

### WEST SUFFOLK COUNCIL

## Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2020/21

### Introduction

Treasury management is the management of the Authority's cash flows, borrowing and investments, and the associated risks. The Authority has borrowed and invested substantial sums of money and is therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of financial risk are therefore central to the Authority's prudent financial management.

Treasury risk management at the Authority is conducted within the framework of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's *Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2017 Edition* (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Authority to approve a treasury management strategy before the start of each financial year. This report fulfils the Authority's legal obligation under the *Local Government Act 2003* to have regard to the CIPFA Code.

Investments held for service purposes or for commercial profit are considered in a different report, the Investment Strategy.

### External Context

**Economic background:** The UK's progress negotiating its exit from the European Union, together with its future trading arrangements, will continue to be a major influence on the Authority's treasury management strategy for 2020/21.

UK Consumer Price Inflation (CPI) for September registered 1.7% year on year, unchanged from the previous month. Core inflation, which excludes the more volatile components, rose to 1.7% from 1.5% in August. The most recent labour market data for the three months to August 2019 showed the unemployment rate ticked back up to 3.9% while the employment rate was 75.9%, just below recent record-breaking highs. The headline 3-month average annual growth rate for pay was 3.8% in August as wages continue to rise steadily. In real terms, after adjusting for inflation, pay growth increased 1.9%.

GDP growth rose by 0.3% in the third quarter of 2019 from -0.2% in the previous three months with the annual rate falling further below its trend rate to 1.0% from 1.2%. Services and construction added positively to growth, by 0.6% and 0.4% respectively, while production was flat and agriculture recorded a fall of 0.2%. Looking ahead, the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Report (formerly the

Quarterly Inflation Report) forecasts economic growth to pick up during 2020 as Brexit-related uncertainties dissipate and provide a boost to business investment helping GDP reach 1.6% in Q4 2020, 1.8% in Q4 2021 and 2.1% in Q4 2022.

The Bank of England maintained Bank Rate to 0.75% in November following a 7-2 vote by the Monetary Policy Committee. Despite keeping rates on hold, MPC members did confirm that if Brexit uncertainty drags on or global growth fails to recover, they are prepared to cut interest rates as required. Moreover, the downward revisions to some of the growth projections in the Monetary Policy Report suggest the Committee may now be less convinced of the need to increase rates even if there is a Brexit deal.

Growth in Europe remains soft, driven by a weakening German economy which saw GDP fall -0.1% in Q2 and is expected to slip into a technical recession in Q3. Euro zone inflation was 0.8% year on year in September, well below the European Central Bank's target of 'below, but close to 2%' and leading to the central bank holding its main interest rate at 0% while cutting the deposit facility rate to -0.5%. In addition to maintaining interest rates at ultra-low levels, the ECB announced it would recommence its quantitative easing programme from November.

In the US, the Federal Reserve began easing monetary policy again in 2019 as a pre-emptive strike against slowing global and US economic growth on the back on of the ongoing trade war with China. At its last meeting the Fed cut rates to the range of 1.50-1.75% and financial markets expect further loosening of monetary policy in 2020. US GDP growth slowed to 1.9% annualised in Q3 from 2.0% in Q2.

**Credit outlook:** Credit conditions for larger UK banks have remained relatively benign over the past year. The UK's departure from the European Union was delayed three times in 2019 and while there remains some concern over a global economic slowdown, this has yet to manifest in any credit issues for banks. Meanwhile, the post financial crisis banking reform is now largely complete, with the new ringfenced banks embedded in the market.

Challenger banks hit the news headlines in 2019 with Metro Bank and TSB Bank both suffering adverse publicity and falling customer numbers.

Looking forward, the potential for a "no-deal" Brexit and/or a global recession remain the major risks facing banks and building societies in 2020/21 and a cautious approach to bank deposits remains advisable.

**Interest rate forecast:** The Authority's treasury management adviser Arlingclose is forecasting that Bank Rate will remain at 0.75% until the end of 2022. The risks to this forecast are deemed to be significantly weighted to the downside, particularly given the need for greater clarity on Brexit and the continuing global economic slowdown. The Bank of England, having previously indicated interest rates may need to rise if a Brexit agreement was reached, stated in its November

Monetary Policy Report and its Bank Rate decision (7-2 vote to hold rates) that the MPC now believe this is less likely even in the event of a deal.

