Appendix 1

CAPITAL STRATEGY

2020/21 TO 2022/23

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

The creation and approval of a capital strategy is now a requirement of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2017 Edition (the CIPFA Code).

The code requires the Council to set Prudential Indicators in relation to its capital programme. This document includes those Prudential Indicators and these are included in tables 1, 4 - 7 clearly marked as such.

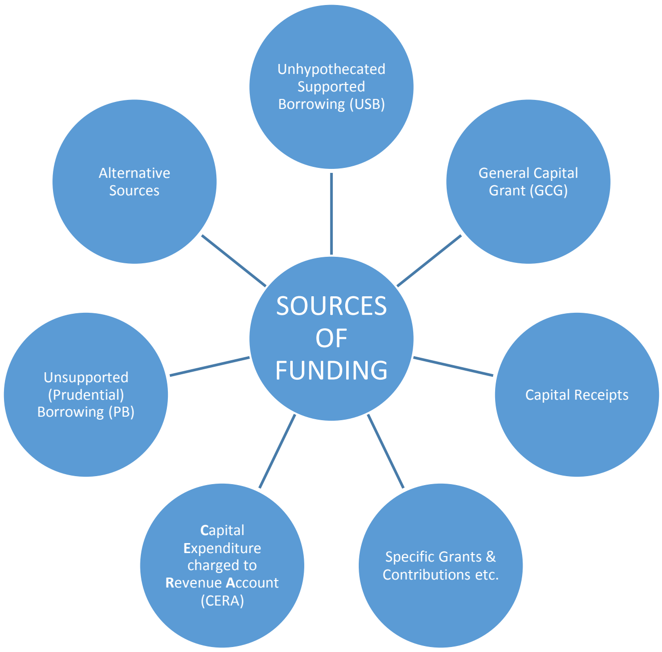
This document updates the capital strategy approved by Council in February 2019. It gives a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of local public services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability.

2. CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

Capital expenditure occurs when the Council spends money on assets, such as property or vehicles, which will be used for more than one year. In local government this includes spending on assets owned by other bodies, and loans and grants to other bodies enabling them to buy assets. The Council has some limited discretion on what counts as capital expenditure, as assets costing below £20k are not capitalised and are charged to revenue in year. Details of the Council's policy on capitalisation may be found in the Accounting Policy section of the Council's Statement of Accounts.

3. RESOURCES

The sources of funding available to the Council are described below:



<u>Unhypothecated Supported Borrowing (USB), commonly referred to as Supported Borrowing</u>

Each year Welsh Government provides councils with a Supported Borrowing capital allocation. Councils can then borrow to fund capital expenditure up to that annual allocation, and Welsh

Government will include funding to cover the revenue costs associated with that level of borrowing in future years within the Revenue Support Grant. The Council decides how this funding is spent.

General Capital Grant (GCG)

This is the annual capital grant from Welsh Government. The Council decides how this funding is spent.

Supported borrowing and general capital grant will be used to fund capital schemes which:

- invest in, or maintain the life of, existing assets which will be retained for future service delivery
- are statutory / regulatory in nature

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) equivalent is known as the Major Repairs Allowance (MRA).

Capital Receipts

These are funds raised from the sale of council assets, usually, but not restricted to, land and buildings. Other examples include repayments of loans for capital purposes and release of restrictive covenants.

Capital finance regulations dictate that capital receipts can only be used to fund capital expenditure or repay debt. In the past regulations required a proportion of all receipts be set aside to repay debt, but this was removed some time ago for the Council Fund and was removed for the HRA with the introduction of self-financing. The Council's policy is to use capital receipts to fund capital expenditure rather than voluntarily set aside to repay debt. The Council sets a Minimum Revenue Provision policy each year which sets out our prudent methods for repayment of debt.

