

**Treasury Management Strategy Statement  
and Annual Investment Strategy  
Mid-year Review Report 2015-16**

## 1 Background

The Council operates a balanced budget, which broadly means cash raised during the year will meet its cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operations ensure this cash flow is adequately planned, with surplus monies being invested in low risk counterparties, providing adequate liquidity initially before considering optimising investment return.

The second main function of the treasury management service is the funding of the Council's capital plans. These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Council, essentially the longer term cash flow planning to ensure the Council can meet its capital spending operations. This management of longer term cash may involve arranging long or short term loans, or using longer term cash flow surpluses, and on occasion any debt previously drawn may be restructured to meet Council risk or cost objectives.

Accordingly, treasury management is defined as:

“The management of the local authority's investments and cash flows, 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 Introduction

The primary requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management 2011 are as follows:

1. Creation and maintenance of a Treasury Management Policy Statement which sets out the policies and objectives of the Council's treasury management activities.
2. Creation and maintenance of Treasury Management Practices which set out the manner in which the Council will seek to achieve those policies and objectives.
3. Receipt by the full council of an annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement - including the Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy - for the year ahead, a **Mid-year Review Report** and an Annual Report covering activities during the previous year.
4. Delegation by the Council of responsibilities for implementing and monitoring treasury management policies and practices and for the execution and administration of treasury management decisions.
5. Delegation by the Council of the role of scrutiny of treasury management strategy and policies to a specific named body. For this Council the delegated body is the Budget & Strategic Planning Working Group.

This mid-year report has been prepared in compliance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management, and covers the following:

- An economic update for the first part of the 2015/16 financial year;
  - A review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy;
  - The Council's capital expenditure (prudential indicators);
  - A review of the Council's investment portfolio for 2015/16;
  - A review of the Council's borrowing strategy for 2015/16;
  - A review of any debt rescheduling undertaken during 2015/16;
  - A review of compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits for 2015/16.
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## 3 Economic update (as provided by the Council' Treasury Management Advisors)

### 3.1 Economic performance to date and outlook

#### 3.1.1 U.K.

UK GDP growth rates in 2013 of 2.2% and 2.9% in 2014 were the strongest growth rates of any G7 country; the 2014 growth rate was also the strongest UK rate since 2006 and the 2015 growth rate is likely to be a leading rate in the G7 again, possibly being equal to that of the US. However, quarter 1 of 2015 was weak at +0.4% though there has been a rebound in quarter 2 to +0.7%. The Bank of England is forecasting growth to remain around 2.4 – 2.8% over the next three years. The most recent forward looking surveys in August for the services and manufacturing sectors showed a marked slow down in the rate of growth; this is not too surprising given the appreciation of Sterling against the Euro and weak growth in the EU, China and emerging markets creating headwinds for UK exporters. For this recovery to become more balanced and sustainable in the longer term, the recovery still needs to move away from dependence on consumer expenditure and the housing market to manufacturing and investment expenditure. This overall strong growth has resulted in unemployment falling quickly over the last few years although it has now ticked up recently after the Chancellor announced in July significant increases planned in the minimum (living) wage over the course of this Parliament.

The MPC has been particularly concerned that the squeeze on the disposable incomes of consumers should be reversed by wage inflation rising back above the level of inflation in order to ensure that the recovery will be sustainable. It has therefore been encouraging in 2015 to see wage inflation rising significantly above CPI inflation which slipped back to zero in June and again in August. However, with the price of oil taking a fresh downward direction and Iran expected to soon rejoin the world oil market after the impending lifting of sanctions, there could be several more months of low inflation still to come, especially as world commodity prices have generally been depressed by the Chinese economic downturn. The August Bank of England Inflation Report forecast was notably subdued with inflation barely getting back up to the 2% target within the 2-3 year time horizon. Despite average weekly earnings ticking up to 2.9% y/y in the three months ending in July, (as announced in mid-September), this is unlikely to provide ammunition for the MPC to take action to raise Bank Rate soon as labour productivity growth meant that net labour unit costs are still only rising by about 1% y/y.