Gilt yields have risen but remain at low levels and only some very modest upward movement from current levels are expected based on Arlingclose’s interest rate projections. The central case is for 10-year and 20-year gilt yields to rise to around 1.00% and 1.40% respectively over the time horizon, with broadly balanced risks to both the upside and downside. However, short-term volatility arising from both economic and political events over the period is a near certainty.

A more detailed economic and interest rate forecast provided by Arlingclose is attached at Appendix A.

For the purpose of setting the budget, it has been assumed that new long-term loans will be borrowed at an average rate of 3.00%, and new treasury management investments will be made at an average rate of 0.65%.

### **Local Context**

On 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019, the Council held £4m of borrowing and £43.9m of investments. This is set out in further detail at **Appendix B**.

The underlying need to borrow for capital purposes is measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). The table below details the forecast CFR over the next 3 years.

	<b>31/03/19</b>	<b>31/03/20</b>	<b>31/03/20</b>	<b>31/03/21</b>	<b>31/03/22</b>	<b>31/03/23</b>
	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Approved Budget</b>	<b>Forecast</b>	<b>Forecast</b>	<b>Forecast</b>	<b>Forecast</b>
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>
<b>Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)</b>	<b>18.17</b>	<b>78.40</b>	<b>47.59</b>	<b>95.02</b>	<b>153.88</b>	<b>206.47</b>

The Council’s current strategy is to utilise current cash balances before taking on external borrowing - sometimes known as internal borrowing. The Council will continue to monitor this strategy to and decide whether externally borrowing to pre-fund future years requirements might better meet its borrowing objectives – detailed below.

The Council has an increasing CFR due to its capital programme. Consequently, investments are forecast to fall in year as capital receipts and revenue reserves are used to finance that capital expenditure and to finance the revenue budget.

CIPFA's *Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities* recommends that the Authority's total debt should be lower than its highest forecast CFR over the next three years. The Council expects to comply with this recommendation during 2020/21.

The Council will maintain cash and investment balances to a minimum level of £6m at each year-end to maintain sufficient liquidity but minimise credit risk.

## **Borrowing Strategy**

The Authority currently holds a £4million loan, consistent with the previous year, as part of its strategy for funding previous years' capital programmes. The Council expects to externally borrow around £49m in 2020/21. The Authority may also borrow additional sums to pre-fund future years' requirements, providing this does not exceed the authorised limit for borrowing of £102.3 million.

**Objectives:** The Authority's chief objective when borrowing money is to strike an appropriately low risk balance between securing low interest costs and achieving certainty of those costs over the period for which funds are required. The flexibility to renegotiate loans should the Authority's long-term plans change is a secondary objective.

**Strategy:** Given the significant cuts to public expenditure and in particular to local government funding, the Authority's borrowing strategy continues to address the key issue of affordability without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio. With short-term interest rates currently much lower than long-term rates, it is likely to be more cost effective in the short-term to either use internal resources, or to borrow short-term loans instead.

By doing so, the Authority is able to reduce net borrowing costs (despite foregone investment income) and reduce overall treasury risk. The benefits of internal / short-term borrowing will be monitored regularly against the potential for incurring additional costs by deferring borrowing into future years when long-term borrowing rates are forecast to rise modestly. Arlingclose will assist the Authority with this 'cost of carry' and breakeven analysis. Its output may determine whether the Authority borrows additional sums at long-term fixed rates in 2020/21 with a view to keeping future interest costs low, even if this causes additional cost in the short-term.

Traditionally, local authorities have raised their long-term borrowing from the PWLB but the government increased PWLB rates by 1% in October 2019 making it now a relatively expensive options. The Authority will now look to borrow any long-term loans from other sources including banks, pensions and local authorities, and will

investigate the possibility of issuing bonds and similar instruments, in order to lower interest costs and reduce over-reliance on one source of funding in line with the CIPFA Code.

Alternatively, the Authority may arrange forward starting loans during 2020/21, where the interest rate is fixed in advance, but the cash is received in later years. This would enable certainty of cost to be achieved without suffering a cost of carry in the intervening period.

In addition, the Authority may borrow further short-term loans to cover unplanned cash flow shortages.

