

REPORT TITLE: CAPITAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2026-2036

12 FEBRUARY 2026

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Cutler – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation

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WARD(S): ALL

PURPOSE

The Capital Investment Strategy sets out the council's capital spending programme and the principles which underpin this in order to deliver the desired priorities as set out in the Council Plan.

It details the overall programme for the next 10 years, how this will be financed, and the impact of the programme on the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. The timetable for local government reorganisation means that the council is expected to become part of a unitary council from 1 April 2028. Therefore, forecast capital expenditure beyond that date only includes projects to which the council will be contractually committed as well as estimated required capital works to, for example, maintain existing assets or programmes such as disabled facilities grants (DFG) which are expected to continue beyond the transition. Also included are the council's forecast housing new build programme in the HRA based on existing targets; however, decisions as to which projects will ultimately proceed beyond that date, unless contractually committed, will be the decision of the new unitary authority.

It includes several prudential indicators that are required to be published by the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Statutory Investment Guidance and, in addition to outlining how the council ensures it has access to the right knowledge and skills (internal and external), it details how it ensures elected Members have sufficient knowledge and skills to undertake their governance role.

RECOMMENDATIONS:That Cabinet recommends to Council:

1. The Capital Investment Strategy be approved including:
 - the Capital Programme and Capital Programme Financing (Appendices A and B to the report);
 - the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement (Appendix E);
 - the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy (Appendix G); and
 - the prudential indicators detailed in the report and Appendix F.

That Cabinet:

2. Subject to Council approval of the capital programme, approves the following capital expenditure:
 - IMT equipment in 2026/27 (£154,000) as detailed in paragraph 11.8.6;
 - Repairs to the Guildhall clocktower in 2026/27 (£250,000); and
 - Capital improvements to the Guildhall in 2026/27 and 2027/28 (£3,300,000)
3. Notes the requirement to ensure Members have the right knowledge and skills to undertake their governance role and that the ongoing support and training offered to members is continued and enhanced as required.

IMPLICATIONS:

1 COUNCIL PLAN OUTCOME

- 1.1 The investment of capital resources will contribute to the achievement of the council's main objectives and priorities in the Council Plan. The Capital Strategy is an integral part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and impacts directly on the Treasury Management Strategy.
- 1.2 More detail on specific projects supporting the priorities in the Council Plan is set out in section 11.2.

2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 The forecast capital programme over the next 10 years to 2035/36 totals £385.6 million of which £56.1 million is General Fund and £329.5 million is Housing Revenue Account.
- 2.2 The proposed financing is made up of £150.7 million of prudential borrowing, £131.0 million from revenue including earmarked reserves, £54.7 million of capital receipts, and £49.2 million of capital grants and contributions.
- 2.3 Further details are provided in the supporting information section below and in the appendices to the strategy.
- 2.4 The council will need to increase its external borrowing but the amount and timing of this is dependent on the delivery of the capital programme and on the council's overall reserve position. Further information, including borrowing limits, is set out in the Treasury Management Strategy (CAB3538).
- 2.5 Included in the Prudential Code is the requirement that "the chief finance officer should report explicitly on the affordability and risks associated with the capital strategy and, where appropriate, have access to specialised advice to enable them to reach their conclusions". The statement below is the Winchester City Council Chief Finance Officer's response:
- 2.6 Affordability and risk are primary considerations within the capital strategy and are of particular importance given the funding constraints on local authorities and the current economic conditions. The strategy aims to support the regeneration and place shaping priorities in the Council Plan as well as helping the council achieve its ambitious carbon neutral goals and, in the HRA, delivering new homes across the district alongside investing in existing homes to improve energy efficiency and reduce costs for tenants.
- 2.7 The council's Risk Policy (extracts of which are below) sets out the corporate risk appetite as well as and how the council ensures that the opportunities it is willing to take to achieve its strategic priorities and objectives are measured, consistent and compatible with the council's capacity to accept and manage risk. Business cases for new schemes are required to ensure that risks are adequately considered. One of the most significant risks specific to capital

investment is capacity to deliver the individual projects contained within the strategy. This is largely mitigated by adequately identifying resources required at the planning stage of projects – a core part of the business case process.

- 2.8 The HRA capital programme is a key element of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan which is refreshed annually. Individual schemes are assessed for affordability within the overall context of this plan, which reflects the investment required to deliver 1000 new homes in line with the Council Plan.
- 2.9 Whilst this is an ambitious programme of works, the council has a long history of successfully managing its capital assets to support its objectives while minimising the associated risks. The proposed programme is considered affordable, sustainable, and prudent. The council utilises its treasury management advisors, Arlingclose, to ensure the latest economic context is considered when assessing capital investment proposals against the requirements of the Prudential Code.

3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The council's Capital Investment Strategy Statement follows the latest codes of practice, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) guidance.
- 3.2 Individual projects included within the programme will be carefully considered in relation to legal and procurement issues and separate approvals sought as appropriate. The Programme and Capital Board (PAC) plays a key role in ensuring that this process takes place when considering business case and gateway decisions.

4 WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Project resources for individual projects are identified as part of the business case development.

5 PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Many of the projects and schemes within the Capital Programme are related to the council's properties and assets and therefore aligning the programme with the Council's Asset Management Strategy is an important consideration. The Programme and Capital Strategy Board (PAC) plays a key role in ensuring that this process takes place and that funds are identified to improve the council's assets in line with its Strategies and Plans.

6 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Budget consultation 2026/27

- 6.1 Stakeholder engagement is an important part of the council's budget planning process. Feedback from the Residents' Survey provided opinion on local priorities; views on emerging policy; and the relative perceived importance of council services. This insight helps the council to take financial decisions; to plan and manage budgets; and to use its financial resources to support delivery of priorities.
- 6.2 Discussions have also been had with local business representatives through the Chamber of Commerce and the BID at their Winchester District Strategy Group business briefing in January 2026. No comments were made.
- 6.3 As capital investment schemes come forward for appraisal, appropriate engagement and consultation is undertaken as part of the business case development for all individual projects and schemes.
- 6.4 Scrutiny Committee is due to consider this report at its meeting on 10 February 2026 after this report has been dispatched. Any matters that the Scrutiny Committee wishes to raise or asks the Cabinet to note before making their decision will be reported and considered fully at the Cabinet meeting.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 Tackling the climate emergency and creating a greener district is a key priority for the council. A number of the schemes in the programme deal specifically with the climate emergency and environmental considerations are part of the business case supporting all capital projects.