The current policy of pooling all capital receipts to allocate to capital schemes in accordance with the Council's strategic aims and priorities will continue. Capital receipts will not be ring-fenced to fund schemes in the same service or geographical areas (with the exception of the HRA). Capital receipts represent a finite funding source based on a planned approach to asset disposals in support of the Council's priorities. They will be used to fund new capital investment schemes.

Generation of capital receipts depends on our ability to identify assets that are surplus to requirements, and to sell them at an appropriate time which will be subject to local economic factors. In recent years this has been challenging, and will continue to be so. Careful and prudent planning around the timing of capital receipts is needed to ensure schemes funded by capital receipts don't begin until we have received the receipt.

Capital receipts will be generated by continuing with our agricultural disposal policy, our policy to reduce the number of assets that we have and the forthcoming review of the commercial estate.

Our assets are also supporting the Strategic Housing and Regeneration Programme (SHARP) in innovative ways. We have identified surplus Council owned sites which will be used to develop new housing. This input will need to continue throughout the life of the programme. The impact of this on the generation of capital receipts will need to be carefully mapped and reflected within the wider Capital Programme.

Specific Grants and Contributions etc.

Specific Grants

These are grant allocations received from a range of sponsoring bodies including Welsh Government, Lottery, etc. for associated specific programmes and projects with limited local discretion on how the funding is spent. Often the terms and conditions of such funding will require unused funding to be returned, and can require the Council to match fund. In times where capital resources are declining the Council will seek to maximise such funding streams, subject to the initiative/scheme reflecting both the third party's agenda and the Council's priorities.

Specific Contributions

These are contributions from developers towards the provision of public assets or facilities. Sometimes these are to mitigate the impact of their development on communities and often referred to as section 106 contributions. Contributions are earmarked for specific purposes in planning agreements and often relate to infrastructure projects including play areas, open spaces, and schools, but also includes affordable housing. Developers also contribute to highways infrastructure developments through section 38 and 278 agreements.

Specific Capital Loans

Increasingly as Welsh Government's funding comes under pressure, capital funding that was previously issued as a specific capital grant is converted into a repayable loan, Examples include the Home Improvement Loans fund, and Vibrant and Viable Places funding. Grant funding will always be preferable to loan funding as it does not require repayment, however loan funding does have benefits. Its use to date has been to provide recyclable loan funding for regeneration purposes. The benefit is that rather than being used to fund a single project, the funding can be recycled and used to fund a number of projects over the term of the loan.

Capital Loans are also available, and have been used, from other sources such as Salix in relation to energy saving projects.

As with grants the Council will seek to maximise such developments that are in line with its priorities, whilst carefully considering the additional administrative burden in issuing and collecting loans, and the risk it carries from loan defaults.

Local Government Borrowing Initiative (LGBI)

In recent years as Welsh Government funding has been under pressure, schemes that would have been funded by capital grant have been funded by LGBI. Welsh Government provides the revenue support for borrowing costs incurred by the Council in borrowing to fund capital schemes (the difference with supported borrowing being that it's for a specific purpose aligned to Welsh Government priorities). LGBI has recently been used for highways maintenance and used to part fund the Welsh Government element of the 21st Century Schools programme – 'Band A'.

Capital Expenditure charged to Revenue Account (CERA)

Capital expenditure can be funded via a direct contribution from revenue funding (note capital financing regulations mean is it not possible to use capital funding to fund revenue expenditure). This method of funding is extensively used by the HRA and will continue to be in the future. Its use for Council Fund activity is generally quite limited as this would add pressure to the revenue budget as forecast in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Unsupported Prudential Borrowing (commonly referred to as Prudential Borrowing)

The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities supports local authorities in determining their programmes for capital investment in assets (we are required by regulation to follow its requirements). The Prudential Code gives Councils discretion to undertake borrowing to fund capital projects with the full cost of borrowing funded from future council revenue resources subject to the Council demonstrating, within a clear framework, that the capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable. A range of prudential indicators must be produced and approved demonstrating the impact of the programme. The option for funding additional capital developments is one which is funded from within existing revenue budgets or from generating additional and ongoing income streams, there is no support from any external funding and is a major constraint on its use as any scheme funded by prudential borrowing will add to the forecast budget deficit in the MTFS.

