

Financial Resilience Report - June 2021

Report number:	FRS/WS/21/004	
Report to and date(s):	Financial Resilience Sub Committee	12 July 2021
	Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee	29 July 2021
	Cabinet	21 September 2021
	Council	28 September 2021
Cabinet member:	Councillor Sarah Broughton Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance Tel: 07929 305787 Email: sarah.broughton@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Gregory Stevenson Service Manager – Finance and Performance Tel: 01284 757264 Email: gregory.stevenson@westsuffolk.gov.uk	

Decisions Plan: **This item is included in the Decisions Plan.**

Wards impacted: **All Wards**

Recommendation: **It is recommended that, the Financial Resilience Sub Committee:**

- 1. Notes the Financial Resilience Report – June 2021; and**
- 2. Makes recommendations as appropriate via the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee to Cabinet and Council.**

1. Treasury Management Report – June 2021

- 1.1 The report is part of the Councils' management and governance arrangements for Treasury Management activities under the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management. It provides a comprehensive assessment of activities from 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Council held investments of £39,300,000 as at 30 June 2021. Interest achieved in the first quarter of the financial year amounted to £16,517 against a budget for the period of £11,250.

- 2.2 External borrowing as at 30 June 2021 remained at £4,000,000, with the Council's level of internal borrowing increasing slightly to £46,712,000 as at 30 June 2021. Overall borrowing (both external and internal) is expected to increase over the full financial year, but not by as much as was originally budgeted for.

2.3

Borrowing costs (Interest Payable and MRP) for the year are forecast to be £965,793 against an approved budget of £3,135,850, although this could change if more external borrowing is undertaken than is currently forecast.

3. Interest Earned from Treasury Investments during the period

- 3.1 The 2021 to 2022 Annual Treasury Management and Investment Strategy Statements (report CAB/WS/21/007 approved 23 February 2021) sets out the Council's projections for the current financial year. The budget for investment income of 2021 to 2022 is £45,000 which is based on a 0.25 per cent target average rate of return on investments.

- 3.2 At the end of June 2021 interest actually earned during the first quarter of the financial year amounted to £16,517 (average rate of return of 0.245 per cent) against a profiled budget for the period of £11,250 (average rate of return 0.25 per cent); a budgetary surplus of £5,267.

Although interest rates continue to be low as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic which started in mid-March 2020, the Council had more cash invested during the period (see note at 3.4) leading to higher overall interest achieved despite the lower rates.

- 3.3 The table below summarises the interest earned and the average rate of return achieved at 30 June 2021.

Interest Earned and Average Rate of Return Summary			
Investment Category	Total Average Investment	Average Rate of Return (%)	Interest Earned in period
Temporary Investments (Term Deposits)			
Lloyds 95 Day Account	nil	0.45%	nil
Santander 365 Day Account	8,000,000	0.687%	13,711.78
Santander 180 Day Account	nil	0.380%	nil
Santander 95 Day Account	500,000	0.404%	504.11
Lloyds Treasury Account	8,241,229	0.080%	1,642.85
Barclays Deposit Account*	6,000,000	0.010%	149.59
CCLA MMF	4,000,000	0.039%	263.13
Local Authorities			
HM Debt Management Office	4,923,077	0.010%	245.48
Total Overall Average Return on Investments %			0.245%
Total Interest Earned - 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2021			16,517

* An annual interest bonus is paid at the end of the financial year if no withdrawals take place.

3.4 The table below summaries the investment activity during the period

Treasury Management – Investment Activity Summary	
	2021 to 2022 (£)
Opening Balance 01 April 2021	28,500,000
Investments made during the year (including transfers to business reserve accounts)	34,600,000
Sub Total	63,100,000
Less Investments realised during the year (including withdrawals from business reserve accounts)	23,800,000
Closing Balance 30 June 2021	39,300,000

Please note: The Councils cash balances are currently greater than forecast as a result of holding advanced business grant and COVID support grant payments.