8 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

- 8.1 The council is committed to ensuring its services are accessible to all its residents and that full consideration is given to obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty in addition to any consultation comments.
- 8.2 Under the Council's Financial Procedure Rule 7.4, the inclusion of a scheme in the capital programme shall not constitute authority to incur expenditure until a full project report has been submitted by the appropriate Service Lead in consultation with their Corporate Head of Service and the S151 officer and approved in line with the limits set out in the constitution. As part of the approval to spend for each scheme, an Equality Impact Assessment must be completed before the project can proceed.

9 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1 Data Protection Impact assessments are considered as part of the business case/approvals for specific capital projects.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT

10.1 In setting out this strategy, and when considering the programme and the projects within in it, reference is made to the council's risk appetite as set in section 11.11.

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
<p><i>Property</i> Council assets not fully utilised</p>	<p>An effective capital strategy and its delivery helps to ensure council assets are used to achieve the council's priorities</p>	<p>Investment in the council's assets can increase income generation.</p> <p>Identification of assets suitable for sale can generate capital receipts which can be reinvested in assets or used to reduce the council's overall borrowing need, reducing the ongoing revenue cost.</p>
<p><i>Community Support</i> Projects are unsupported by the community or the community's needs are not met</p>	<p>Engagement is undertaken for key projects to ascertain community and stakeholder views</p>	<p>Engagement with the community ensures the council's capital programme meets the needs of the district's citizens and businesses</p>
<p><i>Timescales</i> Projects not delivered on time resulting in a delay in benefits to the council</p>	<p>The 10-year strategy and its associated governance structures including regular review by the Programme and Capital Strategy (PAC) Board and quarterly by Scrutiny/Cabinet</p>	
<p><i>Project capacity</i> Failure to deliver major capital schemes due to insufficient staff resources</p>	<p>Ensure robust business cases are taken forward, and sufficient resources are available to deliver the projects.</p>	<p>Consideration of a wide base of potential capital / investment schemes to enable a balanced risk portfolio and other</p>

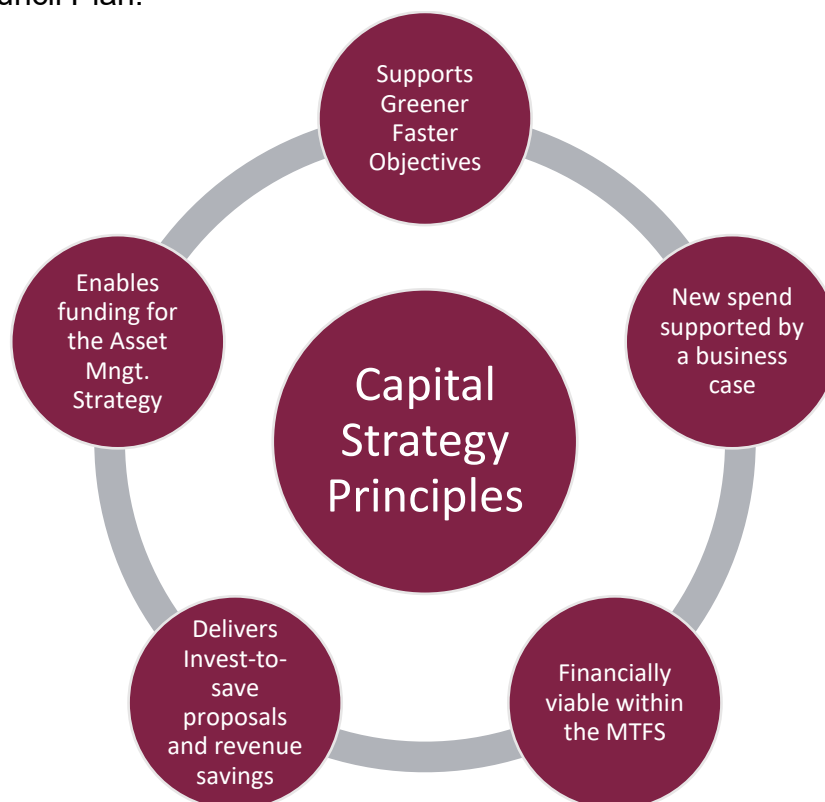
		schemes to be chosen should any schemes not progress
<i>Local Government Reorganisation</i> Failure to budget effectively, and ensure sufficient resources are available for capital requirements in the district both prior to LGR and post LGR	Production of a forward looking 10-year capital strategy taking account of forecast need.	In the shorter-term delivering projects that benefit the citizens of the district up to LGR and beyond. Being part of a larger unitary authority may present new opportunities such as additional potential sites for new build housing projects.
<i>Financial / VfM</i>	Detailed elsewhere within the report	In some cases, projects may generate savings or new income in addition to achieving the council's objectives
<i>Legal</i>	Considered as part of the approval process for individual capital schemes	None
<i>Innovation</i>	Considered as part of the approval process for individual capital schemes	Strategy includes new schemes to innovate
<i>Reputation</i>	Considered as part of the approval process for individual capital schemes	Delivering council objectives via the capital programme can enhance the council's reputation

11 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

11.1. Purpose

- 11.1.1. The council is in a privileged position to be able to invest in local projects that directly improve the quality of life for local people, support the economy, or protect the environment. Therefore, the primary purpose of this strategy is to identify and progress schemes to help deliver the Council Plan and to help make the council self-sufficient in order to be able to deliver the required level of services. It outlines how the council ensures that individual schemes and the programme as a whole are deliverable and financially affordable.

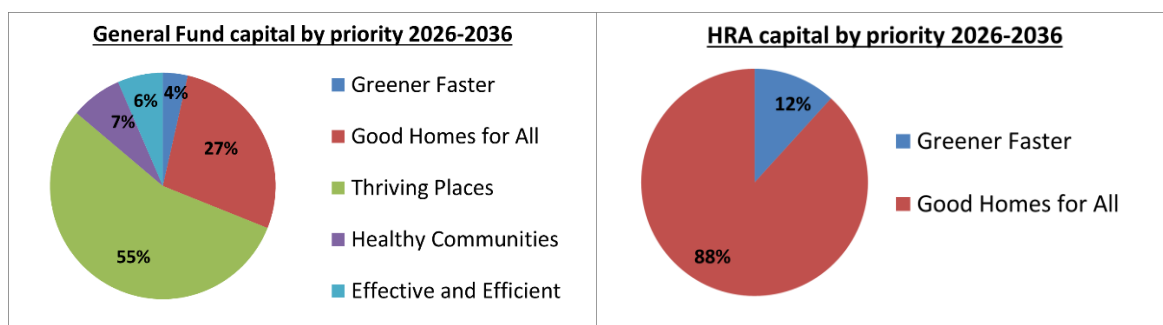
- 11.1.2. However, financial pressures across the sector mean that the principles which underpin the strategy are carefully considered when prioritising schemes in the Capital Strategy. The Strategy sets out the council's capital spending programme and the principles which underpin this to deliver the Council Plan:



- 11.1.3. The council's capital programme incorporates both the General Fund (GF) and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital requirements to support service provision and links with the Council Plan, Housing Business Plan, the Asset Management Strategy, IMT strategy and Medium-Term Financial Strategy. This capital investment strategy provides a framework for the development and implementation of the capital programme.
- 11.1.4. As detailed in the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), the council is forecasting a significant reduction in its anticipated financial resources over the medium term. It is vital therefore that the council maximises the use of its capital investment in the district. As available resources reduce, the council needs to utilise its capital programme to drive the most effective and efficient use of those resources for the benefit of the district's residents.
- 11.1.5. The Council Plan details how the council will deliver its strategic priorities: Greener Faster, Good Homes for All, Thriving Places, Healthy Communities, Listening Better, and Effective and Efficient. Several of these priorities will be delivered through capital spend and associated projects including for example: additional investment in the council's housing stock to improve energy efficiency and help tenants reduce their

carbon emissions and energy costs; the provision of new housing and maintenance of existing housing stock; major regeneration schemes; the refurbishment of the council's existing assets; and provision of leisure facilities.

- 11.1.6. The following charts illustrate the percentage of total capital expenditure forecast for each of the council's priorities (NB the charts are based on the main priority for each project or scheme; however, many meet more than one priority. For example, while a project may have a primary purpose of improving the local economy it may contain elements such as the installation of solar panels in order to tackle the climate emergency):



11.2. The Capital Programme

- 11.2.1. The council has made further progress in 2025/26 in delivering its capital programme. In the General Fund, projects completed or substantially complete this year include:

- River Park pavilion. Work on the new pavilion is expected to be completed in early 2026. By providing high quality facilities, increased community sport outcomes can be achieved across a wider demographic, and the pavilion can be used to support users of River Park, not just cricket, by providing changing and club house facilities to support their events or sports.
- The purchase of vehicles and caddies in order to roll out the new food waste service. The collection of food waste commenced in October. Food waste recycling has the potential to reduce the district's carbon footprint by an estimated 1,900 tonnes of CO₂e per year by recycling this waste to generate clean green energy and nutrient dense soil improver. In addition, the vehicles purchased run on HVO fuel reducing emissions by more than 90%.
- The award of capital grants totalling £0.6m (as at 31 December 2025) via the UK shared prosperity and Rural prosperity fund programmes, and CIL funded community projects. Grants to community groups, parish councils, and small businesses include: the playground and public convenience refurbishments; an air source heat pump; an electric van for bee cultivation and honey production; and solar panel installations.

- Other projects include clubhouse improvements at Winchester City FC, replacement of the 3G pitch at Meadowside Leisure Centre, the replacement of diesel animal welfare vans with electric vehicles, and a grant toward the life size Jane Austen sculpture in the Cathedral's grounds.

11.2.2. In addition to the required investment in major works to the existing stock including an ambitious retrofit programme to increase energy efficiency and help tenants reduce energy costs and to maintain the current decent homes standard, significant additional funding towards a challenging new build and acquisitions programme is included to facilitate the delivery of the council's objective of 1000 new homes for local people. Major approved projects included are:

- Acquisition of 10 units (6 for affordable rent, 4 for shared ownership) at Hazeley Road Twyford, construction between 2024/25 and 2026/27
- Acquisition of 146 units (95 for affordable rent, 51 for shared ownership) at Kings Barton (three phases to be constructed between 2024/25 and 2027/28). As at December 2025, a total of 10 units had been completed and handed over, of which four units shared ownership and six units general needs
- Construction of 5 social rented units at Woodman Close, between January 2026 and February 2027

11.2.3. Over the period 2026 to 2036, the council's total estimated capital expenditure is £381.1m of which £51.6m is General Fund and £329.5m is Housing Revenue Account. The following table summarises the capital programme by year for the period. Further detail by project is included in Appendix A:

Table 1: Summary of capital expenditure

Capital Expenditure 2026 - 2036	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	TOTAL Est.
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
General Fund	18.0	12.6	10.9	2.4	2.2	1.9	1.9	2.1	1.9	2.2	56.1
HRA	39.4	45.0	38.9	60.7	64.8	43.5	9.2	8.7	10.0	9.3	329.5
Total Expenditure	57.4	57.6	49.8	63.1	67.0	45.4	11.1	10.8	11.9	11.6	385.6

11.2.4. The programme includes the following key projects (quoted budget figures are for the period 2026-2036 and do not include prior years):

Priority: Greener Faster (£40.8m)

Making the district Greener Faster is a theme that is integral to *all* that the council does.

- £38.8 m has been allocated to invest in the **council's housing stock to improve energy efficiency and reduce emissions**.
- £2m budget has been allocated for **energy management projects** over 4 years from 2026/27 provisionally funded by prudential borrowing. Expenditure will be subject to a business case as projects are identified and the council will seek to identify external grant funding where possible. As well as reducing carbon emissions it is anticipated that projects will provide potential for additional income and/or savings to the council over and above the cost of borrowing.
- In addition to the projects outlined above, measures to tackle the climate emergency are included in other projects. For example, the design of a new building may include elements to ensure a sustainable and energy efficient building such as high-performance insulation and solar PV, and several capital grants have been made to community groups and small businesses for the installation of solar PV.

Priority: Good Homes for All (£306.2m)

- Over the next 10 years, £181.0 has been budgeted for the council's **New Build programme** to enable the delivery of its ambitious programme.
- An estimated £96.2m will be spent on **major repairs** and maintenance of our existing housing stock including £10.3m to improve fire safety; £6.8m on roof replacements for dwellings; £13.3m on windows & doors for dwellings; £2.2m for estate improvements; £18.6m for major works to blocks; £11.5m on electrical, heating and hot water systems to all properties; and £13.5m on new kitchens to all properties. In addition, allowance of £20m is made for unplanned major works over the period. A full stock condition survey is currently underway, which will provide more accurate data to inform the major repairs programme assumptions in the 2026/27 business plan cycle.
- An estimated £4.4m will be spent on **sewage treatment works** plants over the ten-year period between 2026/27 and 2025/36, of which £1.3m relates to routine major works. To achieve a longer-term ambition of running the sewage treatment plants at cost recovery, investment of £2m is planned to upgrade the four highest cost sites to reduce associated running costs to ensure charges to tenants and leaseholders are not excessive. In addition to the cost reduction works, investment of £1.1m (of which £0.7m on behalf of Partnership for South Hampshire) is planned to reduce nitrate & phosphate pollution and generate nutrient credits, which

can be sold to developers, and the proceeds utilised to fund further upgrades to sewage treatment plants.