**Sources of borrowing:** The approved sources of long-term and short-term borrowing are:

- Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) and any successor body
- any institution approved for investments (see below)
- any other bank or building society authorised to operate in the UK
- any other UK public sector body
- UK public and private sector pension funds (except Suffolk County Council Pension Fund)
- capital market bond investors
- UK Municipal Bonds Agency plc and other special purpose companies created to enable local authority bond issues

**Other sources of debt finance:** In addition, capital finance may be raised by the following methods that are not borrowing, but may be classed as other debt liabilities:

- leasing
- hire purchase
- Private Finance Initiative
- sale and leaseback

The Authority has previously raised all of its long-term borrowing from the commercial loan market but it continues to investigate other sources of finance, such as local authority loans that may be available at more favourable rates.

**Municipal Bonds Agency:** UK Municipal Bonds Agency plc was established in 2014 by the Local Government Association as an alternative to the PWLB. It plans to issue bonds on the capital markets and lend the proceeds to local authorities. This will be a more complicated source of finance than the PWLB for two reasons: borrowing authorities will be required to provide bond investors with a joint and several guarantee to refund their investment in the event that the agency is unable to for any reason; and there will be a lead time of several months between committing to borrow and knowing the interest rate payable. Any decision to

borrow from the Agency will therefore be the subject of a separate report to full Council.

**Lender's Option Borrower's Option Loans (LOBOs):** The Authority entered into a 70year £4m LOBO loan on 31 March 2008, where the lender had the option to propose an increase in the interest rate at set dates, following which the Authority had the option to either accept the new rate or repay the loan at no additional cost. However, in 2016/17 Barclays wrote to the council confirming their decision to waive their right to change the applicable interest rate of this loan, effectively changing this loan to a fixed rate loan.

**Short-term and variable rate loans:** These loans leave the Authority exposed to the risk of short-term interest rate rises and are therefore subject to the interest rate exposure limits in the treasury management indicators below.

**Debt rescheduling:** The PWLB allows authorities to repay loans before maturity and either pay a premium or receive a discount according to a set formula based on current interest rates. Other lenders may also be prepared to negotiate premature redemption terms. The Authority may take advantage of this and replace some loans with new loans, or repay loans without replacement, where this is expected to lead to an overall cost saving or a reduction in risk.

## **Investment Strategy**

The Authority currently holds significant invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves held. In the past 12 months, the Authority's investment balance has ranged between £41.7m and £48.9m. During 2020/21 and in future years, due to the Authority's Capital Programme, these levels are expected to fall dramatically.

**Objectives:** The CIPFA Code requires the Authority to invest its funds prudently, and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its investments before seeking the highest rate of return, or yield. The Authority's objective when investing money is to strike an appropriate balance between risk and return, minimising the risk of incurring losses from defaults and the risk of receiving unsuitably low investment income. Where balances are expected to be invested for more than one year, the Authority will aim to achieve a total return that is equal or higher than the prevailing rate of inflation, in order to maintain the spending power of the sum invested.

**Negative interest rates:** If the UK enters into a recession in 2020/21, there is a small chance that the Bank of England could set its Bank Rate at or below zero, which is likely to feed through to negative interest rates on all low risk, short-term investment options. This situation already exists in many other European countries. In this event, security will be measured as receiving the contractually agreed

amount at maturity, even though this may be less than the amount originally invested.

**Strategy:** Given the increasing risk and very low returns from short-term unsecured bank investments, the Authority aims to further diversify into more secure and/or higher yielding asset classes during 2020/21 (further details in the Approved counterparties section below). This is especially the case for the Authority’s surplus cash currently invested in short-term unsecured bank/building society deposits. This diversification will represent a change in strategy over the coming year.

**Business models:** Under the new IFRS 9 standard, the accounting for certain investments depends on the Authority’s “business model” for managing them. The Authority aims to achieve value from its internally managed treasury investments by a business model of collecting the contractual cash flows and therefore, where other criteria are also met, these investments will continue to be accounted for at amortised cost.

**Approved counterparties:** The Authority may invest its surplus funds with any of the counterparty types in table 3 below, subject to the cash limits (per counterparty) and the time limits shown.

