

INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2019/20

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Investment Strategy is a requirement of the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) *Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments*. The MHCLG Guidance also requires local authorities to have regard to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) publications of *The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities* and *Treasury Management in the Public Services* which both complement it.
- 1.2 The council invests its money for three broad purposes:
- because it has surplus cash as a result of its day-to-day activities, for example when income is received in advance of expenditure (known as **treasury management investments**),
 - to support local public services by lending to or buying shares in other organisations (**service investments**), and
 - to earn investment income (known as **commercial investments** where this is the main purpose).
- 1.3 The main purpose of the strategy is to identify the level of the council's service and commercial investments and to set risk management parameters around these. It is based on the authority's existing and planned service-related and commercial investments and is consistent with the proposed General Fund Medium Term Capital Programme due to be approved by full Council in February 2019.

2. TREASURY MANAGEMENT INVESTMENTS

- 2.1 The council typically receives its income in cash (e.g. from taxes and grants) before it pays for its expenditure in cash (e.g. through payroll and invoices). It also holds reserves for future expenditure and collects local taxes on behalf of other local authorities and central government. These activities, plus the timing of borrowing decisions, lead to a cash surplus which is invested in accordance with guidance from the CIPFA. The balance of treasury management investments is expected to fluctuate between £20m and £40m during the 2019/20 financial year.
- 2.2 **Contribution:** The contribution that these investments make to the objectives of the council is to support effective treasury management activities. These investments also contribute an income stream to support the General Fund budget position annually.
- 2.3 **Further details:** Full details of the council's policies and its plan for 2019/20 for treasury management investments are covered in a separate document, the Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS), due to be considered for approval by Cabinet as part of the budget process for 2019/20. The approved TMSS will be published on the council's website.

3. SERVICE INVESTMENTS: LOANS

- 3.1 **Contribution:** The council can lend money to its subsidiaries, its charities where the council is the trustee, its external service providers, local residents and its employees to support local public services and stimulate local economic growth. In the future the council may also lend money to joint ventures it decides to enter into to help deliver its major corporate investment initiatives. Examples of loans the council makes are shown in the table below:

Table 1 – Example of Loans Made for Service Investments

Organisation	Relationship	Purpose	Service Objective
Oportunitas Ltd	Housing and Regeneration subsidiary company	Primarily for the acquisition of residential property for rent	Provision of good quality homes for rent Generate additional revenue stream for the General Fund
East Kent Housing Ltd	External Service Provider	Acquisition of new software system (interest free)	Efficient management of HRA properties
Local property owners	Jointly funded empty homes initiative with Kent County Council	Loans to property owners to bring empty properties across the district back in to residential use	Bringing empty residential properties back into use and the provision of additional good quality homes

- 3.2 **Security:** The main risk when making service loans is that the borrower will be unable to repay the principal lent and/or the interest due. In order to limit this risk, and ensure that total exposure to service loans remains proportionate to the size of the authority, upper limits on the outstanding loans to each category of borrower have been set as follows:

Table 2 - Loans for service purposes in £ millions

Category of borrower	31.3.2018 actual			2019/20
	Balance owing £m	Loss allowance £m	Net figure in accounts £m	Approved Limit £m
Subsidiaries	3.501	-	3.501	7.6
External Service Provider	0.186	-	0.186	0.3
Local residents/landlords	4.234	-	4.234	4.7
TOTAL	7.921	-	7.921	12.6