To date limited use has been made of the option following cautious and prudent consideration of long term impacts. This approach will continue to be used with schemes that have a clear financial benefit such as 'invest to save', 'spend to earn', and those that generate returns over and above the costs of debt. The focus will be to fund schemes that are the Council's priorities, attract third party funding and generate revenue benefits in future financial years in the form of revenue savings, income generation or increasing Council Tax yield. In addition, prudential borrowing will be used to fund the Council element of 21st Century Schools – 'Band B' and the HRA SHARP and Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) schemes.

<u>Alternative Sources</u>

There are a number of other alternative sources of capital funding which the Council could make use of, depending on circumstances and cost:-

- Finance Leases - Leases that transfers substantially (to the lessee) all the risks and rewards of ownership of an asset, even though ownership may not be transferred. This method was used for the equipment at Deeside Leisure Centre and the Jade Jones Pavilion, Flint.

- Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) - This is a broad term for various arrangements in which the Council has a longer and more intensive relationship with a private sector supplier than it does under a traditional contract. It includes:-

    - PFI contracts;
    - Local Asset Backed Vehicles (LABVs);
    - Strategic partnering;
    - Sale and Lease back;
    - Joint Ventures; and
    - Deferred Purchase

To date the Council has made very limited use of alternative funding options listed above. In future all options along with any new initiatives will be explored and used carefully. Capital schemes funded from alternative sources are likely to increase the Council's debt liability therefore use will be restricted and considered in the same way as prudential borrowing.

4. PRIORITISATION OF CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

The purpose of the Capital Programme is to optimise the Council's use of capital resources by allocation to those areas identified as representing the strategic priorities of the Council. The Programme is split into 3 sections;

- Statutory / Regulatory Programme consisting of an annual allocation to fund schemes of a statutory / regulatory nature. Examples include providing financial support to repair, improve and adapt private sector homes, and adapting schools for disabled children. Service areas will be required to submit plans for approval before the start of each financial year.

- Retained Asset Programme consisting of an annual allocation to fund schemes that maintain, improve or lengthen the economic life of the assets that we retain to use in delivering services where there is already a significant amount of capital work needed, identified by service plans / condition surveys etc. Service areas identified are; schools, highways, and corporate office accommodation. Service areas are required to submit plans for approval before the start of each financial year.

- Investment Programme consisting of allocations to fund new schemes arising from Portfolio Business Plans. Such schemes will be necessary to achieve revenue efficiencies included within Portfolio Business Plans and the MTFS and our strategic priorities as included in the Council Plan. Approval of such schemes will be through the submission of a full business case identifying the source of capital funding and the assets lifetime costs going forward.

Funding of schemes will be allocated as shown below:

Statutory / Regulatory Programme	Retained Asset Programme	Investment Programme

General Capital Grant	Supported Borrowing	Capital Receipts	Debt and Alternative Sources of Funding

Capital Programmes will be set every year covering a timeframe of the next 3 financial years on a rolling basis, reflecting that capital schemes don't match financial years and span more than 1 financial year. Schemes starting in that first financial year will be approved along with any costs and funding required in the subsequent 2 financial years. Schemes starting later than the first financial year will be given indicative support to enable services to plan, but will ultimately require formal approval through the process of approving the subsequent years' capital programme.

Sufficient headroom will be built into the Capital Programme to facilitate more flexibility thus allowing smaller schemes to be presented, considered and approved by Cabinet in year. Such schemes arise in year due to, for example grants that require an element of match funding or unforeseen events such as regulatory works etc.

The development of the capital programme will be considered in the context of its impact on the Council's MTFS and in particular the added pressure the capital programme may bring to the revenue budget.

5. GOVERNANCE

Planning for the Capital Programme is determined in parallel with service and revenue budget planning process within the framework of the MTFS.