**Table 3: Approved investment counterparties and limits**

<b>Credit Rating</b>	<b>Banks Unsecured</b>	<b>Banks Secured</b>	<b>Pooled Funds</b>
AAA	£6m 5 years	£12m 20 years	£12m 20 years
AA+	£6m 5 years	£12m 10 years	£12m 15 years
AA	£6m 4 years	£10m 5 years	£10m 15 years
AA-	£6m 3 years	£10m 4 years	£10m 10 years
A+	£6m 2 years	£8m 3 years	£8m 5 years
A	£6m 13 months	£8m 2 years	£8m 5 years
A-	£6m 6 months	£6m 13 months	£6m 5 years
None	£6m 6 months	n/a	£1m 5 years
<b>UK Government</b>	£Unlimited, 50 Years		
<b>Other UK Local Authorities</b>	Using Arlingclose Rating Formula (Per iDeal trade platform) Gold - £12m, 5 years Silver - £10m, 5 years		

	Bronze - £8m, 5 years
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This table must be read in conjunction with the notes below

**Credit rating:** Investment limits are set by reference to the lowest published long-term credit rating from a selection of external rating agencies. Where available, the credit rating relevant to the specific investment or class of investment is used, otherwise the counterparty credit rating is used. However, investment decisions are never made solely based on credit ratings, and all other relevant factors including external advice will be taken into account.

**Banks unsecured:** Accounts, deposits, certificates of deposit and senior unsecured bonds with banks and building societies, other than multilateral development banks. These investments are subject to the risk of credit loss via a bail-in should the regulator determine that the bank is failing or likely to fail. See below for arrangements relating to operational bank accounts.

**Banks secured:** Covered bonds, reverse repurchase agreements and other collateralised arrangements with banks and building societies. These investments are secured on the bank’s assets, which limits the potential losses in the unlikely event of insolvency, and means that they are exempt from bail-in. Where there is no investment specific credit rating, but the collateral upon which the investment is secured has a credit rating, the higher of the collateral credit rating and the counterparty credit rating will be used to determine cash and time limits. The combined secured and unsecured investments in any one bank will not exceed the cash limit for secured investments.

**Pooled funds:** Shares or units in diversified investment vehicles consisting of the any of the above investment types, plus equity shares and property. These funds have the advantage of providing wide diversification of investment risks, coupled with the services of a professional fund manager in return for a fee. Short-term Money Market Funds that offer same-day liquidity and very low or no volatility will be used as an alternative to instant access bank accounts, while pooled funds whose value changes with market prices and/or have a notice period will be used for longer investment periods.

Bond, equity and property funds offer enhanced returns over the longer term, but are more volatile in the short term. These allow the Authority to diversify into asset classes other than cash without the need to own and manage the underlying investments. Because these funds have no defined maturity date, but are available for withdrawal after a notice period, their performance and continued suitability in meeting the Authority’s investment objectives will be monitored regularly.

**UK Government:** Loans, bonds and bills issued or guaranteed by government. These investments are not subject to bail-in, and there is generally a lower risk of insolvency, although they are not zero risk. Investments with the UK Central Government may be made in unlimited amounts for up to 50 years.

**Operational bank accounts:** The Authority may incur operational exposures, for example through current accounts, collection accounts and merchant acquiring services, to any UK bank with credit ratings no lower than BBB- and with assets greater than £25 billion. These are not classed as investments, but are still subject to the risk of a bank bail-in, and balances will therefore be kept below £1m per bank. The Bank of England has stated that in the event of failure, banks with assets greater than £25 billion are more likely to be bailed-in than made insolvent, increasing the chance of the Authority maintaining operational continuity.

**Risk assessment and credit ratings:** Credit ratings are obtained and monitored by the Authority's treasury advisers, who will notify changes in ratings as they occur. Where an entity has its credit rating downgraded so that it fails to meet the approved investment criteria then:

- no new investments will be made,
- any existing investments that can be recalled or sold at no cost will be, and
- full consideration will be given to the recall or sale of all other existing investments with the affected counterparty.

Where a credit rating agency announces that a credit rating is on review for possible downgrade (also known as "rating watch negative" or "credit watch negative") so that it may fall below the approved rating criteria, then only investments that can be withdrawn on the next working day will be made with that organisation until the outcome of the review is announced. This policy will not apply to negative outlooks, which indicate a long-term direction of travel rather than an imminent change of rating.

**Other information on the security of investments:** The Authority understands that credit ratings are good, but not perfect, predictors of investment default. Full regard will therefore be given to other available information on the credit quality of the organisations in which it invests, including credit default swap prices, financial statements, information on potential government support, reports in the quality financial press and analysis and advice from the Authority's treasury management adviser. No investments will be made with an organisation if there are substantive doubts about its credit quality, even though it may otherwise meet the above criteria.