- An estimated £15.3m of **Disabled Facilities Grant** to enable people to stay in their own homes where possible by providing necessary adaptations to private homes in addition to £8.6m for adaptations to the council's own stock.

Priority: Thriving Places (£30.9m)

- A provisional budget of £2.6m, funded by prudential borrowing, has been set aside for the potential purchase of properties in the **Central Winchester Regeneration (CWR)** area. The properties will be held by the council and passed on to the developer at the relevant phase of the delivery plan which is currently being developed in line with the development agreement. Whilst the council holds the assets, it will incur costs including lost interest in the region of £80,000 to £100,000 per annum depending on the interest rates available to the council at the time. It is anticipated that some of the additional costs such as business rates and security will be offset by identifying meanwhile uses for the properties. A capital grant of £4.5m, to be funded by CIL receipts, has also been included and is required to support the successful delivery of the CWR development by enabling the provision of essential infrastructure work. The grant, subject to a successful CIL application, would assist in addressing a range of baseline constraints on the site, including environmental, structural, and preparatory works necessary to bring forward high quality public realm and create a development ready environment. In addition, a £0.25m provisional budget is included for bus and accessibility improvements as a consequence of the scheme. CWR is a once in a lifetime opportunity aiming to transform the centre of our historic city: bringing homes for local families; providing jobs for local people; and making a visit to this heritage city one which will be remembered. Working with a development partner to bring the scheme forward, the council will be investing in the redevelopment, including transferring its own assets into it.
- The council is actively applying for **LEP Legacy Reserves grant funding**, working with partners to promote and develop our unique cultural, heritage and natural environment assets across the district, and to support new business needs and opportunities, including agriculture and other rural businesses. The specific projects are still being determined and the outcomes, including whether bids are successful, are expected in the spring. A provisional budget of £10m, funded by LEP grant should the bids be successful, has been included over the next 3 years.
- The **Strategic Asset Purchase Scheme (SAPS)** seeks to identify assets for the council to acquire which will assist it in meeting its strategic

objectives such as regeneration whilst also generating ongoing revenue streams in order to ensure a scheme is financially viable overall or to be recycled in other similar schemes. Following changes to the PWLB lending terms and the Prudential Code, the council can no longer purchase assets primarily for yield and must do so for service reasons only, including regeneration. Any surplus income must be incidental to the scheme or recycled in similar schemes elsewhere and cannot be used to fund wider services. The SAPS board (see section 11.10) can approve purchases up to £4m if the minimum score criteria is met. Any other purchases must follow the usual governance process as defined by the constitution. A budget of £4m has been allocated in 2026/27.

- A recent condition survey has indicated that works of up to £5m are required to **the Guildhall** of which an estimated £3.3m are capital. These important works will ensure that this important and historic listed civic building is maintained to a good standard for many years to come. It will also address the quality of some utilities so that letting potential is improved.
- **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – Community projects.** A total of £1.3m has been set aside to award CIL funded capital grants. The scheme allows community groups to apply for a share of between £10,000 and £200,000 for essential infrastructure projects. The allocation of CIL funding helps to provide the infrastructure required to support development whilst ensuring that the corporate priorities and outcomes within the Council Plan are at the forefront of the decisions made regarding the infrastructure to be delivered.
- In addition, a total of £4.1m has been identified for various car park improvements throughout the district including a new lift at **Chesil car park**, replacement of the Air Handling unit at **the Brooks**, and provision of a new **car park at the Dean in Alresford**.

Priority: Healthy Communities (£4.1m)

- A capital grant of £1.2m (including £0.1m in 2025/26), funded by S106 developer contributions, has been included for the construction of a **sport pavilion at North Whiteley** as well as a £160,000 capital grant toward **Wickham Recreation Ground**.
- Over the next 3 years, £0.26m has been included for the **replacement or refurbishment of several play areas** that are the responsibility of Winchester Town Forum as well as £0.15m for the **perimeter footpath at River Park**.
- £0.45m is included in the 10-year programme for: replacement equipment, including gym and group exercise equipment; replacement lift and windows; and roofing works at **Meadowside Leisure Centre**.

- Marketing of **the former River Park Leisure Centre site** commenced in November 2025 with a request for Expressions of Interest (Eoi). Several Eois were received, and the council held a public event on the 27 January to inform the community about the types of uses showing interest. It is intended to request formal bids from the market in February with a bid deadline set for early April 2026. In February 2020, a provisional budget of £2m for the leisure centre's demolition was added to the capital programme. If this expenditure is required, it will be funded from the capital receipts reserve and offset by the capital receipt from the sale of the site.

Priority: Effective and Efficient (£3.6m)

- A number of budgets are for long term capital maintenance works to the council's operational assets. This includes, for example, the replacement of the lifts within City Offices and the West Wing, as well as an annual budget for reactive capital maintenance works.
- A budget of £250,000 has been included in order to undertake **essential refurbishment works to the clock tower of the Guildhall**. The works will improve the fire safety of the building whilst also improving thermal comfort. The building will remain opening during the works.
- The council continues to invest in keeping its IMT up to date including the provision of appropriate equipment to reduce cost and the consumption of paper and investing in remote working solutions to reduce the need for staff to travel and therefore the council's carbon footprint.

11.2.5. Future capital ambitions and key considerations for future years:

- The council needs to ensure that sufficient reserves are in place to maintain and refurbish its existing estate up to and beyond **Local Government Reorganisation**.
- Ongoing work continues on **Greener Faster energy schemes** such as installing solar PV on the council's assets. In some cases, such as with the installation of solar panels, the projects may pay for themselves and deliver a small surplus to the council. However, some projects may not provide sufficient income or savings to cover the associated cost of borrowing and will therefore increase the overall revenue costs to the council; there are a number of possible sources of grant funding for these projects and the council will explore these opportunities where appropriate in order to reduce the financial impact.
- A number of potential schemes will be required in respect of the **Winchester Movement Strategy**. Where possible, external funding sources will be explored such as Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions and external grant funding.