There are therefore considerable risks around whether inflation will rise in the near future as strongly as previously expected; this will make it more difficult for the central banks of both the US and the UK to raise rates as soon as had previously been expected, especially given the recent major concerns around the slowdown in Chinese growth, the knock on impact on the earnings of emerging countries from falling oil and commodity prices, and the volatility we have seen in equity and bond markets in 2015 so far, which could potentially spill over to impact the real economies rather than just financial markets. On the other hand, there are also concerns around the fact that the central banks of the UK and US have few monetary policy options left to them given that central rates are near to zero and huge QE is already in place. There are therefore arguments that they need to raise rates sooner, rather than later, so as to have ammunition to use if there was a sudden second major financial crisis. But it is hardly likely that they would raise rates until they are sure that growth was securely embedded and 'noflation' was not a significant threat.

The forecast for the first increase in Bank Rate has therefore been pushed back from Q1 to Q2 2016; increases after that will be at a much slower pace and to much lower levels than prevailed

before 2008, as increases in Bank Rate will have a much bigger effect on heavily indebted consumers than they did before 2008.

The Government's revised Budget in July eased the pace of cut backs from achieving a budget surplus in 2018/19 to achieving that in 2019/20.

### 3.1.2 U.S.

GDP growth in 2014 of 2.4% was followed by first quarter 2015 growth depressed by exceptionally bad winter weather at only +0.6% (annualised). However, growth rebounded very strongly in Q2 to 3.9% (annualised) and strong growth is expected going forward. Until the turmoil in financial markets in August caused by fears about the slowdown in Chinese growth, it had been strongly expected that the Fed. would start to increase rates in September. However, the Fed pulled back from a first increase due to global risks which might depress growth and put downward pressure on inflation, and due to a 20% appreciation of the dollar which has caused the Fed to lower its growth forecasts. However, despite inflation being subdued at the current time, a combination of ongoing strong economic growth and a return to full employment would tend to indicate that inflation must be due to make a return. The longer the Fed holds out against raising rates, the sharper is likely to be the subsequent pace of increases. While an increase in rates cannot be ruled out at the October or December meetings, market expectations have moved back to January 2016.

### 3.1.3 Eurozone

The ECB fired its big bazooka by announcing a massive €1.1 trillion programme of quantitative easing in January 2015 to buy up high credit quality government debt of selected EZ countries. This programme started in March and will run to September 2016. This seems to have already had a beneficial impact in improving confidence and sentiment. There has also been a continuing trend of marginal increases in the GDP growth rate which hit 0.4% in quarter 1 2015 (1.0% y/y) and +0.4%, (1.5% y/y) in Q2 GDP. The ECB has also stated it would extend its QE programme if inflation failed to return to its target of 2% within this initial time period.

Greece. During July, Greece finally capitulated to EU demands to implement a major programme of austerity and is now cooperating fully with EU demands. An €86bn third bailout package has since been agreed though it did nothing to address the unsupportable size of total debt compared to GDP. However, huge damage has been done to the Greek banking system and economy by the resistance of the Syriza Government, elected in January, to EU demands. The surprise general election in September gave the Syriza government a mandate to stay in power to implement austerity measures. However, there are major doubts as to whether the size of cuts and degree of reforms required can be fully implemented and so Greek exit from the euro may only have been delayed by this latest bailout.

### 3.1.3 China and Japan

Japan is causing considerable concern as the increase in sales tax in April 2014 has suppressed consumer expenditure and growth. In Q2 2015 growth was -1.6% (annualised) after a short burst of strong growth of 4.5% in Q1. During 2015, Japan has been hit hard by the downturn in China. This does not bode well for Japan as the Abe government has already fired its first two arrows to try to stimulate recovery and a rise in inflation from near zero, but has dithered about firing the third, deregulation of protected and inefficient areas of the economy, due to political lobbies which have traditionally been supporters of Abe's party.

As for China, the Government has been very active during 2015 in implementing several stimulus measures to try to ensure the economy hits the growth target of 7% for the current year and to bring some stability after the major fall in the onshore Chinese stock market. Many commentators are concerned that recent growth figures around that figure, could have been massaged to hide a downturn to a lower growth figure. There are also major concerns as to the creditworthiness of much bank lending to corporates and local government during the post 2008 credit expansion period and whether the bursting of a bubble in housing prices is drawing nearer. Overall, China is

still expected to achieve a growth figure that the EU would be envious of. However, concerns about whether the Chinese cooling of the economy could be heading for a hard landing, and the volatility of the Chinese stock market, have caused major volatility in financial markets in August and September such that confidence is, at best, fragile.