When deteriorating financial market conditions affect the creditworthiness of all organisations, as happened in 2008 and 2011, this is not generally reflected in credit ratings, but can be seen in other market measures. In these circumstances, the Authority will restrict its investments to those organisations of higher credit quality and reduce the maximum duration of its investments to maintain the required level of security. The extent of these restrictions will be in line with prevailing financial market conditions. If these restrictions mean that insufficient commercial organisations of high credit quality are available to invest the Authority's cash balances, then the surplus will be deposited with the UK

Government via the Debt Management Office or invested in government treasury bills for example, or with other local authorities. This will cause a reduction in the level of investment income earned, but will protect the principal sum invested.

**Investment limits:** The Authority’s revenue reserves available to cover investment losses are forecast to be nearly £33 million on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020. In order that no more than 40% of available reserves will be put at risk in the case of a single default, the maximum that will be lent to any one organisation (other than the UK Government) will be £12 million. A group of banks under the same ownership will be treated as a single organisation for limit purposes. Limits will also be placed on fund managers, investments in brokers’ nominee accounts, foreign countries and industry sectors as below. Investments in pooled funds and multilateral development banks do not count against the limit for any single foreign country, since the risk is diversified over many countries.

**Table 4: Investment limits**

	<b>Cash limit</b>
Any single organisation, except the UK Central Government	£12m each
UK Central Government	Unlimited
Any group of organisations under the same ownership	£12m per group
Any group of pooled funds under the same management	£12m per manager
Negotiable instruments held in a broker’s nominee account	£12m per broker
Foreign countries	£3m per country
Unsecured investments with building societies	£6m each
Money market funds	£12m in total

**Liquidity management:** The Authority uses a cash flow forecasting spreadsheet to determine the maximum period for which funds may prudently be committed. The forecast is compiled on a prudent basis to minimise the risk of the Authority being forced to borrow on unfavourable terms to meet its financial commitments. Limits on long-term investments are set by reference to the Authority’s medium-term financial plan and cash flow forecast.

**Treasury Management related Prudential Indicators**

The Authority’s overall Treasury Management Strategy and Code of Practice links into the Council’s Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy which are subject to separate reports to Council. A summary of the treasury related indicators is as follows, however these may be subject to change during the

final budget setting processes. The final Prudential Indicator figures will be approved by Council in February.

	<b>2019/20 Approved</b>	<b>2019/20 Revised</b>	<b>2020/21 Budget</b>	<b>2021/22 Budget</b>	<b>2022/23 Budget</b>
	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>
<b>Authorised limit for external debt</b>					
Borrowing	65,663	53,159	102,324	163,628	218,664
Other long term liabilities	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>65,663</b>	<b>53,159</b>	<b>102,324</b>	<b>163,628</b>	<b>218,664</b>
<b>Operational boundary for external debt</b>					
Borrowing	59,097	47,843	92,092	147,265	196,797
Other long term liabilities	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>59,097</b>	<b>47,843</b>	<b>92,092</b>	<b>147,265</b>	<b>196,797</b>
<b>Maturity Structure of Borrowing</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Upper Limit for % of borrowing maturing in:					
• Under 12 Months	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
• 1 - 2 years	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%
• 2 - 5 years	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%
• 5 - 10 years	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%
• Over 10 years	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
The lower limit for all periods	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Upper limit for total principal sums invested for over 364 days (per maturity date)</b>	<b>30,000</b>	<b>30,000</b>	<b>30,000</b>	<b>30,000</b>	<b>30,000</b>

## **Related Matters**

The CIPFA Code requires the Authority to include the following in its treasury management strategy.

**Financial Derivatives:** Local authorities have previously made use of financial derivatives embedded into loans and investments both to reduce interest rate risk (e.g. interest rate collars and forward deals) and to reduce costs or increase income at the expense of greater risk (e.g. LOBO loans and callable deposits). The general power of competence in Section 1 of the *Localism Act 2011* removes much of the uncertainty over local authorities' use of standalone financial derivatives (i.e. those that are not embedded into a loan or investment).

The Authority will only use standalone financial derivatives (such as swaps, forwards, futures and options) where they can be clearly demonstrated to reduce the overall level of the financial risks that the Authority is exposed to. Additional risks presented, such as credit exposure to derivative counterparties, will be taken into account when determining the overall level of risk. Embedded derivatives, including those present in pooled funds and forward starting transactions, will not be subject to this policy, although the risks they present will be managed in line with the overall treasury risk management strategy.