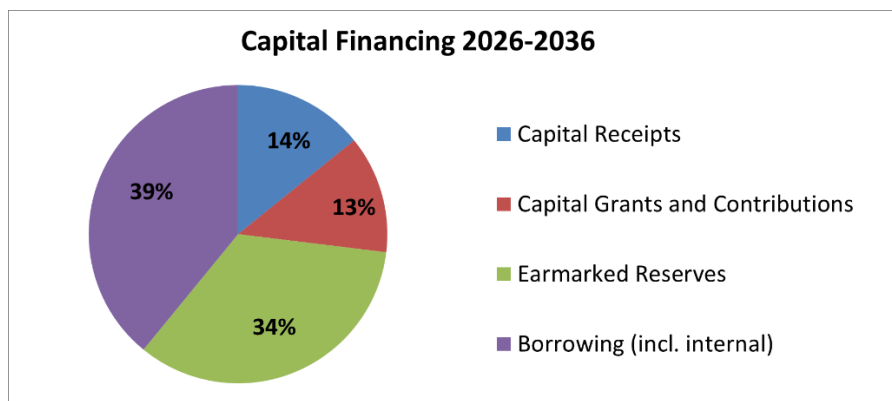
- **Community Infrastructure Levy** will be applied to relevant and appropriate projects to ensure a legacy of new and improved infrastructure ahead of LGR. This might be our major projects for place making and regeneration), the Winchester Movement Strategy (referred to above), and other projects which improve active travel and public transport around our district, or projects aligned with Council Plan priorities. Projects coming forward under these CIL funds will all be authorised through the council's usual governance route.
- The cost of borrowing has increased considerably in the last few years (rates available to the council at the end of 2021 were circa 2% and at the end of 2025 were between 5% and 6%). This, coupled with significant construction inflation, challenges the viability of potential build projects.
- As stated in the Asset Management Strategy (CAB3777 refers), the council's non-housing property assets play a significant role in generating rental income and creating opportunity for social, economic, environmental, cultural and regeneration interventions. As part of this it is essential that sufficient funds are set aside in the Property Reserve and the council is establishing the total needs of the estate over the next several years with a key tenet being the decarbonisation of the council's estate. It is essential to regularly review the performance of the council's property portfolio and make active decisions on retention, disposal or rental/leasing options to best support council objectives. Part of the remit of the council's Property Board, a member/officer group, is "Asset Challenge" which commenced in 2018/19 and involves reviewing the council's assets on a rolling basis to ensure the best use is made of them and, where appropriate, recommend investment in or disposal of assets.

11.3. Financing the Capital Programme

- 11.3.1. The council can invest in a capital programme so long as its capital spending plans are "affordable, prudent, and sustainable" as well as "proportionate".
- 11.3.2. The main sources of finance for capital projects are as follows:
- Capital receipts (from asset sales);
 - Capital grants (e.g. Disabled Facilities Grant);
 - External contributions (e.g. Section 106 developers' contributions and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL));
 - Earmarked Reserves (e.g. the Major Investment Reserve, the Property Reserve, the Car Parks Property Reserve, and the IMT Reserve);
 - Revenue contributions; and

- Borrowing, including internally (also known as the “Capital Financing Requirement”).

11.3.3. Full details of the proposed financing for the 2026-2036 capital programme are provided in Appendix B and is summarised in the following graph:



11.3.4. Borrowing (or Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)) makes up a significant element of the council’s proposed financing over the next 10 years. The council has had sufficient cash and investment balances to be able to internally borrow a significant element of its CFR but will, need to increase its external borrowing in addition to the £159.4m (as at 31 December 2025) of borrowing the council has currently externalised on behalf of the HRA. The impact of this borrowing is incorporated into the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and the Housing Revenue Account business plan. The council works closely with its external treasury advisors (Arlingclose) to identify the optimum borrowing strategy to provide a balance between achieving certainty of future costs (i.e. locking-in long-term fixed rates) and the overall cost of borrowing.

11.3.5. Before committing the council to borrowing, consideration is given to the forecast savings and/or income a new project may generate and how this will contribute to the financing costs as part of its respective business case. The capital financing requirement is reduced over the life of individual assets in the General Fund by a statutory annual contribution from revenue referred to as the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). In addition, the council can elect to reduce its borrowing need by making additional contributions from revenue or from the sale of assets (capital receipts). Planned MRP is as follows:

Table 2: Replacement of debt finance in £ millions

	2024/25 actual	2025/26 forecast	2026/27 budget	2027/28 budget	2028/29 budget
Minimum Revenue Provision (GF)	1.7	1.8	1.9	1.9	1.7
Reserves (HRA)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	1.7	1.8	1.9	1.9	1.7

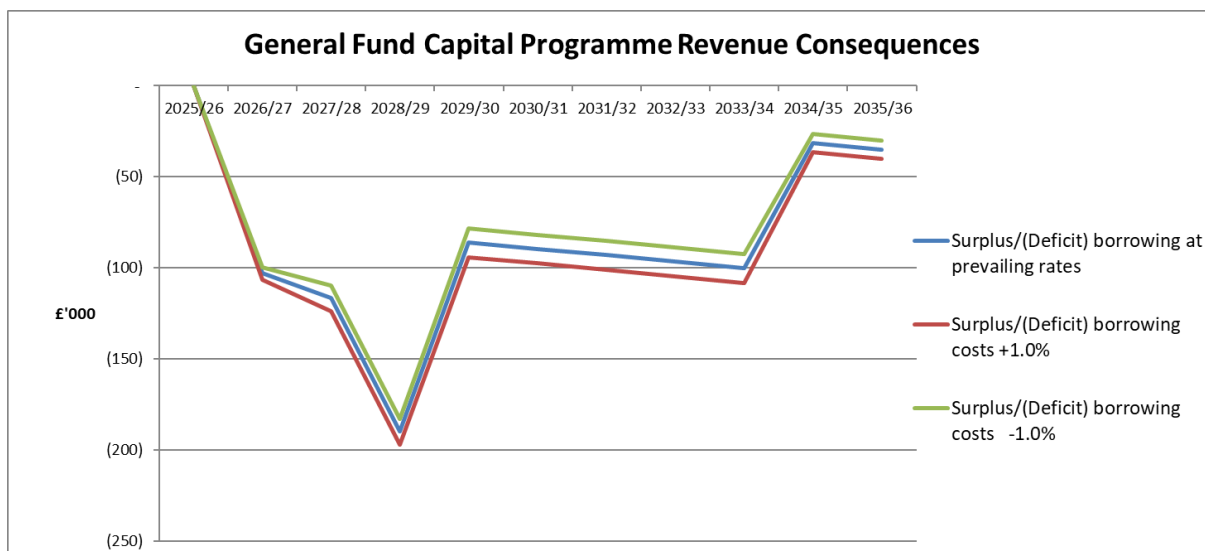
The council's full MRP statement is available at Appendix E.