New investment capital schemes will be rigorously appraised through submission of full business cases which will include schemes funded by grants or contributions from 3rd parties. Large schemes which are programmes in their own right will be subject to gateway reviews at stages during the programme, for example 21st Century Schools and SHARP. This ensures that the evidence and the case for change when the scheme was initially approved is still valid, and that lessons learned from early stages can be applied to future stages.

Those portfolios with core allocations will submit annual plans for assessment and challenge by the Capital and Assets Programme Board to ensure compliance with the Capital Strategy and the Asset Management Plan.

The Capital Programme where possible will be set for each coming financial year before the annual budget, and will include indicative figures spanning the same time frame as the MTFS.

Monitoring of the annual Capital Programme will be undertaken at a Portfolio level by the Capital Team within Technical Accounting, with progress updates given to the Capital and Assets Programme Board. Reporting to Members will take place quarterly to Cabinet and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee including:

- New schemes or additions to existing schemes
- Removal of or reductions to schemes
- Slippage on schemes, and impact on future years capital programme
- Funding virements between schemes
- Other necessary revisions to the scheme

The Capital and Assets Programme Board will develop processes for monitoring the outcomes of capital schemes and measures to monitor the performance of assets.

Capital expenditure plans

The Council's planned capital expenditure for the period 2019/20 to 2022/23 is summarised below:

Table 1: Prudential Indicator: Estimates of Capital Expenditure in £ millions

	2020/21 Estimate	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate
Council Fund	42.297	10.312	9.174
Housing Revenue Account	30.464	20.923	25.482
Total	**72.761**	**31.235**	**34.656**

The Council's Capital Programme is due to be approved by Council in December 2019, and details can be found on the Council's website.

The Council is planning a number of significant investments during the period of this strategy. In particular, it is investing substantially in its schools in conjunction with Welsh Government through the 21st Century Schools programme; is extending its residential care home at Marleyfield in Buckley; is making infrastructure improvements at Standard Yard Waste Transfer Station (WTS) in Buckley to accommodate growth in recycling rates and an increase in resilience and processing capacity for future waste streams; and has plans, in conjunction with its partners, to redevelop Theatr Clwyd. More detail is available in the Capital Programme 2020/21 – 2022/23 report.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a ring-fenced account which ensures that council housing does not subsidise, or is itself subsidised, by other local services. HRA capital expenditure is therefore recorded separately. The Council has plans to invest significantly in housing assets over the period of the strategy, including the building of an estimated 208 new homes as part of the Strategic Housing and Regeneration Programme (SHARP), as well as bringing its stock into line with the Wales Quality Housing Standard.

In addition, part of SHARP is to build new homes for rent at intermediate rent levels (between social housing rents and market rents). This is achieved by making capital loans to the Council's wholly owned subsidiary, North East Wales Homes (NEW Homes) to build affordable homes.

All capital expenditure must be financed, either from external sources (government grants and other contributions), the Council's own resources (revenue, reserves and capital receipts) or debt (borrowing, leasing etc.). The planned financing of the above expenditure is as follows, broken down into the sources detailed above in 'Resources':

Table 2: Capital Financing in £ millions

	2020/21 Estimate	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate
Council Fund			
External Sources			
USB	4.094	4.094	4.094
GCG	3.414	2.492	2.492
Specific Grants/Contrib's/Loans	6.153	2.109	0.384
Own Resources			
Capital Receipts	0.000	0.000	0.000
CERA	0.000	0.000	0.000
Debt			
Prudential Borrowing	28.636	1.617	2.204
Sub Total - Council Fund	**42.297**	**10.312**	**9.174**

Housing Revenue Account			
External Sources			
MRA	5.065	5.065	5.065
Specific Grants/Contrib's/Loans	0.275	0.000	0.000
Own Resources			
Capital Receipts	1.227	0.000	0.000
CERA	13.953	8.208	8.473
Othe contns	0.000	0.000	0.000
Debt			
Prudential Borrowing	9.944	7.650	11.944
Sub Total - HRA	**30.464**	**20.923**	**25.482**
TOTAL	**72.761**	**31.235**	**34.656**