- 3.3 The approved limit for subsidiaries in 2019/20 includes the increase in loan capital to Oportunitas of £2.47m approved by full Council on 28 February 2018 as part of its future strategy for the council's wholly owned subsidiary company.
- 3.4 Accounting standards require the authority to set aside loss allowance for loans, reflecting the likelihood of non-payment. Previously no loss allowance has been made for the loans made as the majority of these have been secured against property with a low risk of default. However, the authority is required to keep the position under review and the figures for loans in the Council's statement of accounts from 2018/19 onwards will be shown net of any loss allowance made. The authority makes every reasonable effort to collect the full sum lent and has appropriate credit control arrangements in place to recover overdue repayments.
- 3.5 **Risk assessment:** The council assesses the risk of loss before entering into and whilst holding service loans. This includes:
- 3.5.1 Ensuring the authority has the legal power to make the loan to the entity in the first place.
- 3.5.2 Assessing loan applications against the type of market the entity is operating and competing in:
- i) Loans to the council's subsidiary company, charities where it is the trustee, joint ventures or external service providers require a business case and, possibly, business model to be prepared in advance. This needs to demonstrate the entity's long term financial viability, its ability to meet the loan repayment terms and also the internal governance arrangements in place to support their operations. The entity also needs to demonstrate how it will evolve over time against both market conditions and its customer needs. The entity needs to identify any ongoing or future investment requirements to support it over the term of the loan. The authority's loan agreement may require the entity to provide regular performance information to enable an assessment to be made of their ability to continue to meet its terms and conditions. Unless

otherwise agreed, loans made are secured against the property or other assets of the entity to help mitigate the risk of default.

- ii) Loans to local property owners for housing improvements schemes are made in accordance with the criteria of the specific scheme agreed by the council. All previous and existing housing improvement schemes offer interest free loans (soft loans) with the requirement that the principal sum is repaid to the authority at an agreed trigger point such as after an agreed period of time or when the property is eventually sold. Loans are secured as a charge against the property to help mitigate the risk of default.

3.5.3 External advisors can be used to support the council in assessing investment opportunities and preparing loan agreements. This can include advising on investment options appraisal, business plan or case submissions, relevant commercial lending terms, compliance for State Aid, taxation and other statutory issues and reporting obligations for the borrower.

3.5.4 The council has established procurement and contract management procedures to appoint and monitor the performance of external advisors it uses. This can involve;-

- interviewing potential consultants to gain a better understanding of their breadth of experience and knowledge in the specific area,
- liaising with other local authorities through established groups and channels to discuss the suitability of consultants being considered where it is known they have been used before,
- focusing advice on larger firms with the breadth and depth of expertise to minimise risk, and
- utilising our own professional judgement to consider the advice received.

3.5.5 Credit ratings are not currently applicable as part of the assessment process for checking the financial status of entities or individuals who apply for a loan. This may alter if the nature and scope of loans made was to change in the future.

3.5.6 The council may require other sources of information to help assess the suitability of the entity requesting a loan such as financial accounts or a bank reference.

4. SERVICE INVESTMENTS: SHARES

4.1 Currently the council only invests in share equity for its wholly owned Housing and Regeneration subsidiary company, Oportunitas Limited. In the future the council may also acquire shares in either other subsidiaries companies it may choose to establish or joint venture companies it decides to enter into to help deliver its major corporate investment initiatives.

4.2 **Contribution:** The council's investment in the shares of Oportunitas Limited supports its operational trading activities including its acquisition of residential property to increase the supply of good quality housing for rent to local

people. No dividend return is expected in the medium term from this investment, however the council's overall investment in Oportunitas provides an additional revenue stream to the General Fund.

- 4.3 **Security:** One of the risks of investing in shares is that they fall in value meaning that the initial outlay may not be recovered. In order to limit this risk, upper limits on the sum invested in each category of shares have been set as follows.

Table 3 - : Shares held for service purposes in £ millions

Category of company	31.3.2018 actual			2019/20
	Amounts invested £'m	Gains or losses £'m	Value in accounts £'m	Approved Limit £'m
Subsidiaries	0.479	-	0.479	5.21
TOTAL	0.479	-	0.479	5.21

- 4.4 The approved limit for 2019/20 includes the increase in share equity of £4.43m approved by full Council on 28 February 2018 as part of its future strategy for Oportunitas.

- 4.5 **Risk assessment:** The council assesses the risk of loss before entering into and whilst holding shares of its subsidiaries or joint ventures. This includes:

- 4.5.1 Ensuring the authority has the legal power to acquire the share capital of the entity in the first place.

