advised of information in movements in Credit Default Swap against the iTraxx benchmark and other market data on a weekly basis. Extreme market movements may result in downgrade of an institution or removal from the Authority's lending list.

2.49 Investments will normally be made for durations which accord with Capita's credit quality list so, for example, an investment would be made for no more than 100 days (3 months) with a "Green" rated counterparty. This policy works well with fixed term deposits but where the Authority invests in a "call" account in a bank there is no fixed duration for the deposit. In such instances, officers will monitor intelligence about the bank and give notice to withdraw funds immediately if there is any indication of a substantially increased risk to the security of the deposit. Where call accounts are used, deposits will only be made where the minimum notice period is no longer than the Capita suggested duration for that institution, and it is therefore recognised that the total period of the investment may be longer than the Capita suggested duration in some cases.

2.50 Sole reliance will not be placed on the use of this external service. In addition this Authority will also use market data and market information, information on government support for banks and the credit ratings of that government support.

MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY 2017/18

2.51 The Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 came into force on 31 March 2008. These regulations were an amendment to the 2003 regulations and introduced several changes to the capital finance regime for local authorities (including fire authorities) in England. The most significant of these were provisions dealing with the calculation of Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP), which is the amount an authority charges to its revenue account in respect of the financing of capital expenditure.

2.52 Under the regulations, Authorities must make a "prudent provision" for MRP and guidance is given on the interpretation of this: "provision for the borrowing which financed the acquisition of an asset should be made over a period bearing some relation to that over which the asset continues to provide a service". This guidance translates into the asset life method. Authorities are permitted to continue charging MRP calculated using the old method for borrowing and credit arrangements which funded capital expenditure incurred before 1 April 2007. This method calculates a charge of 4% of the capital financing requirement each year to revenue.

2.53 The following policy on MRP is therefore recommended to members and budgetary provision for MRP has been made on this basis:

- For all borrowing and credit arrangements to fund capital expenditure incurred before or during 2006/07, the minimum revenue provision applied in 2017/18 will continue to be calculated on the basis of the 4% CFR (capital financing requirement) method. This method will continue to be used in future years for capital expenditure incurred during or before 2006/07.

- For all borrowing and credit arrangements to fund capital expenditure incurred from 2007/08 onwards, the minimum revenue provision applied in 2017/18 will be calculated on the basis of the Asset Life method.

2.54 The regulations also allow for Voluntary Revenue Provision (VRP) charges to be made. A VRP charge would be in addition to the MRP charge, and would have the effect of reducing MRP charges in future years, resulting in revenue budget savings. If the situation arises in the year whereby Officers feel that a VRP charge would be advantageous (e.g. if there are revenue budget underspends), then a recommendation will be made to Finance and Resources Committee to approve a VRP charge during the year.

TRAINING OF OFFICERS AND MEMBERS

2.55 Under the Code, good practice is defined as ensuring that all staff involved in treasury management are appropriately trained and experienced to undertake their duties. Employees within the Finance Department who carry out treasury management activities are suitably trained and experienced and routinely attend at least one treasury management update event each year to ensure that their knowledge keeps pace with changes

2.56 It is also suggested that those tasked with treasury management scrutiny responsibilities also have access to suitable training and a treasury management training seminar was last held for Members of the Fire Authority in January 2017.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications of this report are set out in full within the body of the report.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no human resources or learning and development implications arising directly from this report.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

There are no equalities issues arising directly from this report.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising directly from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report, other than the requirement to act within the Authority's powers when undertaking treasury management borrowings and investments.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The investment of local authority funds cannot be achieved without some element of risk. Careful choice of borrowers using creditworthiness indices will minimise this risk. This prudent approach will undoubtedly result in some interest rate loss but the principles of security and liquidity are paramount.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

9.1 Note the Treasury Management Strategy 2017/18 as set out in this report.

9.2 Approve the Minimum Revenue Provision policy 2017/18 as set out in paragraphs 2.51 to 2.54.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Neil Timms
TREASURER TO THE FIRE AUTHORITY

APPENDIX A

TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY STATEMENT

1. The Authority defines its treasury management activities as: “The management of the authority’s investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks”.

2. The Authority regards the successful identification, monitoring and control of risk to be the prime criteria by which the effectiveness of its treasury management activities will be measured. Accordingly, the analysis and reporting of treasury management activities will focus on their risk implications for the organisation.

3. The Authority acknowledges that effective treasury management will provide support towards the achievement of its business and service objectives. It is therefore committed to the principles of achieving value for money in treasury management, and to employing suitable comprehensive performance measurement techniques, within the context of effective risk management.”

APPENDIX B

PRUDENTIAL AND TREASURY INDICATORS FOR 2017/18

Estimate of Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream	6.0%
Estimate of the Incremental Impact of the New Capital Investment Decisions on the Council Tax (Band D)	£0.40
Estimate of Total Capital Expenditure to be Incurred	£5,113,000
Estimate of Capital Financing Requirement	£28,407,000
Operational Boundary	£27,762,000
Authorised Limit	£30,538,000
Upper limit for fixed rate interest exposures	100%
Upper limit for variable rate interest exposures	30%
Loan Maturity:	Limits:
Under 12 months	Upper 20% Lower 0%
12 months to 5 years	Upper 30% Lower 0%
5 years to 10 years	Upper 75% Lower 0%
Over 10 years	Upper 100% Lower 0%
Over 20 years	Upper 100% Lower 30%
Upper Limit for Principal Sums Invested for Periods Longer than 365 Days	£2,000,000

APPENDIX C

APPROVED COUNTRIES FOR INVESTMENTS – FITCH RATINGS

AAA	AA+	AA
Australia	Finland	Abu Dhabi (U.A.E)
Canada	Hong Kong	France
Denmark		Qatar
Germany		U.K.
Luxembourg		
Netherlands		
Norway		
Singapore		
Sweden		
Switzerland		
U.S.A.		