### 3.1.4 Emerging countries

There are considerable concerns about the vulnerability of some emerging countries and their corporates which are getting caught in a perfect storm. Having borrowed massively in western currency denominated debt since the financial crisis, caused by western investors searching for yield by channelling investment cash away from western economies with dismal growth, depressed bond yields (due to QE), and near zero interest rates, into emerging countries, there is now a strong current flowing to reverse that flow back to those western economies with strong growth and an imminent rise in interest rates and bond yields. This change in investors' strategy and the massive reverse cash flow has depressed emerging country currencies and caused the US dollar and sterling to appreciate. In turn, this has made it much more costly for emerging countries to service their western currency denominated debt at a time when their earnings from commodities are depressed. There are also going to be major issues when previously borrowed debt comes to maturity and requires refinancing at much more expensive rates, if available at all.

Corporates (worldwide), heavily involved in mineral extraction and / or the commodities market may also be at risk and this could also cause volatility in equities and safe haven flows to bonds. Financial markets may also be buffeted by sovereign wealth funds of countries highly exposed to falls in commodity prices which, therefore, may have to liquidate investments in order to cover national budget deficits.

## 3.2 Interest rate forecasts

The Council's treasury advisor, Capita Asset Services, has provided the following forecast:

	Dec-15	Mar-16	Jun-16	Sep-16	Dec-16	Mar-17	Jun-17	Sep-17	Dec-17	Mar-18	Jun-18
<b>Bank rate</b>	0.50%	0.50%	0.75%	0.75%	1.00%	1.00%	1.25%	1.50%	1.50%	1.75%	1.75%
<b>5yr PWLB rate</b>	2.40%	2.50%	2.60%	2.80%	2.90%	3.00%	3.10%	3.20%	3.30%	3.40%	3.50%
<b>10yr PWLB rate</b>	3.00%	3.20%	3.30%	3.40%	3.50%	3.70%	3.80%	3.90%	4.00%	4.10%	4.20%
<b>25yr PWLB rate</b>	3.60%	3.80%	3.90%	4.00%	4.10%	4.20%	4.30%	4.40%	4.50%	4.60%	4.60%
<b>50yr PWLB rate</b>	3.60%	3.80%	3.90%	4.00%	4.10%	4.20%	4.30%	4.40%	4.50%	4.60%	4.60%

Capita Asset Services undertook a review of its interest rate forecasts on 11 August. Later in August, fears around the slowdown in China and Japan caused major volatility in equities and bonds and sparked a flight from equities into safe havens like gilts and so caused PWLB rates to fall. However, there is much volatility in rates as news ebbs and flows in negative or positive ways and news in September in respect of Volkswagen, and other corporates, has compounded downward pressure on equity prices. This latest forecast includes a first increase in Bank Rate in quarter 2 of 2016.

Despite market turbulence in late August, and then September, causing a sharp downturn in PWLB rates, the overall trend in the longer term will be for gilt yields and PWLB rates to rise, due to the high volume of gilt issuance in the UK, and of bond issuance in other major western countries. Increasing investor confidence in eventual world economic recovery is also likely to compound this effect as recovery will encourage investors to switch from bonds to equities.

The overall balance of risks to economic recovery in the UK is currently evenly balanced. Only time will tell just how long this current period of strong economic growth will last; it also remains exposed to vulnerabilities in a number of key areas.

Downside risks to current forecasts for UK gilt yields and PWLB rates currently include:

- Geopolitical risks in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Asia, increasing safe haven flows.
- UK economic growth turns significantly weaker than we currently anticipate.
- Weak growth or recession in the UK's main trading partners - the EU, US and China.
- A resurgence of the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis.
- Recapitalisation of European banks requiring more government financial support.
- Monetary policy action failing to stimulate sustainable growth and to combat the threat of deflation in western economies, especially the Eurozone and Japan.
- Emerging country economies, currencies and corporates destabilised by falling commodity prices and / or the start of Fed. rate increases, causing a flight to safe havens

The potential for upside risks to current forecasts for UK gilt yields and PWLB rates, especially for longer term PWLB rates include: -

- Uncertainty around the risk of a UK exit from the EU.
- The ECB severely disappointing financial markets with a programme of asset purchases which proves insufficient to significantly stimulate growth in the EZ.
- The commencement by the US Federal Reserve of increases in the Fed. funds rate in 2015, causing a fundamental reassessment by investors of the relative risks of holding bonds as opposed to equities and leading to a major flight from bonds to equities.
- UK inflation returning to significantly higher levels than in the wider EU and US, causing an increase in the inflation premium inherent to gilt yields.

## 4 Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy update

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2015/16 was approved by this Council on 4 February 2015.