- 4.5.2 Preparing a long term business case and business model for the company identifying the level, structure and time scale of the investment required to enable it to become financially viable and sustainable and provide the authority with an appropriate financial return

- 4.5.3 Requiring the company to develop and maintain a business plan outlining how it will meet the objectives of the authority as shareholder including identifying associated risks, including market conditions, and measures to mitigate these.

- 4.5.4 Requiring the company in the event it was to cease trading or become insolvent to dispose of its assets and transfer the net receipt to the authority or transfer the assets to the control of the authority itself, to help mitigate the risk of financial loss.

- 4.5.5 Using external advisers if required to support the authority in preparing its business planning and modelling to support the creation and development of the company and also structure the shareholder agreement.

- 4.5.6 Using the authority's established procurement and contract management procedures to appoint and monitor the performance of external advisors it uses. This can involve;-

- interviewing potential consultants to gain a better understanding of their breadth of experience and knowledge in the specific area,

- liaising with other local authorities through established groups and channels to discuss the suitability of consultants being considered where it is known they have been used before,
- focusing advice on larger firms with the breadth and depth of expertise to minimise risk, and
- utilising our own professional judgement to consider the advice received.

4.5.7 Credit rating checks are not applicable as a risk assessment check to support the authority's investment in its wholly owned subsidiary company. This may alter if the nature and scope of the council's acquisition of share capital made was to change in the future.

4.6 **Liquidity:** The council's share equity investment in Oportunitas is a long term commitment with no specified end date. The business case and model supporting the council's investment in Oportunitas is based on a 45 year period. The council's future capital investment plans do not require the repayment of the share equity. As shareholder the council has overall control of the company and can decide if it wants to review the level of its share equity investment. For any future share equity investment in other subsidiary companies or joint ventures it is likely these will also be a long term commitment, however this will be determined at the time the investment is being considered for approval.

4.7 **Non-specified Investments:** Shares are the only investment type that the council has identified that meets the definition of a non-specified investment in the government guidance. The limits above on share investments are therefore also the authority's upper limits on non-specified investments. The council has not adopted any procedures for determining further categories of non-specified investment since none are likely to meet the definition.

5. COMMERCIAL INVESTMENTS: PROPERTY

5.1 **Contribution:** The council invests in local commercial and residential land and property with the intention of making a capital gain or generating a new revenue stream that will be spent on local public services. The council currently holds investment property for the following main reasons;

- i) Land and property to support the proposed Otterpool Park Garden Town development of up to 10,000 new homes over an approximate 30 year period.
- ii) Land for other commercial and residential development.
- iii) Commercial and light industrial units for local businesses providing employment opportunities and the authority with a net rental stream.

5.2 The table below summarises the value of the council's investment assets grouped by property type measured against the original purchase or construction cost. For some assets the original purchase or construction cost data is not available in which case the value of the asset at 1st April 2014 has been used as a proxy value with changes since then shown as a gain or loss.

Table 4 - Property held for investment purposes

Property Type	Value at 01/04/2014	Actual Purchase Cost	31/03/2018 (Actual)		31/03/2019 (Projection)	
			Accrued Gains (Losses)	Value in Accounts	Accrued Gains (Losses)	Value in Accounts
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Commercial and Light Industrial (existing)	1,119	n/a	305	1,424	305	1,424
Land (existing)	183	n/a	284	467	284	467
Land (acquired since 01/04/2014)	n/a	1,112	-55	1,057	-55	1,057
Otterpool (acquired to 31/03/18)	n/a	5,324	-269	5,055	-269	5,055
Otterpool (planned 18/19)	n/a	1,380	n/a	n/a	0	1,380
Total	1,302	7,816	265	8,003	265	9,383

5.3 It is anticipated the council's value of property held for investment purposes will be increased by 31 March 2019 to reflect the reclassification of land held at Princes Parade, Hythe and Fernfield, Hawkinge from surplus assets to investment assets. The impact of this potential change has yet to be determined and will be reflected in the Council's Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2019, if it happens.

