



Investment & Borrowing

Policy 9

Adoption Date: 1st April 2021

Next Review Date: When required or January 2023

1. Introduction

This document gives guidance on borrowing and investments by Cuckfield Parish Council in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003. It highlights that the Council is committed to professional Treasury Management practices to ensure that:

- Capital expenditure plans are affordable
- All external borrowing and other long-term liabilities are within prudent and sustainable levels, and
- Treasury Management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice. The CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice defines Treasury Management as: 'The management of the Council's cashflows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.'

2. Investment Strategy

2.1 Introduction

The Council acknowledges the importance of prudently investing the temporarily surplus funds held on behalf of the community. This Strategy complies with the revised requirements set out in the Department for Communities and Local Government's Guidance on Local Government Investments and Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management in Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross Sectoral Guidance Notes and takes account of Section 15(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 2003.

2.2 Investment Objectives

In accordance with Section 15(1) of the 2003 Act, the Council will have regard to:

- (a) such guidance as the Secretary of State may issue, and
- (b) to such other guidance as the Secretary of State may by regulations specify.

The Council's investment priorities are the security of reserves and liquidity of its

investments.

The Council will aim to achieve the optimum return on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity. All investments will be made in sterling.

The Department for Communities and Local Government maintains that borrowing of monies purely to invest, or to lend and make a return, is unlawful and this Council will not engage in such activity. Where external investment managers are used, they will be contractually required to comply with the Strategy.

2.3 Specified Investments

Specified Investments are those offering high security and high liquidity, made in sterling and which mature in no more than a year. Such short-term investments made with the UK Government or a local authority or town or parish council will automatically be specified investments.

For the prudent management of its treasury balances, maintaining sufficient levels of security and liquidity, Cuckfield Parish Council will use:

- Deposits with banks, building societies, local authorities or other public authorities
- The debt management agency of HM Government.

Cuckfield Parish Council currently holds funds with Unity Trust Bank and NS&I.

2.4 Non-Specified Investments

These investments have greater potential risk – examples include investment in the money market, stocks and shares. Given the unpredictability and uncertainties surrounding such investments, Cuckfield Parish Council will not use this type of investment.

2.5 Liquidity of Investments

The Finance & General Purposes Committee (of Full Council) following advice from the Responsible Finance Officer, will determine the maximum periods for which funds may prudently be committed so as not to compromise liquidity. Investments will be regarded as commencing on the date the commitment to invest is entered into, rather than the date on which the funds are paid over to the counterparty.

2.6 Long Term Investments

Long term investments are defined in the Guidance as greater than 36 months. The Council does not currently hold any long-term investments. No long-term investments are currently envisaged.

2.7 Risk Assessments

The Parish Council's reserves are covered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme up to £85,000 with any one institution and monies must therefore be carefully managed to mitigate the risk of losses.

2.8 Reporting on Investment Performance

Regular reports will be prepared and presented to the F&GP committee at each meeting held during the year (currently meet twice a year).

3. External Borrowing Strategy

3.1 Introduction

The Council acknowledges the importance of borrowing funds and the financial impact on the Council and the local community. The Council will agree borrowing for specific capital projects (as defined in section 16 of the 2003 Act), and gain approval for borrowing by sending an application to the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). All borrowings must be approved by full council.

3.2 Principles

Before a council can borrow a sum of money, it must first receive an approval to borrow (loan sanction) from the Secretary of State by way of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), unless it is for a temporary loan or overdraft from a bank or otherwise of sums which the council may temporarily require to meet revenue expenditure.

The process to be followed and the criteria applied in deciding whether or not approval should be forthcoming, are detailed in the Guide to Parish and Town Council Borrowing in England, jointly published by NALC.

3.3 Interest Rates

The Council will look around for the best possible terms when borrowing but will usually use the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB). The Council feels that the fixed term rates offered by the PWLB are relatively cheap and that PWLB loans are most likely to offer stability for the financial planning of the council.

3.4 Period of Loan

The Council will determine the period of each loan which should not exceed the period for which the expenditure is forecast to provide benefit to the Council i.e. useful life of the asset. The maximum period will begin on the date on which the money is borrowed, and will be;

- 50 years for acquisition of, or work on or to, land, buildings, roads or structures or
- 10 years in all other cases.

4. Review and Amendments of Regulations

This Strategy will be reviewed annually. The Annual Strategy for the coming financial year will be prepared by the Responsible Financial Officer and presented for approval to the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The Council reserves the right to make variations to the Strategy at any time, subject to the approval of the Full Council. Any variations will be made available to the public.