3.5 The table below lists the investments held as at 30 June 2021

Investments held as at 30 June 2021				
Counterparty	Principal Amount (£)	Interest Rate	Date Loaned	Date Returned
Lloyds 95 Day Account	Nil			
Santander 365 Day	8,000,000	0.68%	01/04/20	365 day Notice

Santander 180 Day	Nil			
Santander 95 Day	500,000	0.40%	01/04/20	95 day Notice
Lloyds Treasury Account	7,800,000	0.08%	01/04/20	On call availability
Barclays Deposit Account	6,000,000	0.01%	01/04/20	On call availability
CCLA Money Market Fund	4,000,000	Variable	01/04/20	On call availability
HM Debt Man. Office	5,000,000	0.01%	14/04/21	19/08/21
HM Debt Man. Office	5,000,000	0.01%	01/06/21	19/07/21
HM Debt Man. Office	3,000,000	0.01%	24/06/21	20/12/21
There were no other fixed term investments				
Total	39,300,000			

Please note: The interest rates above are the rates as at 30 June 2021. Actual rates going forward could fluctuate.

- 3.6 The Council has an earmarked revenue reserve to mitigate against possible adverse fluctuations in the returns received from the council's investments, called the Interest Equalisation Reserve. The balance in this reserve as at 30 June 2021 was £865,473.

4. Borrowing activity during the period

- 4.1 As with the 2020 to 2021 financial year, the Council continues to hold significant cash balances, see 1.5 and 1.6 above. With this being the case, the Council's approach, supported by its advisors, will be to continue to borrow internally to fund its capital investment plans and to avoid the payment of external interest rates. This approach is continually kept under review and is based on the level of cash balances the Council holds, as well as the interest rates currently available in the market and the level of risk exposure the Council has to holding the level of internal borrowing it has against the risk of increasing market interest rates.
- 4.2 On 30 June 2021 West Suffolk had £4 million of external borrowing, which is the same level it held on 1 April 2021. With interest rates remaining low and cash balances remaining healthy, it is unlikely that any further external borrowing will need to be undertaken in the 2021 to 2022 financial year, although this is kept under constant review and may change if circumstances and advice changes. The use of internal funds is beneficial whilst we still have available cash, as we would be paying interest at a much higher rate (around 2.00 per cent) than we would get back from investing the extra surplus cash (current average return on our treasury investments of 0.245 per cent). This means we would have a significant cost of carrying external loans that are not currently required from a cash management perspective.

4.3 The table below is a summary of the external borrowings and temporary loans as at 30 June 2021.

External Borrowings and Temporary Loans					
Lender	Balance – 1 April 2021 (£)	Movement (£)	Balance - 30 June 2021 (£)	Interest Rate	Maturity date
Barclays Bank	4,000,000	0	4,000,000	4.24%	31 March 2078

4.4 Although the council has not undertaken any further external borrowing in the period, its underlying need to borrow (Capital Financing Requirement – CFR, the amount the Council has invested in its communities) is forecast to increase which will lead to an increase in the level of borrowing (either external or internal) the council will have.

4.5 The table below details the forecast for the councils Capital Financing Requirement (underlying need to borrow) over the next 3 years.

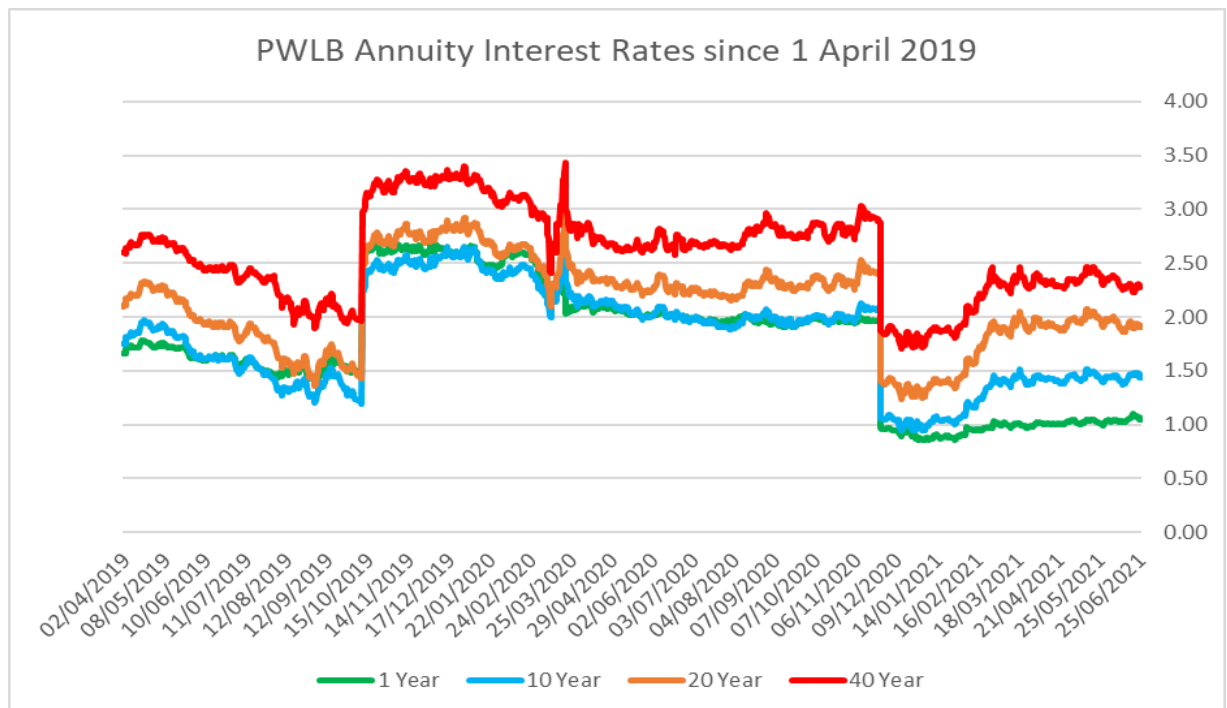
	31 March 2021	31 March 2022	31 March 2022	31 March 2023	31 March 2024
	Actual £ millions	Approved Budget £ millions	Forecast £ millions	Forecast £ millions	Forecast £ millions
Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	49.405	96.179	56.964	154.198	207.963