- 11.3.6. The council's cumulative outstanding amount of debt finance (borrowing need) is measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). This increases with new debt-financed capital expenditure and reduces with MRP and voluntary contributions from revenue or capital receipts. CFR is estimated to increase by up to £3.1m during 2026/27 subject to full delivery of the Capital Programme.

Table 3: Estimates of Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) in £ millions

	31.3.2025 actual	31.3.2026 forecast	31.3.2027 budget	31.3.2028 budget	31.3.2029 budget
General Fund	70.4	69.4	72.5	71.4	69.2
Housing Revenue Account	212.5	212.5	212.5	232.2	247.3
TOTAL CFR	282.9	281.9	285.0	303.6	316.5

- 11.3.7. Further information including borrowing forecasts and borrowing limits are set out in the Treasury Management Strategy (CAB3538).
- 11.4. Revenue Consequences of the Capital Programme on the General Fund
- 11.4.1. Appendix C details the impact of the Capital Programme on the council's General Fund.
- 11.4.2. Part of the council's programme is financed by borrowing and this exposes the council to the risk of changing interest rates. The council can mitigate against this by borrowing early where it is advantageous to do so and by taking out a basket of loans of mixed duration including longer-term fixed rate loans. The graph below illustrates the impact on the General Fund at prevailing long-term rates available to the council as well as the impact of a change in those rates by +/-1.0%:



11.4.3. Although capital expenditure is not charged directly to the revenue budget, interest payable on loans, MRP, and any revenue funded reductions in the borrowing need are charged to the General Fund (GF) or Housing Revenue Account (HRA) income and expenditure statements as appropriate. The net annual charge is known as financing costs - this is compared to the net revenue stream: Council Tax, Business rates, and general government grants in the case of the GF; and rents and other charges in the case of the HRA.

Table 4: Prudential Indicator: Proportion of financing costs to net revenue stream

	2024/25 actual	2025/26 forecast	2026/27 budget	2027/28 budget	2028/29 budget
GF financing costs (£m)	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.0	1.9
GF proportion of net revenue stream	8.1%	7.7%	7.7%	7.6%	7.1%
HRA financing costs (£m)	5.2	5.1	5.3	6.7	7.7
HRA proportion of net revenue stream	13.9%	13.5%	13.3%	15.8%	17.0%

11.4.4. **Sustainability** – due to the long-term nature of capital expenditure and financing, the revenue implications of the expenditure in the next few years will extend up to 50 years in the future. It is imperative therefore that the council ensures that the proposed programme is prudent, affordable, and sustainable. This is achieved by ensuring that the governance and procedures outlined in this strategy are followed; by incorporating and

considering the revenue impact in the context of the medium-term financial strategy (MTFS); by undertaking financial appraisals of individual projects as part of their business cases on a whole life basis; and, for HRA expenditure, incorporating the impact in the 30 year business plan.

11.5. Capital Receipts

11.5.1. When a capital asset is sold the proceeds, known as capital receipts, can be spent on new assets or to reduce debt from prior year capital expenditure. Repayments of capital grants, loans, and investments also generate capital receipts. Forecast capital receipts and their use in funding capital expenditure is detailed in Appendix D.

11.5.2. Ordinarily capital resources, such as capital receipts, can only be used to finance capital expenditure (i.e. the creation or enhancement of a capital asset). However, in 2018 the MHCLG Secretary of State issued a direction to local authorities in order to give them the freedom to use capital receipts from the sale of their own assets (excluding Right to Buy receipts) to help fund the revenue costs of transformation projects and release savings, including through redundancy. By using capital receipts, the council can avoid the negative impact on its annual revenue budget of significant one-off costs. The council used £194,000 in qualifying receipts for severance costs in 2020/21 which will continue to provide significant ongoing savings of over £700,000 per annum. The direction has been extended and expires on 31 March 2030. While the council has no specific plans to do so, it may use qualifying capital receipts, when appropriate, to help fund the revenue costs of any transformation projects identified. Further detail is provided in the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy at Appendix G.

11.5.3. In order to effectively manage its estate, the council commenced an asset challenge programme in 2018/19. This process involves reviewing all the council's assets on a rolling basis to establish why the council holds assets; what options the council has, for example, to increase income, dispose, hold or develop; and when these can be realised.

11.6. The approval process and Project and Programme management

11.6.1. For effective delivery of the Capital Programme, it is important that the programme is realistic in terms of projects which can be delivered on time, within budget, and whilst achieving the desired outcomes. The council has a number of programme and project management procedures in place to help to ensure successful delivery of the capital programme, from the initiation and approval of projects to effective performance monitoring and post-implementation review.

11.6.2. The resource requirements for each corporate project are assessed as part of the development of the outline business case and associated project plan and initially identified in the Business Justification Case which is considered by the Programme and Capital Board (PAC). This is then considered in relation to the whole programme of projects to determine the

cumulative impact of delivery on staff resources. This can have an impact on resourcing in key service areas such as the legal, finance, procurement and estates teams depending upon the nature of the projects. Where required, external support is commissioned to provide resources which cannot be met internally.

- 11.6.3. The PAC Board, the role of which is to monitor the programme and project delivery together with identifying and addressing resource issues, meets on a regular basis to consider such issues.
- 11.6.4. Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee receive quarterly updates on financial performance as well as key projects many of which are in the capital programme.
- 11.7. Asset Management Strategy (AMS)
 - 11.7.1. The AMS seeks to address both the spending priorities for the maintenance of operational property and the development of the non-operational estate to assist economic development and provide both capital receipts and revenue income streams. The most recent AMS covering the period to 2027 was approved in January 2023 (CAB3377 refers).
 - 11.7.2. The council owns a well-located portfolio of property which has the potential to provide an increasing level of income for the council, whilst other sources of income may be restricted in growth. The value of the council's portfolio can be unlocked by undertaking prudent development or refurbishment schemes on existing property to be let as well as identifying potential asset sales as detailed in 11.5 above.
 - 11.7.3. The Capital Programme (Appendix A) includes specific projects in line with the underlying asset management plan held by the council's Estates team. In addition, an annual budget, funded by the Property Reserve, has been allocated to support reactive capital maintenance and smaller scale refurbishments as they arise.
- 11.8. IMT Asset Management Plan
 - 11.8.1. The council formed an IT delivery partnership with Test Valley Borough Council in 2009 that shares an infrastructure platform that continues to produce both capital avoidance and revenue financial savings. Assets in the shared platform are jointly procured and owned. Other capital assets which are required solely for the use of either party will continue to be funded independently. This will be reflected in setting out investment requirements.
 - 11.8.2. The purpose of the IMT Service is to deliver highly reliable, secure and easy to use technology solutions, maintaining operational excellence. The IMT Service uses good practice methodologies (ITIL3) to ensure the