Financial derivative transactions may be arranged with any organisation that meets the approved investment criteria. The current value of any amount due from a derivative counterparty will count against the counterparty credit limit and the relevant foreign country limit.

**Markets in Financial Instruments Directive:** The Authority has opted up to professional client status with its providers of financial services, including advisers, banks, brokers and fund managers, allowing it access to a greater range of services but without the greater regulatory protections afforded to individuals and small companies. Given the size and range of the Authority's treasury management activities, the Chief Financial Officer believes this to be the most appropriate status.

### **Financial Implications**

The budget for investment income in 2020/21 is £131k, based on an average investment portfolio of £20.1million at an interest rate of 0.65%. The budget for debt interest paid in 2020/21 is £1.53m. Please note, these figures are provisional budget figures and may be subject to change during the budget setting approval process.

If actual levels of investments and borrowing, or actual interest rates, differ from those forecast, performance against budget will be correspondingly different.

### **Other Options Considered**

The CIPFA Code does not prescribe any particular treasury management strategy for local authorities to adopt. The Section 151 Officer believes that the above

strategy represents an appropriate balance between risk management and cost effectiveness. Some alternative strategies, with their financial and risk management implications, are listed below.

<b>Alternative</b>	<b>Impact on income and expenditure</b>	<b>Impact on risk management</b>
Invest in a narrower range of counterparties and/or for shorter times	Interest income will be lower	Lower chance of losses from credit related defaults, but any such losses may be greater
Invest in a wider range of counterparties and/or for longer times	Interest income will be higher	Increased risk of losses from credit related defaults, but any such losses may be smaller
Borrow additional sums at long-term fixed interest rates	Debt interest costs will rise; this is unlikely to be offset by higher investment income	Higher investment balance leading to a higher impact in the event of a default; however long-term interest costs may be more certain
Borrow short-term or variable loans instead of long-term fixed rates	Debt interest costs will initially be lower	Increases in debt interest costs will be broadly offset by rising investment income in the medium term, but long-term costs may be less certain
Reduce level of borrowing	Saving on debt interest is likely to exceed lost investment income	Reduced investment balance leading to a lower impact in the event of a default; however long-term interest costs may be less certain

## **Appendix A – Arlingclose Economic & Interest Rate Forecast November 2019**

### **Underlying assumptions:**

- The global economy is entering a period of slower growth in response to political issues, primarily the trade policy stance of the US. The UK economy has displayed a marked slowdown in growth due to both Brexit uncertainty and the downturn in global activity. In response, global and UK interest rate expectations have eased.
- Some positivity on the trade negotiations between China and the US has prompted worst case economic scenarios to be pared back. However, information is limited, and upbeat expectations have been wrong before.
- Brexit has been delayed until 31 January 2020. While the General Election has maintained economic and political uncertainty, the opinion polls suggest the Conservative position in parliament may be strengthened, which reduces the chance of Brexit being further frustrated. A key concern is the limited transitional period following a January 2020 exit date, which will maintain and create additional uncertainty over the next few years.
- UK economic growth has stalled despite Q3 2019 GDP of 0.3%. Monthly figures indicate growth waned as the quarter progressed and survey data suggest falling household and business confidence. Both main political parties have promised substantial fiscal easing, which should help support growth.
- While the potential for divergent paths for UK monetary policy remain in the event of the General Election result, the weaker external environment severely limits potential upside movement in Bank Rate, while the slowing UK economy will place pressure on the MPC to loosen monetary policy. Indeed, two MPC members voted for an immediate cut in November 2019.
- Inflation is running below target at 1.7%. While the tight labour market risks medium-term domestically-driven inflationary pressure, slower global growth should reduce the prospect of externally driven pressure, although political turmoil could push up oil prices.
- Central bank actions and geopolitical risks will continue to produce significant volatility in financial markets, including bond markets.

### **Forecast:**

- Although we have maintained our Bank Rate forecast at 0.75% for the foreseeable future, there are substantial risks to this forecast, dependant on General Election outcomes and the evolution of the global economy.
- Arlingclose judges that the risks are weighted to the downside.

- Gilt yields have risen but remain low due to the soft UK and global economic outlooks. US monetary policy and UK government spending will be key influences alongside UK monetary policy.
- We expect gilt yields to remain at relatively low levels for the foreseeable future and judge the risks to be broadly balanced.