- The underlying TMSS approved previously requires revision in the light of operational changes to the credit methodology whereby viability, financial strength and support ratings will not be considered as key criteria in the choice of creditworthy investment counterparties. The proposed changes and supporting detail for the changes are set out in Section 6 Investment portfolios.
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## 5 The Council's Capital Position (Prudential Indicators)

This part of the report is structured to update:

- The Council's capital expenditure plans;
- How these plans are being financed;
- The impact of the changes in the capital expenditure plans on the prudential indicators and the underlying need to borrow; and
- Compliance with the limits in place for borrowing activity.

### 5.1 Prudential Indicator for Capital Expenditure

This table shows the revised estimates for capital expenditure and the changes since the capital programme was agreed at the Budget.

Capital Expenditure by Service	2015/16 Original Estimate £000	Current Position £000	2015/16 Revised Estimate £000
Non HRA	3,982	3,498	3,498
HRA	1,548	1,851	1,851
<b>Total capital expenditure</b>	<b>5,530</b>	<b>5,349</b>	<b>5,349</b>

The decrease from the original estimate of £3.982m to £3.498m is as a result of some schemes being carried forward from 2014-15, Housing Foyer Contribution (£400k) and Broadband (£360k) plus £550k for Leisure Vision, offset by a re-profiling of the Cattle Market Scheme £2.750m. In terms of the HRA the movement is as a result of the carried forwards from 2014-15 being included into the 2015-16 capital programme balanced against a forecast underspend and resulting carry forward into the 2016-17 which are expected.

### 5.2 Changes to the Financing of the Capital Programme

The table below draws together the main strategy elements of the capital expenditure plans (above), highlighting the original supported and unsupported elements of the capital programme, and the expected financing arrangements of this capital expenditure. The borrowing element of the table increases the underlying indebtedness of the Council by way of the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), although this will be reduced in part by revenue charges for the repayment of debt (the Minimum Revenue Provision). This direct borrowing need may also be supplemented by maturing debt and other treasury requirements.

Capital Expenditure	2015/16 Original Estimate £000	2015/16 Revised Estimate £000
<b>Total capital expenditure</b>		
Financed by:		
Capital receipts	294	2,095
Capital grants	133	133
Third party contribution	3,500	829
Cash backed depreciation	1,025	1,025
Reserves	546	1,205
Repairs & Renewals Fund	32	62
<b>Total financing</b>	<b>5,530</b>	<b>5,349</b>
<b>Borrowing requirement</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Due to the changes outlined in para 5.1 there has been associated changes in the financing requirements and sources of funding which are outline above. The capital receipts and

reserve financing have increased due to the additional schemes being included. The third party contributions have reduced to reflect re-profiling of the Cattle Market project into later years.

### 5.3 Changes to the Prudential Indicators for the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) , External Debt and the Operational Boundary

The table below shows the CFR, which is the underlying external need to incur borrowing for a capital purpose. It also shows the expected debt position over the period, which is termed the Operational Boundary.

#### Prudential Indicator – Capital Financing Requirement

We are on target to achieve the original forecast Capital Financing Requirement.

#### Prudential Indicator – the Operational Boundary for external debt

	2015/16 Original Estimate £000	Current Position £000	2015/16 Revised Estimate £000
<b>Prudential Indicator – Capital Financing Requirement</b>			
CFR – non housing	138	138	138
CFR – housing	31,484	31,484	31,484
<b>Total CFR</b>	<b>31,622</b>	<b>31,622</b>	<b>31,622</b>
<b>Net movement in CFR</b>	<b>-13</b>	<b>-13</b>	<b>-13</b>
<b>Prudential Indicator – the Operational Boundary for external debt</b>			
Borrowing Indicator	35,413	35,413	35,413
Other long term liabilities	138	151	138
<b>Total debt (year end position)</b>	<b>35,551</b>	<b>35,564</b>	<b>35,551</b>

### 5.4 Limits to Borrowing Activity

The first key control over the treasury activity is a prudential indicator to ensure that over the medium term, net borrowing (borrowings less investments) will only be for a capital purpose. Gross external borrowing should not, except in the short term, exceed the total of CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2015/16 and next two financial years. This allows some flexibility for limited early borrowing for future years. The Council has approved a policy for borrowing in advance of need which will be adhered to if this proves prudent.