5. Borrowing Strategy and Sources of Borrowing

5.1 As detailed in the 2021 to 2022 Treasury Management Strategy Statement, the current borrowing strategy is still to make short-term use of internal funds (internal borrowing) or to borrow short-term loans. This is being continually monitored by the Council, along with Arlingclose (treasury advisors), to determine whether this is still the most optimal strategy or whether to look at borrowing additional sums at long-term fixed rates.

5.2 There are various sources of borrowing that the Council is able to make use of for longer term borrowing, which are detailed in the strategy statement. The traditional method for local authorities, and the default method the Council uses in all of its business cases, is to borrow from the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB). In the medium term, if the Council were to look at fixing out some of its internal borrowing into a long-term external loan then it could do so by borrowing through the PWLB.

5.3 The graph below shows historic PWLB interest rates over the previous 2 years, for different durations based on borrowing using the annuity method.



5.4 The graph above shows how PWLB rates fluctuate on a daily basis, as they are linked to UK Gilt rates – current PWLB rates are 1.00 per cent above the relevant UK Gilt rate. West Suffolk Council has access to PWLB Certainty Rates which are only 0.80 per cent above the relevant UK Gilt rate. In October 2019, PWLB increased the margin above UK Gilts from 1.00 per cent (0.80 per cent for Certainty Rate) to 2.00 per cent (1.80 per cent for Certainty Rate) overnight as a result of significant increases in the level of borrowing from PWLB. After undertaking consultation on changes to PWLB lending terms, the margin over UK Gilts was dropped back to 1.00 per cent (0.80 per cent for Certainty Rate) in November 2020.

5.5 PWLB interest rates for 40-year borrowing using the annuity method were 2.25 per cent (2.05 per cent for Certainty Rate) on 30 June 2021. Using the current value of internal borrowing of £46,712,000, if we were to transfer all of that internal borrowing to a 40-year PWLB loan using the 2.05 per cent Certainty Rate, the Council would incur an initial annual interest payable cost of £957,600. This compares to our interest payable budget for 2021 to 2022 of £2,053,000. If PWLB rates were to increase by 0.50 percent, then the interest payable cost would increase to £1,191,150, and an increase of 1.00 per cent in PWLB rates would lead to a cost of £1,424,700.

5.6 The Council, along with Arlingclose, will continue to explore alternative sources of borrowing to ensure the Council will be ready to externally borrow in the most advantageous way when it needs to.

6. Borrowing and Capital Costs - Affordability

6.1 The 2021 to 2022 Budget had assumptions on borrowing costs for capital projects included within it. These borrowing costs are a combination of interest payable on external borrowing, and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP), which is an amount set aside each year to repay that borrowing requirement. The main projects which make up the majority of the Councils borrowing requirement are:

- Western Way development
- Mildenhall Hub
- West Suffolk Operational Hub
- Investing in our Growth Fund

6.2 The business cases for each of these projects considered affordability based on what each project would deliver in terms of income and savings against the borrowing requirement for the project.

6.3 Borrowing costs only form part of the Councils revenue budget once the project has been completed, so although there may be a borrowing requirement, until such time as the project is complete there will be no MRP or interest payable as part of the revenue budget.