5.4 **Security:** In accordance with government guidance, the council considers a property investment to be secure if its accounting valuation is at or higher than its purchase cost including taxes and transaction costs. However, it is recognised the council is acquiring land for development reasons and therefore its existing use value as an investment asset may be significantly lower than its future potential value.

5.5 A fair value assessment of the council's investment property portfolio has been made within the past twelve months, and the underlying assets provide security for capital investment. Should the 2018/19 year end accounts preparation and audit process value these properties below their purchase cost and there is no reasonable prospect of this being reversed as a result of the council's investment plans, then an updated investment strategy will be

presented to full Council detailing the impact of the loss on the security of investments and any revenue consequences arising therefrom.

- 5.6 **Risk assessment:** The council assesses the risk of loss before entering into and whilst holding property investments by preparing a business case to support the proposed investment. This includes:
- 5.6.1 Assessing the current and expected future market demand and need for relevant property by reference to local, regional or national data, including rental and occupancy levels.
 - 5.6.2 Assessing the current and expected future market competition for the type of property being considered.
 - 5.6.3 Identifying the relevant legal power the authority is using to undertake the purchase and whether or not it may need to purchase and operate it through a separate entity such as a company or joint venture.
 - 5.6.4 Identifying how the authority can recover or dispose of its interest in the property without financial loss.
 - 5.6.5 Undertaking a whole-life financial assessment for the proposed scheme to identify any on-going investment that may be required.
 - 5.6.6 Using specialist external advisors such as, valuers, surveyors, property agents, solicitors and taxation and other finance specialists to help evaluate the proposed investment if required.
 - 5.6.7 Using the council's established procurement and contract management procedures to appoint and monitor the performance of external advisors it uses. This can involve;-
 - interviewing potential consultants to gain a better understanding of their breadth of experience and knowledge in the specific area,
 - liaising with other local authorities through established groups and channels to discuss the suitability of consultants being considered where it is known they have been used before,
 - focusing advice on larger firms with the breadth and depth of expertise to minimise risk, and
 - utilising our own professional judgement to consider the advice received.
 - 5.6.8 Using credit checks if required to assess the financial strength of third parties the council could be exposed to, for instance where the authority proposes to purchase an investment property which has existing commercial tenants. Credit ratings are not applicable as part of the assessment process for property investment.
 - 5.6.9 The council has established a proactive risk management culture within the organisation, including all key projects being required to consider risks, as well as quarterly monitoring and reporting of key corporate risks which includes, at times, key investment plans such as the delivery of Otterpool.

- 5.7 **Liquidity:** Compared with other investment types, property is relatively difficult to sell and convert to cash at short notice, and can take a considerable period to sell in certain market conditions.
- 5.8 The council's commercial and light industrial units' portfolio is viewed as a long term commitment providing valuable local jobs and supporting the local economy. Any decision to dispose of existing units would need to be balanced against providing alternative employment opportunities, continuing to support the local economy as well as the direct financial impact to the authority.
- 5.9 Where property is held for future development reasons the council will identify how it intends to recover or access the cost of its capital investment as part of any proposal for the specific development.

6. PROPORTIONALITY

- 6.1 The current Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) does not include property investment income as part of its projections as a number of the council's schemes are currently only in the planning stage. The MTFS is however over the medium term in a deficit position, and the authority has commenced work on exploring investments to support the closure of this gap (along with an internal Transformation programme). Early indicative projections suggest that these schemes could contribute about £1.0m pa by 2022/23, which, including the existing investment income forecast of about £1m, would represent around 2.0% proportion of the gross service expenditure of the authority. As the plans further develop the Council will further consider its approach to proportionality in respect of investment income to gross service expenditure.