	2015/16 Original Estimate £000	Current Position £000	2015/16 Revised Estimate £000
Actual Borrowing	31,413	31,413	31,413
Other long term liabilities	138	151	138
<b>Total debt</b>	<b>31,551</b>	<b>31,564</b>	<b>31,551</b>
<b>CFR (year end position)</b>	<b>31,622</b>	<b>31,622</b>	<b>31,622</b>



The Head of Central Services reports that no difficulties are envisaged for the current or future years in complying with this prudential indicator.

A further prudential indicator controls the overall level of borrowing. This is the Authorised Limit which represents the limit beyond which borrowing is prohibited, and needs to be set and revised by Members. It reflects the level of borrowing which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable in the longer term. It is the expected maximum borrowing need with some headroom for unexpected movements. This is the statutory limit determined under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003.

<b>Authorised limit for external debt</b>	<b>2015/16 Original Indicator £000</b>	<b>Current Position £000</b>	<b>2015/16 Revised Indicator £000</b>
Borrowing	45,860	45,860	45,860
Other long term liabilities	140	140	140
<b>Total</b>	<b>46,000</b>	<b>46,000</b>	<b>46,000</b>

## 6 Investment Portfolio 2015/16

In accordance with the Code, it is the Council's priority to ensure security of capital and liquidity, and to obtain an appropriate level of return which is consistent with the Council's risk appetite. As set out in Section 3, it is a very difficult investment market in terms of earning the level of interest rates commonly seen in previous decades as rates are very low and in line with the 0.5% Bank Rate. The continuing potential for a re-emergence of a Eurozone sovereign debt crisis, and its impact on banks, prompts a low risk and short term strategy. Given this risk environment, investment returns are likely to remain low.

The Council held £20.7m of investments as at 30 September 2015 (£16.45m at 31 March 2015) and the investment portfolio yield for the first six months of the year is 0.66% against the seven day money market rate of 0.30%.

The Head of Central Services confirms that the approved limits within the Annual Investment Strategy were not breached during the first six months of 2015/16.

The Council's budgeted gross investment return for 2015/16 is £127,000 and performance for the year is forecast to exceed the budget by at least £30,000 due to the high level of balances and lengthening of the portfolio.

### Investment Counterparty criteria

The current investment counterparty criteria selection approved in the TMSS requires the following operational changes to be incorporated:

The main rating agencies (Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poor's) have, through much of the financial crisis, provided some institutions with a ratings "uplift" due to implied levels of sovereign support. Commencing in 2015, in response to the evolving regulatory regime, all three agencies have begun removing these "uplifts" with the timing of the process determined by regulatory progress at the national level. The process has been part of a wider reassessment of methodologies by each of the rating agencies. In addition to the removal of implied support, new methodologies are now taking into account additional factors, such as regulatory capital levels. In some cases, these factors have "netted" each other off, to leave underlying ratings either unchanged or little changed. A consequence of the new methodologies is that they have also lowered the importance of the (Fitch) Support and Viability ratings and have seen the (Moody's) Financial Strength rating withdrawn by the agency.

In keeping with the agencies' new methodologies, the credit element of our own credit assessment process now focuses solely on the Short and Long Term ratings of an institution. While this is the same process that has always been used by Standard & Poor's, this has been a change to the use of Fitch and Moody's ratings. It is important to stress that the other key elements to our process, namely the assessment of Rating Watch and Outlook information as well as the Credit Default Swap (CDS) overlay have not been changed.

The evolving regulatory environment, in tandem with the rating agencies' new methodologies also means that sovereign ratings are now of lesser importance in the assessment process. Where through the crisis, clients typically assigned the highest sovereign rating to their criteria the new regulatory environment is attempting to break the link between sovereign support and domestic financial institutions. While this authority understands the changes that have taken place, it will continue to specify a minimum sovereign rating of AA-. This is in relation to the fact that the underlying domestic and where appropriate, international, economic and wider political and social background will still have an influence on the ratings of a financial institution.

It is important to stress that these rating agency changes do not reflect any changes in the underlying status or credit quality of the institution, merely a reassessment of their methodologies in light of enacted and future expected changes to the regulatory environment in which financial institutions operate. While some banks have received lower credit ratings as a result of these changes, this does not mean that they are suddenly less credit worthy than they were formerly. Rather, in the majority of cases, this mainly reflects the fact that implied sovereign government support has effectively been withdrawn from banks. They are now expected to have sufficiently strong balance sheets to be able to withstand foreseeable adverse financial circumstances without government support. In fact, in many cases, the balance sheets of banks are now much more robust than they were before the 2008 financial crisis when they had higher ratings than now. However, this is not universally applicable, leaving some entities with modestly lower ratings than they had through much of the "support" phase of the financial crisis.