6.4 The details of these Budgets is laid out below.

Summary of Capital Borrowing Budget 2021 to 2022			
Project – all supported by business cases	Borrowing Requirement (Budget)	Borrowing Costs	
		Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)	Interest Payable
Investing in our Growth Fund	£15,838,544	£209,500	£410,500
Western Way Development	£21,560,577	£0	£0
Mildenhall Hub	£17,438,264	£243,150	£476,550
West Suffolk Operational Hub	£11,177,329	£168,500	£311,250
Newmarket Leisure Centre	£2,753,610	£12,250	£169,600
Toggam Solar Farm	£1,829,369	£80,950	£82,000
20 High St Haverhill	£1,816,595	£28,600	£56,700
113 High St Newmarket	£688,830	£11,300	£22,500
Olding Road DHL Depot	£3,550,381	£154,000	£113,350

Provincial House	£3,491,626	£53,950	£99,700
Vicon House, Western Way	£3,344,267	£49,300	£102,200
33-35 High St, Haverhill	£370,376	£5,300	£11,000
17/18 Cornhill	£2,695,394	£0	£0
St Edmunds Guest House	£929,850	£10,650	£35,100
Loans and other	£8,693,954	£55,400	£162,550
Total borrowing and associated servicing costs	£96,178,966	£1,082,850	£2,053,000*
% of Gross Revenue Income Budget		2.6%	4.9%

* This represents an average interest rate of 2.75 per cent.

6.5 The affordability of borrowing and capital costs is a key metric in our financial planning and resilience assessments. Current and future financial affordability and resilience to such costs is key when evaluating any new opportunities. As set out in the approved West Suffolk Capital Strategy we are using the per cent of the Gross Revenue Income Budget for both MRP and Interest Payable to assess the Councils affordability position. In other words, how much (in percentage terms) of our gross revenue income budget is committed to servicing our external debt.

6.6 The forecast position on each of these projects for the year of 2021 to 2022 is as below – assuming internal borrowing continues for the full year (note this is constantly reviewed with our advisors as our approach).

Summary of Forecast Capital Borrowing for 2021 to 2022				
Project – all supported by business cases	External Borrowing	Internal Borrowing	Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)	Interest Payable
Investing in our Growth Fund	£0	£0	£0	£0
Western Way Development	£0	£2,000,000	£0	£0
Mildenhall Hub	£0	£17,760,506	£243,150	£0
West Suffolk Operational Hub	£0	£9,516,968	£131,741	£0

Newmarket Leisure Centre	£4,000,000	£0	£12,799	£169,600
Toggam Solar Farm	£0	£1,840,044	£70,276	£0
20 High St Haverhill	£0	£1,814,305	£30,890	£0
113 High St Newmarket	£0	£688,409	£11,721	£0
Olding Road DHL Depot	£0	£3,549,684	£154,697	£0
Provincial House	£0	£3,489,918	£55,658	£0
Vicon House, Western Way	£0	£3,339,032	£54,535	£0
33-35 High Street, Haverhill	£0	£370,380	£5,296	£0
17/18 Cornhill	£0	£2,915,000	£0	£0
St Edmunds Guest House	£0	£993,629	£11,584	£0
Loans and other	£0	£6,520,347	£13,945	£0
Sub total	£4,000,000	£54,210,646	£796,193	£169,600
Newmarket Leisure Centre cumulative MRP reducing internal borrowing amount		(£1,246,940)		
Total Borrowing		£56,963,706		£965,793
% of Gross Revenue Income (excl COVID-19 Grants)			2.0%	0.4%

6.7 The original budget position has moved due to the following reasons:

- Forecast use of internal borrowing instead of external borrowing during 2021 to 2022.
- Reviewing the Western Way development in light of the COVID-19 outbreak, which led to a timing delay in the project programme against what was originally forecast.
- Forecast underspend against the Investing in our Growth Fund.

7. Borrowing and Income - Proportionality

7.1 The concept of proportionality, alongside that of affordability, is a key consideration when considering funding projects through borrowing.

7.2 The costs and risks associated with that borrowing should be looked at as part of the whole financial position of the council in our financial planning and resilience assessments. Awareness of the scale and relationship with the asset base and revenue delivery is essential to informed decision making.