Debt is only a temporary source of finance, as any loans or leases must be repaid. Local Authorities are required each year under Regulations, to set aside some of their revenue resources as provision for the repayment of debt. The annual charge to the revenue account for repaying debt is known as the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). Planned MRP is as follows:

Table 3: Minimum Revenue Provision in £ millions

	2020/21 Estimate	**2021/22 Estimate**	**2022/23 Estimate**
Council Fund	4.456	4.682	4.786
Housing Revenue Account	2.711	2.896	2.999

Local Authorities are required to set a policy for MRP each financial year. The Council's sets its annual MRP policy in February each year and is available on its website.

Alternatively, capital receipts may be used to repay debt by applying capital receipts to the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR).

The Council's cumulative outstanding amount of capital expenditure financed by debt is measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). This increases with new debt-financed capital expenditure and reduces with MRP and any capital receipts used to repay debt. Based on the above figures for expenditure and financing, the Council's estimated CFR is as follows:

Table 4: Prudential Indicator: Estimates of Capital Financing Requirement in £ millions

	2020/21 Estimate	**2021/22 Estimate**	**2022/23 Estimate**
Council Fund	233.145	242.802	248.529
Housing Revenue Account	144.850	149.953	158.954
Total	**377.995**	**392.755**	**407.483**

6. TREASURY MANAGEMENT

Treasury management is concerned with keeping sufficient but not excessive cash available to meet the Council's spending needs as they fall due, while managing the risks involved. Surplus cash is invested until required, while a shortage of cash will be met by borrowing, to avoid excessive credit balances or overdrafts in the bank current account. The Council is typically cash rich in the short-term as revenue income is received before it is spent, but cash poor in the long-term as capital expenditure is incurred before being financed. The revenue cash surpluses are offset against capital cash shortfalls to reduce overall borrowing.

Due mainly to decisions taken in the past, the Council currently (30th September 2019) has £290m long term borrowing at an average interest rate of 4.57%, and £19m short term borrowing at an average interest rate at 0.76%. It also had £19.5m treasury investments at an average interest rate of 0.69%.

Borrowing strategy: The Council's main objectives when borrowing are to achieve a low but certain cost of finance while retaining flexibility should plans change in future. These objectives are often conflicting, and the Council therefore seeks to strike a balance between cheap short-term loans (currently available at around 0.75%) and long-term fixed rate loans where the future cost is known but higher (currently 3.0% to 3.5%).

Projected levels of the Council's total outstanding debt (which comprises borrowing and leases) are shown below, compared with the capital financing requirement (see above).

Table 5: Prudential Indicator: Gross Debt & the Capital Financing Requirement in £ millions

	2020/21 Estimate	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate
Debt (Incl Leases)	355.000	373.655	389.993
Capital Financing Requirement	377.995	392.755	407.483

Statutory guidance is that debt should remain below the capital financing requirement, except in the short-term. As can be seen from Table 5, the Council expects to comply with this in the medium term.

Affordable borrowing limit: The Council is legally obliged to set an affordable borrowing limit (also termed the authorised limit for external debt) each year and to keep it under review. In line with statutory guidance, a lower “operational boundary” is also set as a warning level should debt approach the limit.

Table 6: Prudential Indicators: Authorised Limit & Operational Boundary for external debt in £m

	2020/21 Limit	2021/22 Limit	2022/23 Limit
Authorised Limit - Borrowing	395	410	415
Authorised Limit - Other long term liabilities	35	35	35
Authorised Limit - Total External Debt	430	445	450
Operational Boundary - Borrowing	375	390	405
Operational Boundary - Other long term liabilities	20	20	20
Operational Boundary - Total External Debt	395	410	425

Investment strategy: Treasury investments arise from receiving cash before it is paid out again. Investments made for service reasons or for pure financial gain are not generally considered to be part of treasury management.