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## 7 Borrowing

The Council's capital financing requirement (CFR) for 2015/16 is £31.622m. The CFR denotes the Council's underlying need to borrow for capital purposes. If the CFR is positive the Council may borrow from the PWLB or the market (external borrowing) or from internal balances on a temporary basis (internal borrowing). The balance of external and internal borrowing is generally driven by market conditions. Table 5.4 shows the Council has borrowings of £31.413m which is below the CFR. This is a prudent and cost effective approach in the current economic climate but will require ongoing monitoring in the event that upside risk to gilt yields prevails.

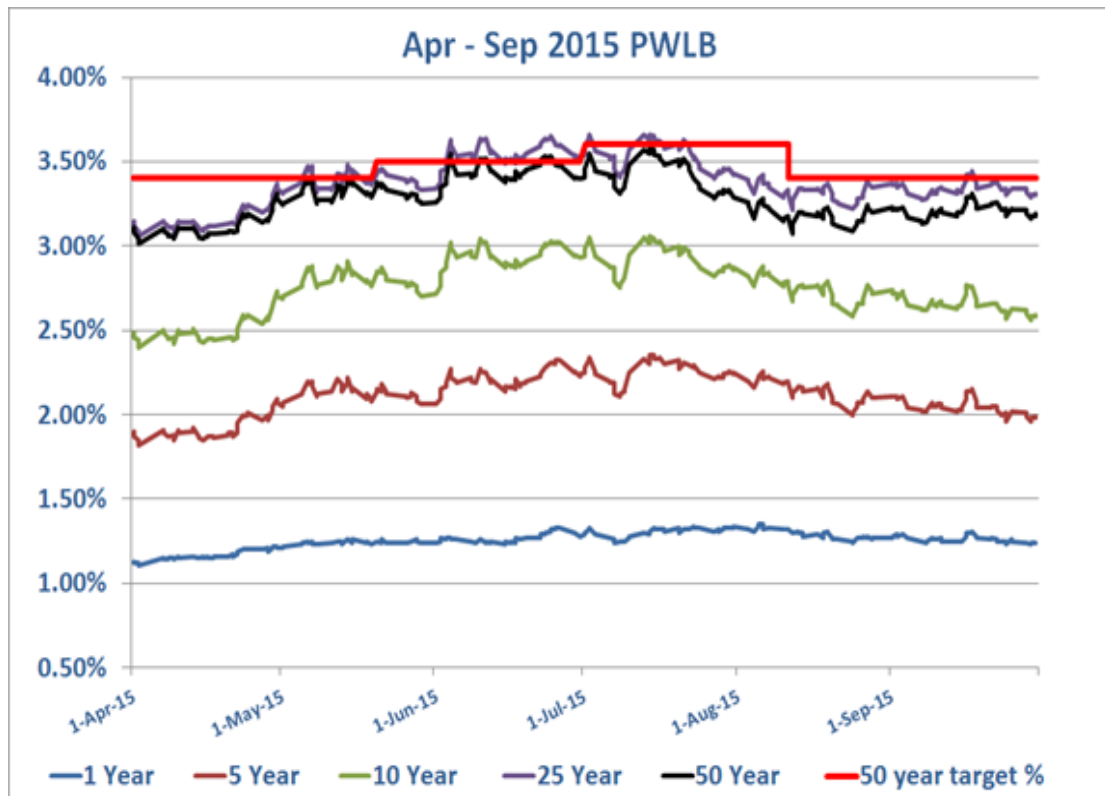
As outlined below, the general trend has been an increase in interest rates during the first quarter but then a fall during the second quarter.

No new external borrowing has been/ will be undertaken during this financial year.

The graph and table below show the movement in PWLB certainty rates for the first six months of the year to date:

### PWLB certainty rates 1 April 2015 to 30th September 2015

	1 Year	5 Year	10 Year	25 Year	50 Year
Low	1.11%	1.82%	2.40%	3.06%	3.01%
Date	02/04/2015	02/04/2015	02/04/2015	02/04/2015	02/04/2015
High	1.35%	2.35%	3.06%	3.66%	3.58%
Date	05/08/2015	14/07/2015	14/07/2015	02/07/2015	14/07/2015
Average	1.26%	2.12%	2.76%	3.39%	3.29%



## 8 Debt Rescheduling

No debt rescheduling was undertaken during the first six months of 2015/16.