7.3 As at 31 March 2021, the Councils asset base was valued at £266.6 million. As such the budgeted borrowing requirement of £96.18 million would have represented 36.07 per cent of our long-term asset base. The forecast borrowing requirement at the end of the financial year is £56.96 million, which represents 21.37 per cent of our long-term asset base. It is worth noting that the capital projects being undertaken would increase the overall asset base of the council, leading to the borrowing requirement being a smaller percentage of the asset base than detailed above.

8. Borrowing and Asset Yields

8.1 Borrowing, whether internally from available cash balances or externally from other institutions, bears a cost which will affect the yield of investments made with that money. The yield is the return on the investment, whether through additional income of savings, less the borrowing costs associated with the investment, against the value of the investment.

8.2 West Suffolk Council makes investment decisions to support its strategic priorities which are not solely focussed on financial return, in line with our agreed Investing in our Growth Agenda Strategy. There are therefore a range of yield returns delivered by these investments that varies from project-to-project dependant on the wider blended socio-economic returns that these projects give.

8.3 In order to aid comparison between projects and returns from 'normal' treasury management cash investment (section 2 above), the table below shows the income and net return from the current project portfolio.

2021/22 BUDGET	Asset Value £m	Borrowing £m	Annual Income £m	Net Return (Excl. Borrowing Costs *)	Net Return (Incl. Borrowing Costs)	Yield % (E/A)
	A	B	C	D	E	F
Industrial Units	£24.2	£0.0	£2.6	£2.2	£2.2	9.0%
Retail Units	£28.2	£0.0	£1.8	£1.5	£1.5	5.3%
Land	£10.3	£0.0	£1.0	£1.0	£1.0	9.6%
Solar Farm	£14.4	£1.8	£1.4	£1.1	£0.4	2.7%
Growth Fund		£15.8	£0.7	£0.7	£0.2	1.0%
Western Way Development		£21.6	£0.0	£0.0	£0.0	0.0%
Mildenhall Hub		£17.4	£0.0	£0.0	£0.0	0.0%

Other		£11.2	£0.7	£0.6	£0.6	0.0%
TOTAL	£77.1	£67.8	£8.2	£7.1	£5.9	4.1%

2021/22	Asset Value £m	Borrowing £m	Annual Income £m	Net Return (Excl. Borrowing Costs *)	Net Return (Incl. Borrowing Costs)	Yield % (E/A)
	A	B	C	D	E	F
Industrial Units	£24.2	£0.0	£2.6	£2.2	£2.2	8.7%
Retail Units	£31.8	£0.0	£1.8	£1.5	£1.5	4.4%
Land	£10.3	£0.0	£1.0	£1.0	£1.0	8.7%
Solar Farm	£14.4	£0.0	£1.4	£1.1	£0.4	2.1%
Growth Fund		£0.0	£0.7	£0.7	£0.2	1.0%
West Suffolk Operational Hub		£0.0	£0.0	£0.0	£0.0	0.0%
Mildenhall Hub		£0.0	£0.0	£0.0	£0.0	0.0%
Other		£4.0	£0.7	£0.6	£0.6	0.0%
TOTAL	£80.7	£4.0	£8.2	£7.1	£5.9	4.2%

* Includes direct operating costs

9. CIPFA Consultation on Prudential Code

- 9.1 In February 2021, CIPFA undertook some consultation on proposed changes to the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities – see link ([Prudential Code Consultation | CIPFA](#)). The Prudential Code is a professional code of practice to support local authorities in taking decisions on capital investments. Key objectives of the code of practice are to ensure that local authorities’ capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable; that treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice; and that local strategic planning, asset management planning and proper option appraisal are supported.
- 9.2 The main proposed change was to amend the code’s wording to restrict local authority borrowing for yield from “purely for profit” to “primarily for profit”. Following feedback from local authorities, CIPFA has said that it will give more detail on what borrowing is allowed, as well as which sources of finance are prudent, and which are restricted.
- 9.3 Another proposed change which are likely to come into effect are the introduction of a liability benchmark as an indicator in the code. This assesses the lowest borrowing options available to an authority, by

comparing debt levels to future liquidity. The next monitoring report will include an introduction to the liability benchmark.

10. Market Information

- 10.1 The Council's treasury management advisors provide economic and interest rate forecasts on a monthly basis. **Appendix 1** has details from this forecast from June 2021.

11. Appendices referenced in this report

- 11.1 Appendix 1 - Arlingclose Economic and Interest Rate Forecast

12. Background documents associated with this report

- 12.1 Capital Strategy 2021 to 2022, Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2021 to 2021 and Treasury Management Code of Practice.