	Dec-19	Mar-20	Jun-20	Sep-20	Dec-20	Mar-21	Jun-21	Sep-21	Dec-21	Mar-22	Jun-22	Sep-22	Dec-22	Average
<b>Official Bank Rate</b>														
Upside risk	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.21
Arlingclose Central Case	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75
Downside risk	-0.50	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.73
<b>3-month money market rate</b>														
Upside risk	0.10	0.10	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.25
Arlingclose Central Case	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75
Downside risk	-0.50	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.73
<b>1yr money market rate</b>														
Upside risk	0.10	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.25	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.23
Arlingclose Central Case	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85
Downside risk	-0.30	-0.50	-0.55	-0.65	-0.65	-0.65	-0.65	-0.65	-0.65	-0.65	-0.65	-0.65	-0.65	-0.60
<b>5yr gilt yield</b>														
Upside risk	0.30	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.40	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.37
Arlingclose Central Case	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.55	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.57
Downside risk	-0.35	-0.50	-0.50	-0.55	-0.60	-0.60	-0.60	-0.60	-0.60	-0.60	-0.60	-0.60	-0.60	-0.56
<b>10yr gilt yield</b>														
Upside risk	0.30	0.30	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.40	0.40	0.45	0.45	0.37
Arlingclose Central Case	0.75	0.75	0.80	0.80	0.85	0.85	0.90	0.90	0.95	0.95	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.88
Downside risk	-0.40	-0.40	-0.40	-0.40	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.45
<b>20yr gilt yield</b>														
Upside risk	0.30	0.30	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.40	0.40	0.45	0.45	0.37
Arlingclose Central Case	1.20	1.20	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.35	1.35	1.35	1.40	1.40	1.30
Downside risk	-0.40	-0.40	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.50	-0.50	-0.45
<b>50yr gilt yield</b>														
Upside risk	0.30	0.30	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.40	0.40	0.45	0.45	0.37
Arlingclose Central Case	1.20	1.20	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.35	1.35	1.35	1.40	1.40	1.30
Downside risk	-0.40	-0.40	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.45	-0.50	-0.50	-0.45

PWLB Certainty Rate (Maturity Loans) = Gilt yield + 1.80%

PWLB Local Infrastructure Rate (Maturity Loans) = Gilt yield + 0.60%

## Appendix B – Existing Investment & Debt Position

Investments held as at 31 December 2019				
Counterparty	Principal Amount	Interest Rate	Date Loaned	Date Returned
Leeds B/Soc	1,000,000	1.00%	18/03/19	27/01/20
Leeds B/Soc	1,000,000	1.00%	18/03/19	20/01/20
Coventry B/Soc	2,000,000	0.97%	21/05/19	24/01/20
Yorkshire B/Soc	1,000,000	0.74%	12/08/19	10/02/20
Nationwide B/Soc	1,000,000	0.74%	30/08/19	21/02/20
Skipton B/Soc	1,000,000	0.50%	02/09/19	19/02/20
Nat Counties B/Soc	1,000,000	0.93%	07/10/19	17/02/20
Nat Counties B/Soc	1,000,000	0.90%	01/11/19	17/02/20
Newcastle B/Soc	1,000,000	0.85%	01/11/19	17/02/20
Principality B/Soc	2,000,000	0.76%	15/11/19	16/03/20
Nationwide B/Soc	4,000,000	0.73%	26/11/19	17/02/20
Coventry B/Soc	4,000,000	0.71%	02/12/19	19/03/20
Lloyds 95 Day	2,400,000	1.10%	01/04/19	95 Day
Santander 365 Day	8,000,000	1.15%	01/04/19	365 Day
Santander 180 Day	1,000,000	0.95%	01/04/19	180Day
Santander 95 Day	500,000	0.85%	01/04/19	95 Day
Lloyds Treasury Account	6,000,000	0.65%	01/04/19	On call availability
Barclays Deposit Account	3,000,000	0.01%	01/04/19	On call availability
CCLA MMF	3,000,000	Variable	03/09/19	On call availability
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>43,900,000</b>			

**West Suffolk Council  
External Borrowing (Debt) as at 31 December 2019**

<b>Counterparty</b>	<b>Principal Amount</b>	<b>Interest Rate</b>	<b>Date Loaned</b>	<b>Date Returned</b>
Barclays Bank Plc	4,000,000	4.24%	31/03/2018	31/03/2078