The Council’s policy on treasury investments is to prioritise security and liquidity over yield that is to focus on minimising risk rather than maximising returns. Cash that is likely to be spent in the near term is invested securely, for example with the government, other local authorities or selected high-quality banks, to minimise the risk of loss. Money that will be held for longer terms is invested more widely, including in bonds, shares and property, to balance the risk of loss against the risk of receiving returns below inflation. Both near-term and longer-term investments may be held in pooled funds, where an external fund manager makes decisions on which particular investments to buy and the Council may request its money back at short notice.

Governance: Decisions on treasury management investment and borrowing are made daily and are therefore delegated to the Corporate Finance Manager and the Treasury Management team, who must act in line with the Treasury Management Strategy approved annually by the Council in February. Quarterly reports on treasury management activity are presented to the Audit Committee. The Audit Committee is responsible for scrutinising treasury management decisions.

The Council sets a Treasury Management Policy Statement, an annual Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Management Schedules and Practices which contain further details on the Council’s borrowing strategy, investment strategy and treasury management governance which are available on its website.

7. COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES

The Council has a portfolio of investment properties, in the form of agricultural property and industrial units. Although these are classified as investment properties, they are legacy assets and the council is managing down its agricultural portfolio and is reviewing its position in regard to industrial units.

8. LIABILITIES

In addition to debt of £290m detailed above, the Council is committed to making future payments to cover its pension fund deficit (valued at £408m). It has also set aside £1m to cover the risks associated with the aftercare of former landfill sites, and £2.7m as a provision against bad debts.

The Council is also at risk of having to pay for any additional works necessary at landfill sites, payments in respect of historic insurance, abuse and housing disrepair claims, costs involved in some employment tribunal cases, and has given pension guarantees on behalf of various alternative service delivery models. The Council has not set aside any funds because of a lack of certainty in estimating the size and timing of these liabilities.

Governance: Decisions on incurring new discretional liabilities are taken by Chief Officers in consultation with the Corporate Finance Manager. The risk of liabilities crystallising and requiring payment is monitored by corporate finance and reported as required to Cabinet.

Further details on liabilities and guarantees are in the contingent liability section in note 33 of the Council's 2018/19 Statement of Accounts available on its website.

9. REVENUE BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Although capital expenditure is not charged directly to the revenue budget, interest payable on loans and MRP are charged to revenue, offset by any investment income receivable. The net annual charge is known as financing costs; this is compared to the net revenue stream i.e. the amount funded from Revenue Support Grant, Council Tax and business rates (NNDR) for the Council Fund, and the HRA equivalent is the amount to be met from WG grants and rent payers.

Table 7: Prudential Indicator: Proportion of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream

	2020/21 Estimate	2021/22 Estimate	2022/23 Estimate
Council Fund	4.68%	4.75%	4.79%
HRA	24.33%	25.37%	25.84%

Sustainability: Due to the very long-term nature of capital expenditure and financing, the revenue budget implications of expenditure incurred in the next few years will extend for up to 50 years into the future. The Corporate Finance Manager is satisfied that the proposed capital programme is prudent, affordable and sustainable because the impact of the existing capital programme on the MTFS has been considered, and the revenue implications of future capital schemes are included when considering the approval of the capital budget. .

Other revenue implications of capital expenditure are included in business cases and are factored into the MTFS.

10. KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

The Council employs professionally qualified and experienced staff in senior positions with responsibility for making capital expenditure, borrowing and investment decisions. For example, the Corporate Finance Manager is a qualified accountant with significant experience. The Council pays for junior staff to study towards relevant professional qualifications, including CIPFA and AAT.

Where Council staff do not have the knowledge and skills required, use is made of external advisers and consultants that are specialists in their field. The Council currently employs Arlingclose Limited as treasury management advisers. This approach is more cost effective than employing such staff directly, and ensures that the Council has access to knowledge and skills commensurate with its risk appetite.