Table 5 - Proportionality of Investments

	2017/18 Actual	2018/19 Forecast	2019/20 Budget	2020/21 Projection	2021/22 Projection
Gross service expenditure	94,861,000	96,128,000	97,412,000	98,714,000	100,033,000
Investment income	(871,000)	(954,000)	(1,128,000)	(1,060,000)	(1,060,000)
Proportion	0.92%	0.99%	1.16%	1.07%	1.06%

7. CAPACITY, SKILLS AND CULTURE

7.1 Elected members and statutory officers:

- 7.1.1 All members are provided with a full training session on treasury management and investments by the authority's Treasury Management advisors (Arlingclose Ltd). This is conducted regularly and encompasses all members and not just those on the relevant committees. Training is also held on specific issues for nominated councillors (such as on Investment Appraisals) and there are ongoing briefings for individual members with specific responsibilities such as the Finance Portfolio holder and the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee. All members have a wide exposure to

investment decisions and are able to interrogate officers either formally or informally.

7.2 Commercial deals:

7.2.1 The council has a process in place whereby all proposed capital investment decisions are referred to Financial Services and Legal Services to ensure compliance with the principles of the prudential framework and of the regulatory framework for local authorities. For individual major projects, including commercial property investments, a project board or working group is established at the outset which includes officers from Financial Services and Legal Services who advise on compliance with statutory guidance and regulatory issues.

7.3 Corporate governance:

7.3.1 The council has a clearly articulated corporate plan and associated values which are being refreshed as part its transformation programme. It also has a long standing practice of regular and transparent decisions in relation to investments held for both treasury management purposes and also for investment purposes. The governance structure includes scrutiny of all decisions through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to these being considered by Cabinet. Any new investment decisions need to be approved by Full Council with a full explanation of the benefits, opportunities and risks associated with any proposal. The ongoing performance of investments is regularly reported back to Members and is subject to ongoing review and monitoring.

8. INVESTMENT INDICATORS

8.1 The council proposes to set the following quantitative indicators to allow elected members and the public to assess the Authority's total risk exposure as a result of its investment decisions.

8.2 **Total risk exposure:** The first indicator shows the authority's total exposure to potential investment losses. This includes amounts the authority is contractually committed to lend but have yet to be drawn down and guarantees it has issued over third party loans.

Table 6 - Total investment exposure in £millions

Total investment exposure £m	31.03.2018 Actual	31.03.2019 Forecast	31.03.2020 Forecast
Treasury management investments	37.3	37.4	20.0
Service investments: Loans	7.9	9.5	12.5
Service investments: Shares	0.5	0.5	5.2
Commercial investments: Property	8.0	9.4	17.1
TOTAL EXPOSURE	53.8	56.8	54.9

- 8.3 **How investments are funded:** Government guidance is that these indicators should include how investments are funded. Since the council does not normally associate particular assets with particular liabilities, this guidance is difficult to comply with. However, the following investments could be described as being funded by borrowing. The remainder of the council's investments are funded by usable reserves and income received in advance of expenditure.

Table 7 - Investments funded by borrowing in £millions

Investments funded by borrowing £m	31.03.2018 Actual	31.03.2019 Forecast	31.03.2020 Forecast
Service investments: Loans	-	-	1.6
Service investments: Shares	-	-	2.8
Commercial investments: Property	5.7	6.1	10.1
TOTAL FUNDED BY BORROWING	5.7	6.1	14.5

- 8.4 **Rate of return received:** This indicator shows the investment income received less the associated costs, including the cost of borrowing where appropriate, as a proportion of the sum initially invested. Note that due to the complex local government accounting framework, not all recorded gains and losses affect the revenue account in the year they are incurred.

Table 8 - Investment rate of return (net of all costs)

Investments net rate of return	2017/18 Actual	2018/19 Forecast	2019/20 Forecast
Treasury management investments	1.02%	1.26%	1.96%
Service investments: Loans	1.86%	2.04%	2.39%
Service investments: Shares	0%	0%	0%
Commercial investments: Property	1.07%	1.06%	1.10%
ALL INVESTMENTS	1.13%	1.34%	1.86%

8.4.1 The net return on loans made for service investments includes those that are interest free and are accounted for as 'soft loans', including private sector housing improvement loans.

End