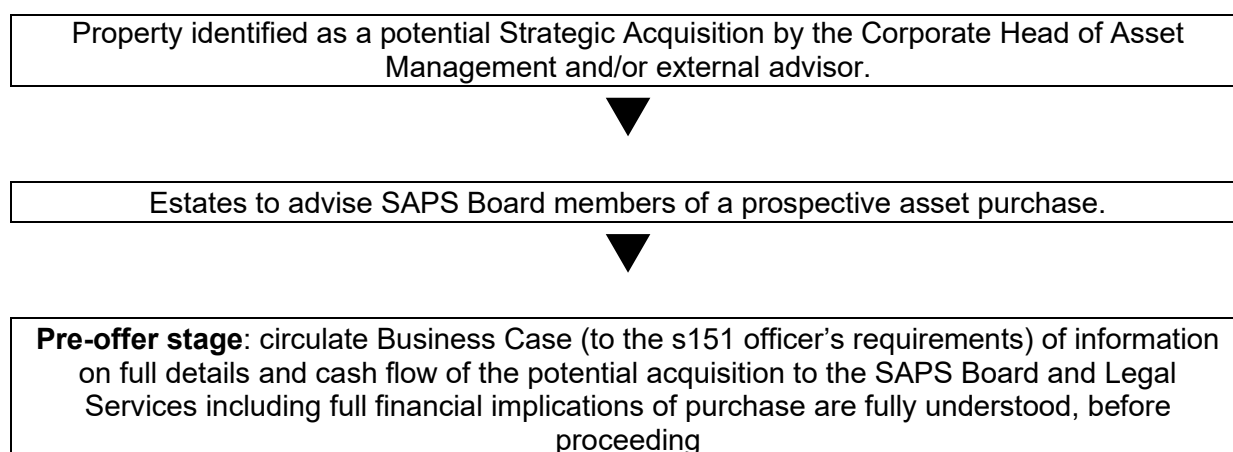
quality control of supportable, sustainable, and secure services to deliver. high quality IT Services.

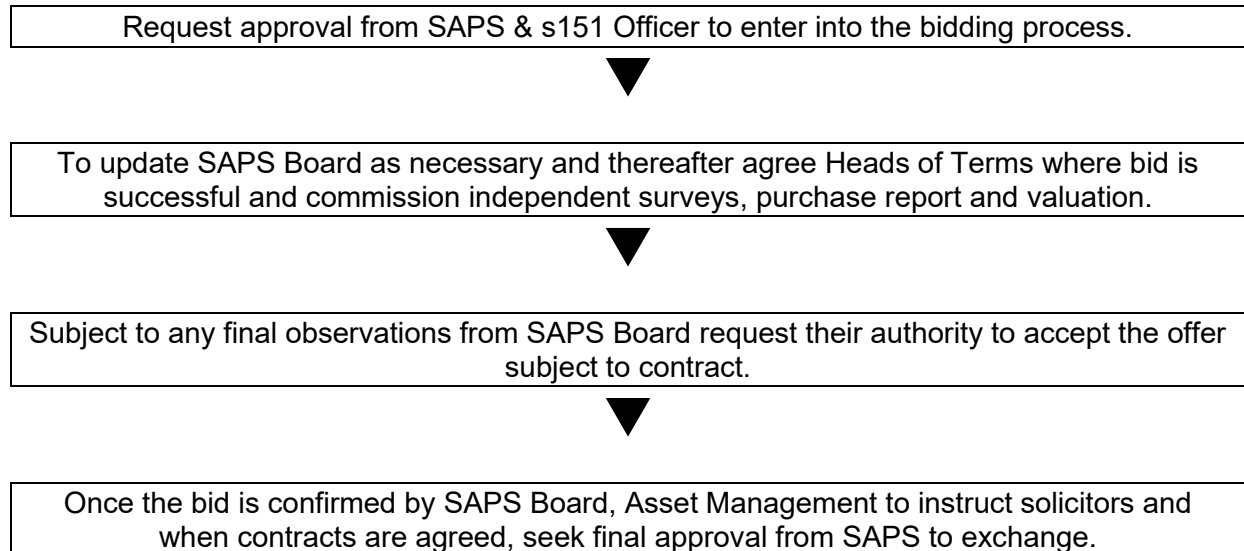
- 11.8.3. The Asset Management Plan for IT infrastructure recognises this requirement for fit-for-purpose equipment through a programme of continuous investment. Generally, equipment will require refreshment after 4-5 years, at intermittent intervals due to the practical constraint of delivery and implementation. The plan previously assumed the need to refresh infrastructure items on a like-for-like basis. However, as the council moves towards cloud-based solutions, the requirement for hardware replacement is reduced and this is reflected in the capital strategy with lower future investment required replaced with ongoing costs in the IMT revenue budget.
- 11.8.4. The council has introduced hybrid working and staff may work up to 50% of the time remotely. A key element of this is the IT investment to enable flexible working from a range of locations (specifically the roll-out of laptops and hybrid meeting room solutions).
- 11.8.5. Digitalisation is a key tenet of the council's TC25 Programme and we must continue to align our IT delivery to ensure that we provide technical solutions that enable a shift from traditional IT support and focus more on transformation services to complement our digital and workforce strategy.
- 11.8.6. The following table sets out the proposed IMT capital expenditure for 2026/27 to be financed from the IMT reserve:

IMT Capital	2026/27
	£'000
Corporate network	125
Multi-functional device (MFD) replacement	29
Total	154

- 11.9. Housing Revenue Account (HRA)
- 11.9.1. The HRA capital programme takes full account of priorities detailed in the council's Housing Strategy, its 30-year HRA Business Plan and the Housing Asset Management Strategy.
- 11.9.2. Appendix A provides summary detail on the HRA capital programme for 2026/27 and forecasts to 2035/36. Further detailed information can be found in the Housing budget paper (CAB3540).
- 11.10. Commercial and non-Treasury Investment Activities
- 11.10.1. The council invests for three broad purposes:

- because it has surplus cash as a result of the reserves it holds and its day-to-day activities such as when income is received in advance of expenditure (known as **treasury management investments**);
 - to support local public services by undertaking regeneration projects, by lending to, and by buying shares in other organisations (**service investments**); and
 - to earn investment income (**commercial investments**).
- 11.10.2. The council's Treasury Management Strategy, and associated limits and indicators, is reported in CAB3538. Further detail on service and commercial investments including total investment indicators is provided in Appendix F.
- 11.10.3. As noted elsewhere in this report, the council's Asset Management Strategy seeks to develop the estate to assist economic development and provide both capital receipts and revenue income streams.
- 11.10.4. Individual projects are supported by appropriate business cases, and the programme as a whole is monitored to ensure that sufficient resources are available, both financial and in respect of staff. Where appropriate, the council will procure additional external resource when either there is insufficient officer availability or when specialist advice and support is required.
- 11.10.5. In addition to this, Council approved a Strategic Asset Purchase Scheme (SAPS) in January 2017 (CAB2872 refers). As part of this, a SAPS Board was created which includes members and officers; the board receives recommendations of potential purchases and the s151 officer has delegated authority to make acquisitions up to £4m following discussions with the board, subject to due diligence, or recommend to Cabinet and Council to approve acquisitions above £4m.
- 11.10.6. The following flowchart details the process:





11.11. Risk Appetite

- 11.11.1. The council's Risk Appetite Statement is an integral part of the council's Risk Management Policy. It ensures that the opportunities the council is willing to take to achieve its strategic priorities and objectives are measured, consistent and compatible with the council's capacity to accept and manage risk; and that they do not expose the council to unknown, unmanaged or unacceptable risks. The Policy was most recently updated and approved in March 2025 (CAB3500). The Policy is subject to review annually and the risk appetite detailed below may therefore change.
- 11.11.2. During the course of the year the council will take fair, measured and targeted levels of risk to achieve the priority objectives included in the Council Plan. There will be opportunities for the council to be innovative or work differently, and any identified risks will need to be considered against the anticipated cost or efficiency benefits.
- 11.11.3. The Risk Appetite Statement supports members and officers in decision making by setting out where the cabinet is comfortable taking different levels of risk, and which levels of risk are unacceptable. The council's risk appetite is considered in conjunction with the risk section of all committee reports when decisions are made.
- 11.11.4. The council's current overall risk appetite is defined as MODERATE (see table below for definitions). This means the council remains open to innovative ways of working and to pursue options that offer potentially substantial rewards, despite also having greater level of risks. However, the council's preference is for safe delivery options which have a lower degree of risk, especially for those services required by statute.

Risk Appetite Definitions	
Avoid	No appetite. Not prepared to take risk.
Averse	Prepared to accept only the very lowest levels of risk, with the preference being for ultra-safe delivery options, while recognising that these will have little or no potential for reward/return.
Cautious	Willing to accept some low risks, while maintaining an overall preference for safe delivery options despite the probability of these having mostly restricted potential for reward/return.
Moderate	Tending always towards exposure to only modest levels of risk in order to achieve acceptable outcomes.
Open	Prepared to consider all delivery options and select those with the highest probability of productive outcomes, even when there are elevated levels of associated risk.
Hungry	Eager to seek original/creative/pioneering delivery options and to accept the associated substantial risk levels in order to secure successful outcomes and meaningful reward/return.

11.11.5. Risk appetite is not a single, fixed concept and there will be a range of appetites for different risks which may vary over time. The council's risk appetite by corporate priority (as at March 2025) and guiding principles are set out below.

Council Plan Priority	Risk Appetite	
Greener Faster	Open	Reflecting the urgency of the climate crisis we will consider options with elevated levels of risk if they deliver required outcomes faster.
Good homes for all	Open	We will choose innovative solutions which may bring elevated levels of risk in order to provide homes that are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable • safe • sustainable • with low energy usage and low bills • built in the right areas for our changing communities.
Healthy Communities	Moderate	We will continue to facilitate and deliver solutions, often working with partners, that produce positive outcomes for all our residents. We will usually take moderate to low-risk options.
Thriving Places	Moderate	We will tend towards exposure to modest levels of risk in order to deliver positive outcomes for our local economy and communities in these challenging times.

Efficient and Effective	Moderate	We will, in order to ensure resilience, enhance our services and make the best use of our resources and explore alternative delivery models and digital solutions. We will tend towards moderate risk exposure to deliver good levels of service.
Listening and Learning	Moderate	We will tend towards exposure to modest levels of risk in order to improve engagement and satisfaction with our services.

11.12. Knowledge, capacity, and skills

- 11.12.1. In order to deliver the Capital Programme, it is essential that the council has access to the right knowledge and skills.
- 11.12.2. Internally the council employs fully qualified and experienced staff such as accountants, solicitors, and surveyors. It is fully supportive in providing access to training, both internal and external, to enable those staff to complete their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements.
- 11.12.3. Where the council does not have the knowledge, capacity, or skills required, use is made of external advisors and specialists in their field. The council currently employs Arlingclose Ltd as their Treasury advisers, PSTax to advise on tax matters, Wilks Head & Eve to undertake its year end valuations, and other specialists as required to support, for example, its major projects.
- 11.12.4. In addition, the council ensures that its members are suitably experienced to undertake the governance responsibilities commensurate to their roles by providing training opportunities (internally and externally provided) and access to workshops either within the council or with its local government partners. There are a number of mandatory training sessions for members throughout the year including, for example, Code of Conduct training and training for the Audit & Governance Committee. Several members attended briefing sessions in October 2025: "Understanding your council's financial statements" provided by CIPFA and a session on Treasury Management delivered provided by the council's treasury advisors Arlingclose.
- 11.12.5. The council also procures, when required, expert advice and assistance externally such as financial and legal advice.

12 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 12.1 The council could elect to have no capital programme at all or to plan for an alternative programme. Both these options have been rejected as the council would no longer be able to meet its objectives.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-

The Capital Strategy and Programme are approved annually.

Other Background Documents:-

None

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Capital Programme 2026-2036

Appendix B – Capital Programme Financing 2026-2036

Appendix C – Revenue Consequences of General Fund Capital Programme 2026 to 2036

Appendix D – Capital Receipts Reserve Forecast

Appendix E – Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2026/27

Appendix F – Investment activities

Appendix G – Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy