Bolton Council

Report to:	Cabinet		
Date of meeting:	7th February 2022		
Report of:	Deputy Chief Executive	**Report number:**	31728
Contact officer:	Sue Johnson	**Telephone number**	X1502
Report title:	Treasury Management and Investment Strategies for 2022/23 to 2025/26		

Not confidential

This report does not contain information which warrants its consideration in the absence of the press or members of the public.

Purpose:	To outline the Council's prudential indicators for 2022/23 – 2025/26 and set out the expected treasury operations for this period.	
Recommendations:	Cabinet is asked to recommend to the Council for Approval: i. The Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23 to 2025/26 and the treasury limits on activity contained within this report. ii. The Authorised Limit Prudential Indicator. iii. The Investment Strategy 2022/23 contained in the treasury management strategy.	
Decision:		
Background documents:		
Signed:	Leader/Executive Cabinet Member	Monitoring Officer
Date:		

Consultation with other officers		
Finance	n/a	
Legal	No	
HR	No	
Equality Impact Assessment required?	No	

(a) Pre-consultation reports Is there a need to consult on the proposals?	No
(b) Post consultation reports Please confirm that the consultation response has been taken into consideration in making the recommendations.	No

Vision outcomes		
Please identify the appropriate Vision outcome(s) that this report relates or contributes to by putting a cross in the relevant box.	1. Start Well	X
	2.Live Well	X
	3.Age Well	X
	4.Prosperous	X
	5. Clean and Green	X
	6.Strong and Distinctive	X

Summary:	The report fulfils two key legislative requirements: The **treasury management strategy statement** which sets out how the Council's treasury service will support the capital decisions taken on an earlier item, the day to day treasury management and the limitations on activity through **treasury prudential indicators**. The key indicator is the **Authorised Limit**, the maximum amount of debt the Council could afford in the short term, but which may not be sustainable in the longer term. This is the Affordable Borrowing Limit required by s3 of the Local Government Act 2003. This is in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management; and The **investment strategy** which sets out the Council's criteria for choosing investment counterparties and limiting exposure to the risk of loss. This strategy is in accordance with the CLG Investment Guidance.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The Council is required to operate a balanced budget, which broadly means that cash raised during the year will meet cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operation is to ensure that this cash flow is adequately planned, with cash being available when it is needed. Surplus monies are invested in low risk counterparties or instruments commensurate with the Council's low risk appetite, providing adequate liquidity initially before considering investment return.

1.1.2 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 that the Council can meet its capital spending obligations. This management of longer-term cash may involve arranging long or short-term loans, or using longer-term cash flow surpluses. On occasion, when it is prudent and economic, any debt previously drawn may be restructured to meet Council risk or cost objectives.

1.1.3 The contribution the treasury management function makes to the authority is critical, as the balance of debt and investment operations ensure liquidity or the ability to meet spending commitments as they fall due, either on day-to-day revenue or for larger capital projects. The treasury operations will see a balance of the interest costs of debt and the investment income arising from cash deposits affecting the available budget. Since cash balances generally result from reserves and balances, it is paramount to ensure adequate security of the sums invested, as a loss of principal will in effect result in a loss to the General Fund Balance.

1.1.4 CIPFA defines treasury management as:

- "The management of the local authority's borrowing, 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."

1.1.5 This authority has not engaged in any commercial investments and has no non-treasury investments.

1.2 Reporting requirements

1.2.1 Capital Strategy

1.2.2 Since 2019/20 the CIPFA revised 2017 Prudential and Treasury Management Codes require all local authorities to prepare an additional report, a capital strategy report, which will provide the following:

- a high-level long term overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of services
- an overview of how the associated risk is managed
- the implications for future financial sustainability

1.2.3 The aim of this capital strategy is to ensure that all elected members on the full council fully understand the overall long-term policy objectives and resulting capital strategy requirements, governance procedures and risk appetite.

1.2.4 The Capital Strategy 2022-2025 is a separate item on the agenda and incorporates;

- the capital expenditure and financing plan (including prudential indicators)

- a minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy, (how residual capital expenditure is charged to revenue over time);

1.2.5 Treasury Management reporting

1.2.6 The Council is currently required to receive and approve, as a minimum, three main treasury reports each year, which incorporate a variety of policies, estimates and actuals.

1.2.7 Prudential and treasury indicators and treasury strategy (this report) - This covers:

- the treasury management strategy, (how the investments and borrowings are to be organised), including treasury indicators; and
- an investment strategy, (the parameters on how investments are to be managed).

1.2.8 Quarterly update reports (including the year end report) are taken to the Executive Cabinet Member Leader's Portfolio meeting. This is primarily a progress report and will update members on the capital position, amending prudential indicators as necessary, and whether any policies require revision. If applicable.

1.3 Scrutiny

1.3.1 The above reports are required to be adequately scrutinised before being recommended to Council. This role is undertaken by the Audit Committee.

1.4 Treasury Management Strategy for 2022/23

1.4.1 The strategy for 2022/23 covers two main areas:

1.4.2 Capital issues

- the capital expenditure plans and the associated prudential indicators;
- the minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy.

1.4.3 Treasury management issues

- the current treasury position;
- treasury indicators which limit the treasury risk and activities of the Council;
- prospects for interest rates;
- the borrowing strategy;
- policy on borrowing in advance of need;
- debt rescheduling;
- the investment strategy;
- creditworthiness policy; and
- the policy on use of external service providers.

1.4.4 These elements cover the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003, the CIPFA Prudential Code, MHCLG MRP Guidance, the CIPFA Treasury Management Code and MHCLG Investment Guidance.

1.5 Training

1.5.1 The CIPFA Code requires the responsible officer to ensure that members with responsibility for treasury management receive adequate training in treasury management. This especially applies to members responsibe for scrutiny. Training was undertaken by members of the Audit Committee in July 2019 and further training will take place in Summer or Autumn 2022.

1.5.2 The training needs of officers involved with treasury management are periodically reviewed.

1.6 Treasury management advisors

1.6.1 The Council's current external treasury management advisor is Link Asset Services (formerly Capita Asset Services), through the Greater Manchester group contract who will re-tender for the contract in 2022.

1.6.2 The Council recognises that responsibility for treasury management decisions remains with the organisation at all times and will ensure that undue reliance is not placed upon the services of our external service providers. All decisions will be undertaken with regards to all available information, including, but not solely, our treasury advisers.

1.6.3 It also recognises that there is value in employing external providers of treasury management services in order to acquire access to specialist skills and resources. The Council will ensure that the terms of their appointment and the methods by which their value will be assessed are properly agreed and documented, and subjected to regular review.

2 BORROWING

2.1.1 The capital expenditure plans, set out in another item on this agenda, provide details of the service activity of the Council. The treasury management function ensures that the Council's cash is organised in accordance with the the relevant professional codes, so that sufficient cash is available to meet this service activity. This will involve both the organisation of the cash flow and, where capital plans require, the organisation of appoporiate borrowing facilities. The strategy covers the relevant treasury / prudential indicators, the current and projected debt positions and the annual investment strategy.

2.2 Current portfolio position

2.2.1 The Council's treasury portfolio position at 31 March 2021, with forward projections, is summarised below. The table shows the actual external debt (the treasury management operations), against the underlying capital borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement - CFR), highlighting any over or under borrowing.

£m	2020/21	2021/2022	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	Actual	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
External Debt						
Debt at 1 April	178.800	178.800	178.800	194.800	194.800	194.800
Expected change in Debt	0.000	0.000	16.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Other long-term liabilities (OLTL) at 1 April	7.885	7.385	6.885	7.385	6.885	6.385
Expected change in OLTL	-0.500	-0.500	0.500	-0.500	-0.500	-0.500
Actual gross debt at 31 March	**186.185**	**185.685**	**202.185**	**201.685**	**201.185**	**200.685**
The Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	**266.900**	**295.000**	**296.200**	**295.500**	**294.800**	**294.100**
Maximum Under Borrowing	**80.715**	**109.315**	**94.015**	**93.815**	**93.615**	**93.415**

2.2.2 Within the prudential indicators there are a number of key indicators to ensure that the Council operates its activities within well-defined limits. One of these is that the Council needs to ensure that its gross debt does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2022/23 and the following two financial years. This allows some flexibility for limited early borrowing for future years, but ensures that borrowing is not undertaken for revenue purposes.

2.2.3 The Deputy Chief Executive reports that the Council complied with this prudential indicator in the current year and does not envisage difficulties for the future. This view takes into account current commitments, existing plans, and the proposals in this budget report.

2.3 Treasury Indicators: limits to borrowing activity

2.3.1 **The operational boundary** - This is the limit beyond which external debt is not normally expected to exceed. In most cases, this would be a similar figure to the CFR, but may be lower or higher depending on the levels of actual debt.

Operational boundary £m	2020/21	2021/2022	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	Actual	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
Total	276.900	305.000	306.200	305.500	304.800	304.100

2.3.2 **The authorised limit for external debt -** A further key prudential indicator represents a control on the maximum level of borrowing. This represents a limit beyond which external debt is prohibited, and this limit needs to be set or revised by the full Council. It reflects the level of external debt which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable in the longer term.

- This is the statutory limit determined under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003. The Government retains an option to control either the total of all councils' plans, or those of a specific council, although this power has not yet been exercised.

Council officers are currently working on the accounting changes brought in under International Financial Reporting Standard (IFRS) 16 to bring operating leases and similar instruments onto the balance sheet. This has been deferred unti 2022/23. Whilst this change will not result in any resource impact to the Income and Expenditure Statement, it will bring assets onto the balance sheet with a matching liability. The figures now included in the Other Long Term Liabilities within the Authorised Limit are the current best estimate with some headroom included. Officers will update and revise the Authorised Limit when more accurate figures are available, but any breach of the estimate will have no impact on the financial health of the Council. The Council is asked to approve the following authorised limit:

Authorised limit £m	2020/21	2021/2022	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	Actual	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
Total	296.9	325.0	326.2	325.5	324.8	324.1

2.4 Prospects for interest rates

The Council has appointed Link Group as its treasury advisor and part of their service is to assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates. Link provided the following forecasts on 20th December 2021. These are forecasts for certainty rates, gilt yields plus 80bps:

Link Group Interest Rate View 20.12.21	Dec-21	Mar-22	Jun-22	Sep-22	Dec-22	Mar-23	Jun-23	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25
BANK RATE	0.25	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.25
3 month ave earnings	0.20	0.30	0.50	0.50	0.60	0.70	0.80	0.90	0.90	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
6 month ave earnings	0.40	0.50	0.60	0.60	0.70	0.80	0.90	1.00	1.00	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10
12 month ave earnings	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.80	0.90	1.00	1.10	1.10	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20
5 yr PWLB	1.40	1.50	1.50	1.60	1.60	1.70	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.90	1.90	1.90	2.00	2.00
10 yr PWLB	1.60	1.70	1.80	1.80	1.90	1.90	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.10	2.10	2.10	2.20	2.30
25 yr PWLB	1.80	1.90	2.00	2.10	2.10	2.20	2.20	2.20	2.30	2.30	2.40	2.40	2.50	2.50
50 yr PWLB	1.50	1.70	1.80	1.90	1.90	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.10	2.10	2.20	2.20	2.30	2.30

Additional notes by Link on this forecast table: -

- *LIBOR and LIBID rates will cease from the end of 2021. Work is currently progressing to replace LIBOR with a rate based on SONIA (Sterling Overnight Index Average). In the meantime, our forecasts are based on expected average earnings by local authorities for 3 to 12 months.*
- *Our forecasts for average earnings are averages i.e., rates offered by individual banks may differ significantly from these averages, reflecting their different needs for borrowing short term cash at any one point in time.*

Over the last two years, the coronavirus outbreak has done huge economic damage to the UK and to economies around the world. After the Bank of England took emergency action in March 2020 to cut Bank Rate to 0.10%, it left Bank Rate unchanged at its subsequent meetings until raising it to 0.25% at its meeting on 16th December 2021.

As shown in the forecast table above, the forecast for Bank Rate now includes four increases, one in December 2021 to 0.25%, then quarter 2 of 2022 to 0.50%, quarter 1 of 2023 to 0.75%, quarter 1 of 2024 to 1.00% and, finally, one in quarter 1 of 2025 to 1.25%.

2.4.1 Significant risks to the forecasts

- **Mutations** of the virus render current vaccines ineffective, and tweaked vaccines to combat these mutations are delayed, or cannot be administered fast enough to prevent further lockdowns. 25% of the population not being vaccinated is also a significant risk to the NHS being overwhelmed and lockdowns being the only remaining option.

- **Labour and supply shortages** prove more enduring and disruptive and depress economic activity.

- **The Monetary Policy Committee** acts too quickly, or too far, over the next three years to raise Bank Rate and causes UK economic growth, and increases in inflation, to be weaker than we currently anticipate.

- **The Monetary Policy Committee** tightens monetary policy too late to ward off building inflationary pressures.

- **The Government** acts too quickly to cut expenditure to balance the national budget.

- **UK / EU trade arrangements** – if there was a major impact on trade flows and financial services due to complications or lack of co-operation in sorting out significant remaining issues.

- **Longer term US treasury yields** rise strongly and pull gilt yields up higher than forecast.

- **Major stock markets** e.g., in the US, become increasingly judged as being over-valued and susceptible to major price corrections. Central banks become increasingly exposed to the "moral hazard" risks of having to buy shares and corporate bonds to reduce the impact of major financial market selloffs on the general economy.

- **Geopolitical risks,** for example in Ukraine, Iran, North Korea, but also in Europe and Middle Eastern countries; on-going global power influence struggles between Russia/China/US. These could lead to increasing safe-haven flows.

The balance of risks to the UK economy: -

- The overall balance of risks to economic growth in the UK is now to the downside, including risks from Covid and its variants - both domestically and their potential effects worldwide.

2.5 The following is a commentary on interest rates from Link Asset Services

- It is not expected that Bank Rate will go up fast after the initial rate rise as the supply potential of the economy is not likely to have taken a major hit during the pandemic: it should, therefore, be able to cope well with meeting demand after supply shortages subside over the next year, without causing inflation to remain elevated in the medium-term, or to inhibit inflation from falling back towards the MPC's 2% target after the spike up to around 5%. The forecast includes four increases in Bank Rate over the three-year forecast period to March 2025, ending at 1.25%. However, it is likely that these forecasts will need changing within a relatively short timeframe for the following reasons:-

- We do not know how severe an impact Omicron could have on the economy and whether there will be another lockdown or similar and, if there is, whether there would be significant fiscal support from the Government for businesses and jobs.

- There were already increasing grounds for viewing the economic recovery as running out of steam during the autumn and now into the winter. And then along came Omicron to pose a significant downside threat to economic activity. This could lead into stagflation, or even into recession, which would then pose a dilemma for the MPC as to whether to focus on combating inflation or supporting economic growth through keeping interest rates low.

- Will some current key supply shortages spill over into causing economic activity in some sectors to take a significant hit?

- Rising gas and electricity prices in October and next April and increases in other prices caused by supply shortages and increases in taxation next April, are already going to deflate consumer spending power without the MPC having to take any action on Bank Rate to cool inflation.

- On the other hand, consumers are sitting on over £160bn of excess savings left over from the pandemic so when will they spend this sum, in part or in total?

- It looks as if the economy coped well with the end of furlough on 30th September. It is estimated that there were around 1 million people who came off furlough then and there was not a huge spike up in unemployment. The other side of the coin is that vacancies have been hitting record levels so there is a continuing acute shortage of workers. This is a potential danger area if this shortage drives up wages which then feed through into producer prices and the prices of services i.e., a second-round effect that the MPC would have to act against if it looked like gaining significant momentum.

- We also recognise there could be further nasty surprises on the Covid front beyond the Omicron mutation.

In summary, with the high level of uncertainty prevailing on several different fronts, we expect to have to revise our forecasts again - in line with whatever the new news is.

It should also be borne in mind that Bank Rate being cut to 0.25% and then to 0.10%, were emergency measures to deal with the Covid crisis hitting the UK in March 2020. At any time, the MPC could decide to simply take away such emergency cuts on no other grounds than they are no longer warranted, and as a step forward in the return to normalisation. In addition, any Bank Rate under 1% is both highly unusual and highly supportive of economic growth.

2.5.1 **Gilt yields / PWLB rates**

Since the start of 2021, there has been a lot of volatility in gilt yields, and hence PWLB rates. As the interest forecast table for PWLB certainty rates above shows, there is forecast to be a steady, but slow, rise in both Bank Rate and gilt yields during the forecast period to March 2025, though there will doubtless be a lot of unpredictable volatility during this forecast period.

While monetary policy in the UK will have a major impact on gilt yields, there is also a need to consider the potential impact that rising treasury yields in America could have on our gilt yields. **As an average since 2011, there has been a 75% correlation between movements in US 10-year treasury yields and UK 10-year gilt yields. This is a significant <u>UPWARD RISK</u> exposure to our forecasts for longer term PWLB rates. However, gilt yields and treasury yields do not always move in unison.**

US treasury yields. During the first part of 2021, US President Biden's, and the Democratic party's, determination to push through a $1.9trn (equivalent to 8.8% of GDP) fiscal boost for the US economy as a recovery package from the Covid pandemic was what unsettled financial markets. However, this was in addition to the $900bn support package already passed in December 2020. This was then followed by additional Democratic ambition to spend $1trn on infrastructure, (which was eventually passed by both houses later in 2021), and an even larger sum on an American families plan over the next decade; this is still caught up in Democrat / Republican haggling. Financial markets were alarmed that all this stimulus was happening at a time when: -

1. A fast vaccination programme had enabled a rapid opening up of the economy during 2021.
2. The economy was growing strongly during the first half of 2021 although it has weakened overall during the second half.
3. It started from a position of little spare capacity due to less severe lockdown measures than in many other countries.
4. And the Fed was still providing substantial stimulus through monthly QE purchases during 2021.

It was not much of a surprise that a combination of these factors would eventually cause an excess of demand in the economy which generated strong inflationary pressures. This has eventually been recognised by the Fed at its December meeting with an aggressive response to damp inflation down during 2022 and 2023.

At its 3rd November Fed meeting, the Fed decided to make a start on tapering its $120bn per month of QE purchases so that they ended next June. However, at its **15th December meeting** it doubled the pace of tapering so that they will end all purchases in February. These purchases are currently acting as downward pressure on treasury yields and so it would be expected that Treasury yields will rise over the taper period and after the taper ends, all other things being equal. The Fed also forecast that it expected there would be three rate rises in 2022 of 0.25% from near zero currently, followed by three in 2023 and two in 2024, taking rates back above 2% to a neutral level for monetary policy.

There are also possible **<u>DOWNSIDE RISKS</u>** from the huge sums of cash that the UK populace have saved during the pandemic; when savings accounts earn little interest, it is likely that some of this cash mountain could end up being invested in bonds and so push up demand for bonds and support their prices i.e., this would help to keep their yields down.

How this will interplay with the Bank of England eventually getting round to not reinvesting maturing gilts and then later selling gilts, will be interesting to monitor.

There is likely to be **exceptional volatility and unpredictability in respect of gilt yields and PWLB rates** due to the following factors: -

- How strongly will changes in gilt yields be correlated to changes in US treasury yields (see below). Over 10 years since 2011 there has been an average 75% correlation between movements in US treasury yields and gilt yields. However, from time to time these two yields can diverge. Lack of spare economic capacity and rising inflationary pressures are viewed as being much greater dangers in the US than in the UK. This could mean that central bank rates will end up rising earlier and higher in the US than in the UK if inflationary pressures were to escalate; the consequent increases in treasury yields could well spill over to cause (lesser) increases in gilt yields. There is, therefore, an upside risk to forecasts for gilt yields due to this correlation. The Link Group forecasts have included a risk of a 75% correlation between the two yields.
- Will the Fed take action to counter increasing treasury yields if they rise beyond a yet unspecified level?
- Would the MPC act to counter increasing gilt yields if they rise beyond a yet unspecified level?
- How strong will inflationary pressures actually turn out to be in both the US and the UK and so put upward pressure on treasury and gilt yields?
- How will central banks implement their new average or sustainable level inflation monetary policies?
- How well will central banks manage the withdrawal of QE purchases of their national bonds i.e., without causing a panic reaction in financial markets as happened in the "taper tantrums" in the US in 2013?
- Will exceptional volatility be focused on the short or long-end of the yield curve, or both?

As the US financial markets are, by far, the biggest financial markets in the world, any upward trend in treasury yields will invariably impact and influence financial markets in other countries. Inflationary pressures and erosion of surplus economic capacity look much stronger in the US compared to those in the UK, which would suggest that Fed rate increases eventually needed to suppress inflation, are likely to be faster and stronger than Bank Rate increases in the UK. This is likely to put upward pressure on treasury yields which could then spill over into putting upward pressure on UK gilt yields.

The forecasts are also predicated on an assumption that there is no break-up of the Eurozone or EU within the forecasting period, despite the major challenges that are looming up, and that there are no major ructions in international relations, especially between the US and Russia, China / North Korea and Iran, which have a major impact on international trade and world GDP growth.

The balance of risks to medium to long term PWLB rates: -

- There is a balance of upside risks to forecasts for medium to long term PWLB rates.

A new era for local authority investing – a fundamental shift in central bank monetary policy

One of the key results of the pandemic has been a fundamental rethinking and shift in monetary policy by major central banks like the Fed, the Bank of England and the ECB, to tolerate a higher level of inflation than in the previous two decades when inflation was the prime target to bear down on so as to stop it going <u>above</u> a target rate. There is now also a greater emphasis on other targets for monetary policy than just inflation, especially on 'achieving broad and inclusive "maximum" employment in its entirety' in the US, before consideration would be given to increasing rates.

- The Fed in America has gone furthest in adopting a monetary policy based on a clear goal of allowing the inflation target to be symmetrical, (rather than a ceiling to keep under), so that inflation averages out the dips down and surges above the target rate, over an unspecified period of time.
- The Bank of England has also amended its target for monetary policy so that inflation should be 'sustainably over 2%' before starting on raising Bank Rate and the ECB now has a similar policy.
- ***For local authorities, this means that investment interest rates and very short term PWLB rates will not be rising as quickly or as high as in previous decades when the economy recovers from a downturn and the recovery eventually runs out of spare capacity to fuel continuing expansion.***
- Labour market liberalisation since the 1970s has helped to break the wage-price spirals that fuelled high levels of inflation and has now set inflation on a lower path which makes this shift in monetary policy practicable. In addition, recent changes in flexible employment practices, the rise of the gig economy and technological changes, will all help to lower inflationary pressures.
- Governments will also be concerned to see interest rates stay lower as every rise in central rates will add to the cost of vastly expanded levels of national debt; (in the UK this is £21bn for each 1% rise in rates). On the other hand, higher levels of inflation will help to erode the real value of total public debt.

2.6 Investment and borrowing rates

- **Investment returns** are expected to improve in 2022/23. However, while markets are pricing in a series of Bank Rate hikes, actual economic circumstances may see the MPC fall short of these elevated expectations.

- **Borrowing interest rates** fell to historically very low rates as a result of the COVID crisis and the quantitative easing operations of the Bank of England and still remain at historically low levels. The policy of avoiding new borrowing by running down spare cash balances has served local authorities well over the last few years.

- On 25.11.20, the Chancellor announced the conclusion to the review of margins over gilt yields for PWLB rates which had been increased by 100 bps in October 2019. The standard and certainty margins were reduced by 100 bps but a prohibition was introduced to deny access to borrowing from the PWLB for any local authority which had purchase of assets for yield in its three-year capital programme. The current margins over gilt yields are as follows: -.

    - **PWLB Standard Rate** is gilt plus 100 basis points (G+100bps)
    - **PWLB Certainty Rate** is gilt plus 80 basis points (G+80bps)
    - **PWLB HRA Standard Rate** is gilt plus 100 basis points (G+100bps)
    - **PWLB HRA Certainty Rate** is gilt plus 80bps (G+80bps)
    - **Local Infrastructure Rate** is gilt plus 60bps (G+60bps)

- **Borrowing for capital expenditure.** Link's long-term (beyond 10 years), forecast for Bank Rate is 2.00%. As some PWLB certainty rates are currently below 2.00%, there remains value in considering long-term borrowing from the PWLB where appropriate. Temporary borrowing rates are likely, however, to remain near Bank Rate and may also prove attractive as part of a balanced debt portfolio. In addition, there are also some cheap alternative sources of long-term borrowing if the authority is seeking to avoid a "cost of carry" but also wishes to mitigate future re-financing risk.

- It should be noted that there will be a cost of carry, (the difference between higher borrowing costs and lower investment returns), to any new short or medium-term borrowing that causes a temporary increase in cash balances as this position will, most likely, incur a revenue cost.

2.7 Borrowing strategy

2.7.1 The Council is currently maintaining an under-borrowed position. This means that the capital borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement), has not been fully funded with loan debt as cash supporting the Council's reserves, balances and cash flow has been used as a temporary measure. This strategy is prudent as investment returns are low and counterparty risk is relatively high.

2.7.2 Against this background and the risks within the economic forecast, caution will be adopted with the 2022/23 treasury operations. The Deputy Chief Executive will monitor interest rates in financial markets and adopt a pragmatic approach to changing circumstances.

2.7.3 Any decisions will be reported to the appropriate decision making body at the next available opportunity.

3 Treasury management limits on activity

3.1.1 There are three debt related treasury activity limits. The purpose of these is to restrain the activity of the treasury function within certain limits, thereby managing risk and reducing the impact of any adverse movement in interest rates. However, if these are set to be too restrictive they will impair the opportunities to reduce costs / improve performance. The indicators are:

- Upper limits on variable interest rate exposure. This identifies a maximum limit for variable interest rates for both investments and debt.
- Upper limits on fixed interest rate exposure. This is similar to the previous indicator and covers a maximum limit on fixed interest rates for both investments and debt.

%	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Interest rate exposures				
	Upper	**Upper**	**Upper**	**Upper**
Borrowing - Fixed Interest Rate exposure	100%	100%	100%	100%
Borrowing - Variable Interest Rate exposure	50%	50%	50%	50%
Investments - Fixed Interest Rate Exposure	100%	100%	100%	100%
Investments - Variable Interest Rate Exposure	50%	50%	50%	50%

- Maturity structure of borrowing. These gross limits are set to reduce the Council's exposure to large fixed rate sums falling due for refinancing, and are required for upper and lower limits. The Council is asked to approve the following treasury indicators and limits:

Maturity structure of fixed interest rate borrowing 2022/23		
Time to Maturity	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Under 12 months	0	80.00%

12 months to 2 years	0	80.00%
2 years to 5 years	0	80.00%
5 years to 10 years	0	80.00%
10 years to 15 years	0	80.00%
15 years to 20 years	0	80.00%
20 years to 25 years	0	80.00%
25 years to 30 years	0	80.00%
30 years to 35 years	0	80.00%
35 years to 40 years	0	80.00%
40 years to 45 years	0	80.00%
45 years to 50 years	0	80.00%
50 years and above	0	80.00%

3.2 Policy on borrowing in advance of need

3.2.1 The Council will not borrow more than or in advance of its needs purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed. Any decision to borrow in advance will be within forward approved Capital Financing Requirement estimates, and will be considered carefully to ensure that value for money can be demonstrated and that the Council can ensure the security of such funds.

3.3 Debt rescheduling

3.3.1 With the repayment of all of the Council's PWLB debt following the housing stock transfer in March 2011, whilst the Council has subsequently borrowed from PWLB the opportunities for debt rescheduling are limited. However if the lenders of the Market Loans exercise their option to increase rates this may provide the Council with an opportunity to switch to either fixed rate or cheaper shorter term debt.

3.3.2 All rescheduling will be reported to Executive Cabinet Member Leader's Portfolio at the earliest meeting following its action.

4 ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

4.1 Investment policy

4.1.1 The Council's investment policy has regard to the following: -

- MHCLG's Guidance on Local Government Investments ("the Guidance")
- CIPFA Treasury Management in Public Services Code of Practice and Cross Sectoral Guidance Notes 2017 ("the Code")
- CIPFA Treasury Management Guidance Notes 2018

4.1.2 The Council's investment priorities will be security first, portfolio liquidity second and then yield, (return).

4.1.3 The above guidance from the MHCLG and CIPFA place a high priority on the management of risk. This authority has adopted a prudent approach to managing risk and defines its risk appetite by the following means: -

- Minimum acceptable credit criteria are applied in order to generate a list of highly creditworthy counterparties. This also enables diversification and thus avoidance of concentration risk. The key ratings used to monitor counterparties are the short term and long-term ratings.

- Other information: ratings will not be the sole determinant of the quality of an institution; it is important to continually assess and monitor the financial sector on both a micro and macro basis and in relation to the economic and political environments in which institutions operate. The assessment will also take account of information that reflects the opinion of the markets. To achieve this consideration the Council will engage with its advisors to maintain a monitor on market pricing such as "credit default swaps" and overlay that information on top of the credit ratings.
- Other information sources used will include the financial press, share price and other such information pertaining to the banking sector in order to establish the most robust scrutiny process on the suitability of potential investment counterparties.
- This authority has defined the list of types of investment instruments that the treasury management team are authorised to use.
    - Specified investments are those with a high level of credit quality and subject to a maturity limit of one year.
- This authority has engaged external consultants, to provide expert advice on how to optimise an appropriate balance of security, liquidity and yield, given the risk appetite of this authority in the context of the expected level of cash balances and need for liquidity throughout the year.
- As a result of the change in accounting standards for 2019/20 under IFRS 9, this authority will consider the implications of investment instruments which could result in an adverse movement in the value of the amount invested and resultant charges at the end of the year to the General Fund.

4.1.4 However, this authority will also pursue value for money in treasury management and will monitor the yield from investment income against appropriate benchmarks for investment performance,. Regular monitoring of investment performance will be carried out during the year.

4.2 Changes in risk management policy from last year.

4.2.1 The above criteria are unchanged from last year.

4.3 Creditworthiness policy

4.3.1 The primary principle governing the Council's investment criteria is the security of its investments, although the yield or return on the investment is also a key consideration. After this main principle, the Council will ensure that:

- It maintains a policy covering both the categories of investment types it will invest in, criteria for choosing investment counterparties with adequate security, and monitoring their security. This is set out in the specified and non-specified investment sections below; and
- It has sufficient liquidity in its investments. For this purpose it will set out procedures for determining the maximum periods for which funds may prudently be committed. These procedures also apply to the Council's prudential indicators covering the maximum principal sums invested.

4.3.2 The Deputy Chief Executive will maintain a counterparty list in compliance with the following criteria and will revise the criteria and submit them to Council for approval as necessary. These criteria are separate to that which determines which types of investment instrument are either specified or non-specified as it provides an overall pool of counterparties considered high quality which the Council may use, rather than defining what types of investment instruments are to be used.

4.3.3 The minimum rating criteria uses the lowest common denominator method of selecting counterparties and applying limits. This means that the application of the Council's minimum criteria will apply to the lowest available rating for any institution. For instance, if an institution is rated by two agencies, one meets the Council's criteria and the other does not, then the institution will fall outside the lending criteria. Credit rating information is supplied by Link Asset Services, our treasury consultants, on all active counterparties that comply with the criteria below. Any counterparty failing to meet the criteria would be omitted from the counterparty (dealing) list. Any rating changes, rating watches (notification of a likely change), rating outlooks (notification of a possible longer term change) are provided to officers almost immediately after they occur and this information is considered before dealing. The criteria for providing a pool of high quality investment counterparties (both specified and non-specified investments) are:

Banks 1 - good credit quality	The Council will only use banks which are UK banks; and have, as a minimum, the following Fitch, Moody's and Standard and Poor's credit ratings (where rated); Short term – F1/P1/A1 Long term – A-/A3/A-
Banks 2 - Part nationalised UK banks - Lloyds Banking Group (Lloyds Bank and Bank of Scotland) and Royal Bank of Scotland (Royal Bank of Scotland and National Westminster Bank).	These banks can be included if they continue to be part nationalised or they meet the ratings in Banks 1 above.
Banks 3	The Council's own banker if the bank falls below the above criteria.
Building Societies	The Council will use all societies which meet the ratings for Banks 1 outlined above
UK Government (the DMADF)	
Local authorities, parish councils etc.	
Money Market Funds	AAA with a Fixed Net Asset Value (NAV).

4.3.4 **Group and sector considerations** - Due care will be taken to consider the group and sector exposure of the Council's investments.

4.3.5 **Use of additional information other than credit ratings -** Additional requirements under the Code requires the Council to supplement credit rating information. Whilst the above criteria relies primarily on the application of credit ratings to provide a pool of appropriate counterparties for officers to use, additional operational market information will be applied before making any specific investment decision from the agreed pool of counterparties. This additional market information (for example Credit Default Swaps, negative rating watches/outlooks) will be applied to compare the relative security of differing investment counterparties.

4.3.6 **Time and monetary limits applying to investments.** The time and monetary limits for institutions on the Council's counterparty list are as follows (these will cover both specified and non-specified investments):

	Fitch Long Term Rating (or equivalent)	Money Limit	Time Limit
Banks 1	F1	£30m	1 year
Banks 2 – part nationalised	N/A	£30m	1 year
Banks 3 – Council's banker (if not meeting Banks 1 or Banks 2)	N/A	£20m	1 year
Building Societies (meeting the criteria for Banks 1 above)	F1	£30m	1 year
DMADF	N/A	unlimited	6 months
Local Authorities	N/A	£15m	3 years
Money Market Funds	AAA	£40m	Liquid

4.3.7 **The monitoring of investment counterparties** - The credit rating of counterparties will be monitored regularly. The Council receives credit rating information (changes, rating watches and rating outlooks) from Link Asset Services as and when ratings change, and counterparties are checked promptly. On occasion ratings may be downgraded when an investment has already been made. The criteria used are such that a minor downgrading should not affect the full receipt of the principal and interest. Any counterparty failing to meet the criteria will be removed from the list immediately by the Deputy Chief Executive, and if required new counterparties which meet the criteria will be added to the list following approval by the Council. The counterparty list based on the above criteria as at the 1st January 2021 is attached in Appendix 5.

4.4 UK banks – ring fencing

4.4.1 The largest UK banks, (those with more than £25bn of retail / Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) deposits), were required, by UK law, to separate core retail banking services from their investment and international banking activities by 1st January 2019. This is known as "ring-fencing". Whilst smaller banks with less than £25bn in deposits are exempt, they can choose to opt up. Several banks are very close to the threshold already and so may come into scope in the future regardless.

4.4.2 Ring-fencing is a regulatory initiative created in response to the global financial crisis in 2008. It mandates the separation of retail and SME deposits from investment banking, in order to improve the resilience and resolvability of banks by changing their structure. In general, simpler, activities offered from within a ring-fenced bank, (RFB), will be focused on lower risk, day-to-day core transactions, whilst more complex and "riskier" activities are required to be housed in a separate entity, a non-ring-fenced bank, (NRFB). This is intended to ensure that an entity's core activities are not adversely affected by the acts or omissions of other members of its group.

4.4.3 While the structure of the banks included within this process may have changed, the fundamentals of credit assessment have not. The Council will continue to assess the new-formed entities in the same way that it does others and those with sufficiently high ratings, (and any other metrics considered), will be considered for investment purposes.

4.5 Investment strategy

4.5.1 **In-house funds.** Investments will be made with reference to the core balance and cash flow requirements and the outlook for short-term interest rates (i.e. rates for investments up to 12 months).

4.5.2 **Investment returns expectations.** The current forecast shown in paragraph 2.4 includes a forecast for a first increase in Bank Rate in May 2022. Though it could come in February 2022.

4.5.3 The suggested budgeted investment earnings rates for returns on investments placed for periods up to about three months during each financial year are as follows (based on a first increase in Bank Rate in quarter 2 of 2022):

Average earnings in each year	
2022/23	0.50%
2023/24	0.75%
2024/25	1.00%
2025/26	1.25%
Long term later years	2.00%

4.5.4 As part of the response to the pandemic and lockdown, the Bank and the Government have provided financial markets and businesses with plentiful access to credit, either directly or through commercial banks. In addition, the Government has provided large sums of grants to local authorities to help deal with the COVID-19 crisis; this has caused some local authorities to have sudden large increases in cash balances searching for an investment home, some of which were only very short term until those sums were able to be passed on.

4.5.5 Money market funds (MMFs) yields have continued to drift lower. Some managers have trimmed fee levels to ensure that net yields for investors remain in positive territory where possible and practical. Investor cash flow uncertainty, and the need to maintain liquidity in these unprecedented times, has meant there is a surfeit of money swilling around at the very short end of the market. This has seen a number of market operators, now including the DMADF, offer nil or negative rates for very short term maturities. This is not universal, but there are few MMFs still offering a marginally positive return, as are a number of financial institutions for investments at the very short end of the yield curve.

4.5.6 Inter-local authority lending and borrowing rates have also declined due to the surge in the levels of cash seeking a short-term home at a time when many local authorities are probably having difficulties over accurately forecasting when disbursements of funds received will occur or when further large receipts will be received from the Government.

4.5.7 **Investment treasury indicator and limit** - total principal funds invested for greater than 364 days. These limits are set with regard to the Council's liquidity requirements and to reduce the need for early sale of an investment, and are based on the availability of funds after each year-end.

4.5.8 The Council is asked to approve the treasury indicator and limit: -

Maximum principal sums invested > 364 days				
£m	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Principal sums invested > 364 days	£15m	£15m	£15m	£15m

4.6 Investment risk benchmarking

4.6.1 These benchmarks are simple guides to maximum risk, so they may be breached from time to time, depending on movements in interest rates and counterparty criteria. The purpose of the benchmark is that officers will monitor the current and trend position and amend the operational strategy to manage risk as conditions change. Any breach of the benchmarks will be reported, with supporting reasons to the Executive Cabinet Member Leader's Portfolio

4.6.2 **Security** - The Council's maximum security risk benchmark for the current portfolio, when compared to these historic default tables, is:

- 0.025% historic risk of default when compared to the whole portfolio.

4.6.3 **Liquidity** – in respect of this area the Council seeks to maintain:

- Liquid short term deposits of at least £10m available with a week's notice
- Weighted average life benchmark is expected to be between 0.25 and 0.75 years.

4.6.4 **Yield** - local measures of yield benchmarks are*:*

- Investments – internal returns above the 7 day LIBID rate.

4.7 End of year investment report

4.7.1 The fourth quarter treasury report will provide details of the overall investment activity for the year in question

5 Impacts and Implications

5.1.1 Financial – as above

5.1.2 Legal - none

5.1.3 HR – none

5.1.4 Climate change - none

5.1.5 Other – none

6 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

6.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the council has a general duty to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

6.2 It is important to consider how the proposals contained within this report may impact positively or negatively on protected characteristics. Due to the nature of the report it is not anticipated that the proposals within this report will have a differential impact on any of Bolton's diversity groups, including staff. A full EIA is therefore not required.

7 Recommendations

7.1 Cabinet is asked to recommend to the Council for Approval:

7.1.1 The Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23 to 2025/26 and the treasury limits on activity contained within this report.

7.1.2 The Authorised Limit Prudential Indicator.

7.1.3 The Investment Strategy 2022/23 contained in the treasury management strategy.

APPENDIX 1

TREASURY MANAGEMENT CODE OF PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

In 2011 CIPFA issued Codes of Practice on Treasury Management in The Public Services. This was subsequently revised in December 2017.

These were due to increased attention being given to cash management and the Institute felt there was a need for expertise and caution in money market transactions.

As Bolton Council has always adopted a prudent approach to Treasury Management and has worked within the framework of CIPFA recommendations, the new Code of Practice has now been adopted.

As recommended by CIPFA, this document includes a Treasury Policy Statement and Treasury Management Practices (TMPs). The Schedules to the TMPs, various control systems and documentation that relate to Treasury Management in this Authority are held by the Corporate Accounting and Strategy Team.

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR TREASURY MANAGEMENT IN LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Public Services issued by CIPFA in 2017 sets out a Policy and 12 Treasury Management Practices which Local Authorities are urged to formally adopt.

Key Principles (section 4 of the 2017 Code)

The Code recommended the formal adoption of the following clauses;

The Council previously adopted on 17th February 2021 the 3 key principles of CIPFA's "Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice" (the Code) as described in Section 4 of that Code.

(a) The Council should put in place formal and comprehensive objectives, policies and practices, strategies and reporting arrangements for the effective management and control of their treasury management activities.

(b) Policies and practices should make clear that the effective management and control of risk are prime objectives of their treasury management activities and that responsibility for these lies clearly within their organisations. Their appetite for risk should form part of their annual strategy, including any use of financial instruments for the prudent management of those risks, and should ensure that priority is given to security and portfolio liquidity when investing treasury management funds

(c) The Council should acknowledge that the pursuit of value for money in treasury management, and the use of suitable performance measures, are valid and important tools for responsible organisations to employ in support of their business and service objectives; and that within the context of effective risk management, their treasury management policies and practices should reflect this

Clauses to be formally adopted (section 5 of the 2017 code)

The Council will create and maintain, as the cornerstones for effective Treasury Management

- a treasury management policy statement, stating the policies, objectives and approach to risk management of its treasury management activities
- suitable treasury management practices (TMPs), setting out the manner in which the organisation will seek to achieve those policies and objectives, and prescribing how it will manage and control those activities.

The content of the policy statement and TMPs will follow the recommendations contained in Sections 6 and 7 of the Code, subject only to amendment where necessary to reflect the particular circumstances of this organisation. Such amendments will not result in the organisation materially deviating from the Code's key principles.

This organisation will receive reports on its treasury management policies, practices and activities, including, as a minimum, an annual strategy and plan in advance of the year, and quarterly reports, in the form prescribed in its TMPs.

This organisation delegates responsibility for the implementation and regular monitoring of its treasury management policies and practices to Executive Cabinet Member Leader's Portfolio, and for the execution and administration of treasury management decisions to the Deputy Chief Executive, who will act in accordance with the organisation's policy statement and TMPs and, if he/she is a CIPFA member, CIPFA's Standard of Professional Practice on Treasury Management.

This organisation nominates the Audit Committee to be responsible for ensuring effective scrutiny of the treasury management strategy and policies.

APPENDIX 2

TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY STATEMENT (section 6 of the 2017 Code)

This organisation defines its treasury management activities as:

1) The management of the organisation'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) This organisation regards the successful identification, monitoring and control of risk to be the prime criteria by which the effectiveness of its treasury management activities will be measured. Accordingly, the analysis and reporting of treasury management activities will focus on their risk implications for the organisation, and any financial instruments entered into to manage these risks.
3) This organisation acknowledges that effective treasury management will provide support towards the achievement of its business and service objectives. It is therefore committed to the principles of achieving value for money in treasury management, and to employing suitable comprehensive performance measurement techniques, within the context of effective risk management

APPENDIX 3

TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

TMP 1 – RISK MANAGEMENT

General statement

This organisation regards a key objective of its treasury management activities to be the security of the principal sums it invests. Accordingly, it will ensure that robust due diligence procedures cover all external investment.

The responsible officer will design, implement and monitor all arrangements for the identification, management and control of treasury management risk, will report at least annually on the adequacy/suitability thereof, and will report, as a matter of urgency, the circumstances of any actual or likely difficulty in achieving the organisation's objectives in this respect, all in accordance with the procedures set out in TMP6 *Reporting requirements and management information arrangements*.

In respect of each of the following risks, the arrangements which seek to ensure compliance with these objectives are set out in the schedule to this document.

[1] credit and counterparty risk management

This organisation will ensure that its counterparty lists and limits reflect a prudent attitude towards organisations with whom funds may be deposited, and will limit its treasury management investment activities to the instruments, methods and techniques referred to in TMP4 *Approved instruments, methods and techniques* and listed in the schedule to this document. It also recognises the need to have, and will therefore maintain, a formal counterparty policy in respect of those organisations from which it may borrow, or with whom it may enter into other financing or derivative arrangements.

[2] liquidity risk management

This organisation will ensure it has adequate though not excessive cash resources, borrowing arrangements, overdraft or standby facilities to enable it at all times to have the level of funds available to it which are necessary for the achievement of its business/service objectives.
This organisation will only borrow in advance of need where there is a clear business case for doing so and will only do so for the current capital programme or to finance future debt maturities.

[3] interest rate risk management

This organisation will manage its exposure to fluctuations in interest rates with a view to containing its interest costs, or securing its interest revenues, in accordance with the amounts provided in its budgetary arrangements as amended in accordance with TMP6 Reporting requirements and management information arrangements.

It will achieve this by the prudent use of its approved instruments, methods and techniques, primarily to create stability and certainty of costs and revenues, but at the same time retaining a sufficient degree of flexibility to take advantage of unexpected, potentially advantageous changes in the level or structure of interest rates. This should be subject to the consideration and, if required, approval of any policy or budgetary implications.

It will ensure that any hedging tools such as derivatives are only used for the management of risk and the prudent management of financial affairs and that the policy for the use of derivatives is clearly detailed in the annual strategy.

[4] exchange rate risk management

It will manage its exposure to fluctuations in exchange rates so as to minimise any detrimental impact on its budgeted income/expenditure levels.

[5] inflation risk management

The organisation will keep under review the sensitivity of its treasury assets and liabilities to inflation, and will seek to manage the risk accordingly in the context of the whole organisation's inflation exposures.

[6] refinancing risk management

This organisation will ensure that its borrowing, private financing and partnership arrangements are negotiated, structured and documented, and the maturity profile of the monies so raised is managed, with a view to obtaining offer terms for renewal or refinancing, if required, which are competitive and as favourable to the organisation as can reasonably be achieved in the light of market conditions prevailing at the time.

It will actively manage its relationships with its counterparties in these transactions in such a manner as to secure this objective and will avoid overreliance on any one source of funding if this might jeopardise achievement of the above.

[7] legal and regulatory risk management

This organisation will ensure that all of its treasury management activities comply with its statutory powers and regulatory requirements. It will demonstrate such compliance, if required to do so, to all parties with whom it deals in such activities. In framing its credit and counterparty policy under TMP1[1] credit and counterparty risk management, it will ensure that there is evidence of counterparties' powers, authority and compliance in respect of the transactions they may effect with the organisation, particularly with regard to duty of care and fees charged. This organisation recognises that future legislative or regulatory changes may impact on its treasury management activities and, so far as it is reasonably able to do so, will seek to minimise the risk of these impacting adversely on the organisation.

[8] fraud, error and corruption, and contingency management

This organisation will ensure that it has identified the circumstances which may expose it to the risk of loss through fraud, error, corruption or other eventualities in its treasury management dealings. Accordingly, it will employ suitable systems and procedures, and will maintain effective contingency management arrangements, to these ends.

[9] price risk management

This organisation will seek to ensure that its stated treasury management policies and objectives will not be compromised by adverse market fluctuations in the value of the principal sums it invests, and will accordingly seek to protect itself from the effects of such fluctuations.

TMP 2 - PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

This organisation is committed to the pursuit of value for money in its treasury management activities, and to the use of performance methodology in support of that aim, within the framework set out in its treasury management policy statement.

Accordingly, the treasury management function will be the subject of ongoing analysis of the value it adds in support of the organisation's stated business or service objectives. It will be the subject of regular examination of alternative methods of service delivery, of the availability of fiscal or other grant or subsidy incentives, and of the scope for other potential improvements. The performance of the treasury management function will be measured using the criteria set out in the schedule to this document.

TMP 3 – DECISION MAKING AND ANALYSIS

This organisation will maintain full records of its treasury management decisions, and of the processes and practices applied in reaching those decisions, both for the purposes of learning from the past, and for demonstrating that reasonable steps were taken to ensure that all issues relevant to those decisions were taken into account at the time. The issues to be addressed and processes and practices to be pursued in reaching decisions are detailed in the schedule to this document.

TMP 4 - APPROVED INSTRUMENTS, METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

This organisation will undertake its treasury management activities by employing only those instruments, methods and techniques detailed in the schedule to this document, and within the limits and parameters defined in TMP1 Risk management.

Where this organisation intends to use derivative instruments for the management of risks, these will be limited to those set out in its annual treasury strategy. The organisation will seek proper advice and will consider that advice when entering into arrangements to use such products to ensure that it fully understands those products.

This organisation has reviewed its classification with financial institutions under MIFID II and has set out in the schedule to this document those organisations with which it is registered as a professional client and those with which it has an application outstanding to register as a professional client.

TMP 5 - ORGANISATION, CLARITY AND SEGREGATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES AND DEALING ARRANGEMENTS

This organisation considers it essential, for the purposes of the effective control and monitoring of its treasury management activities, for the reduction of the risk of fraud or error, and for the pursuit of optimum performance, that these activities are structured and managed in a fully integrated manner, and that there is at all times a clarity of treasury management responsibilities.

The principle on which this will be based is a clear distinction between those charged with setting treasury management policies and those charged with implementing and controlling these policies, particularly with regard to the execution and transmission of funds, the recording and administering of treasury management decisions, and the audit and review of the treasury management function.

If and when this organisation intends, as a result of lack of resources or other circumstances, to depart from these principles, the responsible officer will ensure that the reasons are properly reported in accordance with TMP6 Reporting requirements and management information arrangements, and the implications properly considered and evaluated.

The responsible officer will ensure that there are clear written statements of the responsibilities for each post engaged in treasury management, and the arrangements for absence cover. The responsible officer will also ensure that at all times those engaged in treasury management will follow the policies and procedures set out. The present arrangements are detailed in the schedule to this document.

The responsible officer will ensure there is proper documentation for all deals and transactions, and that procedures exist for the effective transmission of funds. The present arrangements are detailed in the schedule to this document.

The delegations to the responsible officer in respect of treasury management are set out in the schedule to this document. The responsible officer will fulfil all such responsibilities in accordance with the organisation's policy statement and TMPs and, if a CIPFA member, the Standard of Professional Practice on Treasury Management.

TMP 6 - REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND MANAGEMENT INFORMATION ARRANGEMENTS

Bolton Council will ensure that regular reports are prepared and considered on the implementation of its Treasury Management Policies, on the effects of decisions taken and transactions executed in pursuit of those policies, on the implications of changes, particularly budgetary, resulting from regulatory, economic, market or other factors affecting its Treasury Management activities and on the performance of the Treasury management function. Cabinet will receive an Annual Report on the Strategy and Plan to be pursued in the coming year.

The Executive Cabinet Member Leader's Portfolio will receive regular monitoring reports on treasury management activities and risks. The Audit Committee will have responsibility for the scrutiny of the treasury management policies or practices. Bolton will report the treasury management indicators as detailed in their sector specific guidance notes. The present arrangements and the form of these reports are detailed in the Treasury Management Documentation Papers maintained in the Corporate Accounting and Strategy Team.

TMP 7 - BUDGETING, ACCOUNTING AND AUDIT ARRANGEMENTS

The responsible officer will prepare, and this organisation will approve and, if necessary, from time to time will amend, an annual budget for treasury management, which will bring together all of the costs involved in running the treasury management function, together with associated income. The matters to be included in the budget will at minimum be those required by statute or regulation, together with such information as will demonstrate compliance with TMP1 Risk management, TMP2 Performance measurement, and TMP4 Approved instruments, methods and techniques. The responsible officer will exercise effective controls over this budget, and will report upon and recommend any changes required in accordance with TMP6 Reporting requirements and management information arrangements.

This organisation will account for its treasury management activities, for decisions made and transactions executed, in accordance with appropriate accounting practices and standards, and with statutory and regulatory requirements in force for the time being.

TMP 8 - CASH AND CASH FLOW MANAGEMENT

Unless statutory or regulatory requirements demand otherwise, all monies in the hands of this organisation will be under the control of the responsible officer, and will be aggregated for cash flow and investment management purposes. Cash flow projections will be prepared on a regular and timely basis, and the responsible officer will ensure that these are adequate for the purposes of monitoring compliance with TMP1[2] liquidity risk management. The present arrangements for preparing cash flow projections, and their form, are set out in the schedule to this document.

TMP 9 - MONEY LAUNDERING

This organisation is alert to the possibility that it may become the subject of an attempt to involve it in a transaction involving the laundering of money. Accordingly, it will maintain procedures for verifying and recording the identity of counterparties and reporting suspicions, and will ensure that staff involved in this are properly trained. The present arrangements, including the name of the officer to whom reports should be made, are detailed in the schedule to this document.

TMP 10 - STAFF TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

This organisation recognises the importance of ensuring that all staff involved in the treasury management function are fully equipped to undertake the duties and responsibilities allocated to them. It will therefore seek to appoint individuals who are both capable and experienced and will provide training for staff to enable them to acquire and maintain an appropriate level of expertise, knowledge and skills. The responsible officer will recommend and implement the necessary arrangements.

The responsible officer will ensure that board/council members tasked with treasury management responsibilities, including those responsible for scrutiny, have access to training relevant to their needs and those responsibilities.

Those charged with governance recognise their individual responsibility to ensure that they have the necessary skills to complete their role effectively. The present arrangements are detailed in the schedule to this document.

TMP 11 - USE OF EXTERNAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

This organisation recognises that responsibility for treasury management decisions remains with the organisation at all times. It recognises that there may be potential value in employing external providers of treasury management services, in order to acquire access to specialist skills and resources. When it employs such service providers, it will ensure it does so for reasons which have been submitted to a full evaluation of the costs and benefits. It will also ensure that the terms of their appointment and the methods by which their value will be assessed are properly agreed and documented and subjected to regular review. And it will ensure, where feasible and necessary, that a spread of service providers is used, to avoid overreliance on one or a small number of companies. Where services are subject to formal tender or re-tender arrangements, legislative requirements will always be observed. The monitoring of such arrangements rests with the responsible officer, and details of the current arrangements are set out in the schedule to this document.

TMP 12 - CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

This organisation is committed to the pursuit of proper corporate governance throughout its businesses and services, and to establishing the principles and practices by which this can be achieved. Accordingly, the treasury management function and its treasury management activities will be undertaken with openness and transparency, honesty, integrity and accountability.

This organisation has adopted and has implemented the key principles of the Code. This, together with the other arrangements detailed in the schedule to this document, is considered vital to the achievement of proper corporate governance in treasury management, and the responsible officer will monitor and, if and when necessary, report upon the effectiveness of these arrangements.

APPENDIX 4

Investments that are not part of treasury management activity

Where, in addition to treasury management investment activity, organisations invest in other financial assets and property primarily for financial return, these investments should be proportional to the level of resources available to the organisation and the organisation should ensure that the same robust procedures for the consideration of risk and return are applied to these decisions.

MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR NON-TREASURY INVESTMENTS

This organisation recognises that investment in other financial assets and property primarily for financial return, taken for non-treasury management purposes, requires careful investment management. Such activity includes loans supporting service outcomes, investments in subsidiaries, and investment property portfolios.

This organisation will ensure that all the organisation’s investments are covered in the capital strategy, investment strategy or equivalent, and will set out, where relevant, the organisation’s risk appetite and specific policies and arrangements for non-treasury investments. It will be recognised that the risk appetite for these activities may differ from that for treasury management.

The organisation will maintain a schedule setting out a summary of existing material investments, subsidiaries, joint ventures and liabilities including financial guarantees and the organisation’s risk exposure.

APPENDIX 5

Counterparty List

The recommended (2022/23) Counterparty list based upon the policy in section 4.3 is:

	Fitch Rating		Moody's Ratings		S&P Ratings			
Name	**Short Term**	**Long Term**	**Short Term**	**Long Term**	**Short Term**	**Long Term**	**Time Limit**	**Money Limit**
United Kingdom (Sovereign rating)		AA-		Aa3		AA		
Barclays Bank	F1	A+	P-1	A1	A-1	A	1 year	£20m
Bolton at Home							90 days	£3m
Coventry Building Society	F1	A-	P-1	A2			1 year	£30m
UK Debt Management Office (which is an Executive Agency of HM Treasury)							6 months	No limit
Goldman Sachs International Bank	F1	A+	P-1	A1	A-1	A+	1 year	£30m
HSBC Bank	F1+	AA-	P-1	A1	A-1	A+	1 year	£30m
Lloyds Bank / Bank of Scotland	F1	A+	P-1	A1	A-1	A	1 year	£30m
Local Authorities							3 years	£15m ea
Money Market Funds	AAA with a Fixed Net Asset Value (NAV)						Liquid	£40m ea
Nationwide Building Society	F1	A	P-1	A1	A-1	A	1 year	£30m
Santander UK Plc	F1	A+	P-1	A1	A-1	A	1 year	£30m
Standard Chartered Bank	*F1*	*A+*	*P-1*	*A1*	*A-1*	*A*	*1 year*	*£30m*
Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation Europe Ltd	*F1*	*A*	*P-1*	*A1*	*A-1*	*A*	*1 year*	*£30m*

Counterparties in italics do not normally borrow from Local Authorities

APPENDIX 6

ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

Commentary from Link Asset Services

COVID-19 vaccines.

These were the game changer during 2021 which raised high hopes that life in the UK would be able to largely return to normal in the second half of the year. However, the bursting onto the scene of the Omicron mutation at the end of November, rendered the initial two doses of all vaccines largely ineffective in preventing infection. This has dashed such hopes and raises the spectre again that a fourth wave of the virus could overwhelm hospitals in early 2022. What we now know is that this mutation is very fast spreading with the potential for total case numbers to double every two to three days, although it possibly may not cause so much severe illness as previous mutations. Rather than go for full lockdowns which heavily damage the economy, the government strategy this time is focusing on getting as many people as possible to have a third (booster) vaccination after three months from the previous last injection, as a booster has been shown to restore a high percentage of immunity to Omicron to those who have had two vaccinations. There is now a race on between how quickly boosters can be given to limit the spread of Omicron, and how quickly will hospitals fill up and potentially be unable to cope. In the meantime, workers have been requested to work from home and restrictions have been placed on large indoor gatherings and hospitality venues. With the household saving rate having been exceptionally high since the first lockdown in March 2020, there is plenty of pent-up demand and purchasing power stored up for services in sectors like restaurants, travel, tourism and hotels which had been hit hard during 2021, but could now be hit hard again by either, or both, of government restrictions and/or consumer reluctance to leave home. Growth will also be lower due to people being ill and not working, similar to the pingdemic in July. The economy, therefore, faces significant headwinds although some sectors have learned how to cope well with Covid. However, the biggest impact on growth would come from another lockdown if that happened. The big question still remains as to whether any further mutations of this virus could develop which render all current vaccines ineffective, as opposed to how quickly vaccines can be modified to deal with them and enhanced testing programmes be implemented to contain their spread until tweaked vaccines become widely available.

A SUMMARY OVERVIEW OF THE FUTURE PATH OF BANK RATE

- In December, the Bank of England became the first major western central bank to put interest rates up in this upswing in the current business cycle in western economies as recovery progresses from the Covid recession of 2020.
- The next increase in Bank Rate could be in February or May, dependent on how severe an impact there is from Omicron.
- If there are lockdowns in January, this could pose a barrier for the MPC to putting Bank Rate up again as early as 3rd February.
- With inflation expected to peak at around 6% in April, the MPC may want to be seen to be active in taking action to counter inflation on 5th May, the release date for its Quarterly Monetary Policy Report.
- The December 2021 MPC meeting was more concerned with combating inflation over the medium term than supporting economic growth in the short term.
- Bank Rate increases beyond May are difficult to forecast as inflation is likely to drop sharply in the second half of 2022.
- However, the MPC will want to normalise Bank Rate over the next three years so that it has its main monetary policy tool ready to use in time for the next down-turn; all rates under 2% are providing stimulus to economic growth.
- We have put year end 0.25% increases into Q1 of each financial year from 2023 to recognise this upward bias in Bank Rate - but the actual timing in each year is difficult to predict.

- Covid remains a major potential downside threat in all three years as we ARE likely to get further mutations.
- How quickly can science come up with a mutation proof vaccine, or other treatment, – and for them to be widely administered around the world?
- Purchases of gilts under QE ended in December. Note that when Bank Rate reaches 0.50%, the MPC has said it will start running down its stock of QE.

MPC MEETING 16H DECEMBER 2021

- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) voted 8-1 to raise Bank Rate by 0.15% from 0.10% to 0.25% and unanimously decided to make no changes to its programme of quantitative easing purchases due to finish in December 2021 at a total of £895bn.

- The MPC disappointed financial markets by not raising Bank Rate at its November meeting. Until Omicron burst on the scene, most forecasters, therefore, viewed a Bank Rate increase as being near certain at this December meeting due to the way that inflationary pressures have been comprehensively building in both producer and consumer prices, and in wage rates. However, at the November meeting, the MPC decided it wanted to have assurance that the labour market would get over the end of the furlough scheme on 30th September without unemployment increasing sharply; their decision was, therefore, to wait until statistics were available to show how the economy had fared at this time.

- **On 10th December we learnt of the disappointing 0.1% m/m rise in GDP** in October which suggested that economic growth had already slowed to a crawl even before the Omicron variant was discovered in late November. Early evidence suggests growth in November might have been marginally better. Nonetheless, at such low rates of growth, the government's "Plan B" COVID-19 restrictions could cause the economy to contract in December.

- **On 14th December, the labour market statistics** for the three months to October and the single month of October were released. The fallout after the furlough scheme was smaller and shorter than the Bank of England had feared. The single-month data were more informative and showed that LFS employment fell by 240,000, unemployment increased by 75,000 and the unemployment rate rose from 3.9% in September to 4.2%. However, the weekly data suggested this didn't last long as unemployment was falling again by the end of October. What's more, the 49,700 fall in the claimant count and the 257,000 rise in the PAYE measure of company payrolls suggests that the labour market strengthened again in November. The other side of the coin was a further rise in the number of vacancies from 1.182m to a record 1.219m in the three months to November which suggests that the supply of labour is struggling to keep up with demand, although the single-month figure for November fell for the first time since February, from 1.307m to 1.227m.

- These figures by themselves, would probably have been enough to give the MPC the assurance that it could press ahead to raise Bank Rate at this December meeting. However, the advent of Omicron potentially threw a spanner into the works as it poses a major headwind to the economy which, of itself, will help to cool the economy. The financial markets, therefore, swung round to expecting no change in Bank Rate.

- **On 15th December we had the CPI inflation** figure for November which spiked up further from 4.2% to 5.1%, confirming again how inflationary pressures have been building sharply. However, Omicron also caused a sharp fall in world oil and other commodity prices; (gas and electricity inflation has generally accounted on average for about 60% of the increase in inflation in advanced western economies).

- **Other elements of inflation are also transitory** e.g., prices of goods being forced up by supply shortages, and shortages of shipping containers due to ports being clogged have caused huge increases in shipping costs. But these issues are likely to clear during 2022, and then prices will subside back to more normal levels. Gas prices and electricity prices will also fall back once winter is passed and demand for these falls away.

- Although it is possible that the Government could step in with some **fiscal support for the economy**, the huge cost of such support to date is likely to pose a barrier to incurring further major economy wide expenditure unless it is very limited and targeted on narrow sectors like hospitality, (as announced just before Christmas). The Government may well, therefore, effectively leave it to the MPC, and to monetary policy, to support economic growth – but at a time when the threat posed by rising inflation is near to peaking!

- This is the adverse set of factors against which the MPC had to decide on Bank Rate. For the second month in a row, the MPC blind-sided financial markets, this time with a **surprise increase in Bank Rate from 0.10% to 0.25%.** What's more, the hawkish tone of comments indicated that the MPC is now concerned that inflationary pressures are indeed building and need concerted action by the MPC to counter. This indicates that there will be more increases to come with financial markets predicting 1% by the end of 2022. The 8-1 vote to raise the rate shows that there is firm agreement that inflation now poses a threat, especially after the CPI figure hit a 10-year high this week. The MPC commented that "there has been significant upside news" and that "there were some signs of greater persistence in domestic costs and price pressures".

- On the other hand, it did also comment that **"the Omicron variant is likely to weigh on near-term activity".** But it stressed that at the November meeting it had said it <u>would</u> raise rates if the economy evolved as it expected and that now "these conditions had been met". It also appeared more worried about the possible boost to inflation form Omicron itself. It said that "the current position of the global and UK economies was materially different compared with prior to the onset of the pandemic, including elevated levels of consumer price inflation". It also noted the possibility that renewed social distancing would boost demand for goods again, (as demand for services would fall), meaning "global price pressures might persist for longer". (Recent news is that the largest port in the world in China has come down with an Omicron outbreak which is not only affecting the port but also factories in the region.)

- On top of that, there were no references this month to inflation being expected to be below the **2% target in two years' time,** which at November's meeting the MPC referenced to suggest the markets had gone too far in expecting interest rates to rise to over 1.00% by the end of the year.

- These comments indicate that there has been a material reappraisal by the MPC of the inflationary pressures since their last meeting and the Bank also increased its forecast for inflation to peak at 6% next April, rather than at 5% as of a month ago. However, as the Bank retained its guidance that only **a "modest tightening"** in policy will be required, it cannot be thinking that it will need to increase interest rates that much more. A typical policy tightening cycle has usually involved rates rising by 0.25% four times in a year. "Modest" seems slower than that. As such, the Bank could be thinking about raising interest rates two or three times next year to 0.75% or 1.00%.

- In as much as a considerable part of the inflationary pressures at the current time are indeed **transitory,** and will naturally subside, and since economic growth is likely to be weak over the next few months, this would appear to indicate that this tightening cycle is likely to be comparatively short.

- As for the timing of the next increase in Bank Rate, the MPC dropped the comment from November's statement that Bank Rate would be raised "in the coming months". That may imply another rise is unlikely at the next meeting in February and that May is more likely. However, much could depend on how adversely, or not, the economy is affected by Omicron in the run up to the next meeting on 3rd February. Once 0.50% is reached, the Bank would act to start shrinking its stock of QE, (gilts purchased by the Bank would not be replaced when they mature).

- **The MPC's forward guidance on its intended monetary policy** on raising Bank Rate versus selling (quantitative easing) holdings of bonds is as follows: -
    - Raising Bank Rate as "the active instrument in most circumstances".
    - Raising Bank Rate to 0.50% before starting on reducing its holdings.
    - Once Bank Rate is at 0.50% it would stop reinvesting maturing gilts.
    - Once Bank Rate had risen to at least 1%, it would start selling its holdings.

- **US.** Shortages of goods and intermediate goods like semi-conductors, have been fuelling increases in prices and reducing economic growth potential. In November, **CPI inflation hit a near 40-year record level of 6.8%** but with energy prices then falling sharply, this is probably the peak. The biggest problem for the Fed is the mounting evidence of a strong pick-up in cyclical price pressures e.g., in rent which has hit a decades high.
- **Shortages of labour** have also been driving up wage rates sharply; this also poses a considerable threat to feeding back into producer prices and then into consumer prices inflation. It now also appears that there has been a sustained drop in the labour force which suggests the pandemic has had a longer-term scarring effect in reducing potential GDP. Economic growth may therefore be reduced to between 2 and 3% in 2022 and 2023 while core inflation is likely to remain elevated at around 3% in both years instead of declining back to the Fed's 2% central target.
- Inflation hitting 6.8% and the feed through into second round effects, meant that it was near certain that the **Fed's meeting of 15th December** would take aggressive action against inflation. Accordingly, the rate of tapering of monthly $120bn QE purchases announced at its November 3rd meeting. was doubled so that all purchases would now finish in February 2022. In addition, Fed officials had started discussions on running down the stock of QE held by the Fed. Fed officials also expected three rate rises in 2022 of 0.25% from near zero currently, followed by three in 2023 and two in 2024, taking rates back above 2% to a neutral level for monetary policy. The first increase could come as soon as March 2022 as the chairman of the Fed stated his view that the economy had made rapid progress to achieving the other goal of the Fed – "maximum employment". The Fed forecast that inflation would fall from an average of 5.3% in 2021 to 2.6% in 2023, still above its target of 2% and both figures significantly up from previous forecasts. What was also significant was that this month the Fed dropped its description of the current level of inflation as being "transitory" and instead referred to "elevated levels" of inflation: the statement also dropped most of the language around the flexible average inflation target, with inflation now described as having exceeded 2 percent "for some time". It did not see Omicron as being a major impediment to the need to take action now to curtail the level of inflationary pressures that have built up, although Fed officials did note that it has the potential to exacerbate supply chain problems and add to price pressures.
  See also comments in paragraph 3.3 under PWLB rates and gilt yields.

- **EU.** The slow role out of vaccines initially delayed **economic recovery** in early 2021 but the vaccination rate then picked up sharply. After a contraction of -0.3% in Q1, Q2 came in with strong growth of 2%. With Q3 at 2.2%, the EU recovery was then within 0.5% of its pre Covid size. However, the arrival of Omicron is now a major headwind to growth in quarter 4 and the expected downturn into weak growth could well turn negative, with the outlook for the first two months of 2022 expected to continue to be very weak.
- **November's inflation figures** breakdown shows that the increase in price pressures is not just due to high energy costs and global demand-supply imbalances for durable goods as services inflation also rose. Headline inflation reached 4.9% in November, with over half of that due to energy. However, oil and gas prices are expected to fall after the winter and so energy inflation is expected to plummet in 2022. Core goods inflation rose to 2.4% in November, its second highest ever level, and is likely to remain high for some time as it will take a long time for the inflationary impact of global imbalances in the demand and supply of durable goods to disappear. Price pressures also increased in the services sector, but wage growth remains subdued and there are no signs of a trend of faster wage growth which might lead to *persistently* higher services inflation - which would get the ECB concerned. The

upshot is that the euro-zone is set for a prolonged period of inflation being above the ECB's target of 2% and it is likely to average 3% in 2022, in line with the ECB's latest projection.

- **ECB tapering.** The ECB has joined with the Fed by also announcing at its meeting on 16th December that it will be reducing its QE purchases - by half from October 2022, i.e., it will still be providing significant stimulus via QE purchases for over half of next year. However, as inflation will fall back sharply during 2022, it is likely that it will leave its central rate below zero, (currently -0.50%), over the next two years. The main struggle that the ECB has had in recent years is that inflation has been doggedly anaemic in sticking below the ECB's target rate despite all its major programmes of monetary easing by cutting rates into negative territory and providing QE support.
- The ECB will now also need to consider the impact of **Omicron** on the economy, and it stated at its December meeting that it is prepared to provide further QE support if the pandemic causes bond yield spreads of peripheral countries, (compared to the yields of northern EU countries), to rise. However, that is the only reason it will support peripheral yields, so this support is limited in its scope.
- The EU has entered into a **period of political uncertainty** where a new German government formed of a coalition of three parties with Olaf Scholz replacing Angela Merkel as Chancellor in December 2021, will need to find its feet both within the EU and in the three parties successfully working together. In France there is a presidential election coming up in April 2022 followed by the legislative election in June. In addition, Italy needs to elect a new president in January with Prime Minister Draghi being a favourite due to having suitable gravitas for this post. However, if he switched office, there is a significant risk that the current government coalition could collapse. That could then cause differentials between Italian and German bonds to widen when 2022 will also see a gradual running down of ECB support for the bonds of weaker countries within the EU. These political uncertainties could have repercussions on economies and on Brexit issues.

- **CHINA.** After a concerted effort to get on top of the virus outbreak in Q1 2020, economic recovery was strong in the rest of **2020**; this enabled China to recover all the initial contraction. During 2020, policy makers both quashed the virus and implemented a programme of monetary and fiscal support that was particularly effective at stimulating short-term growth. At the same time, China's economy benefited from the shift towards online spending by consumers in developed markets. These factors helped to explain its comparative outperformance compared to western economies during 2020 and earlier in 2021.
- However, the pace of economic growth has now fallen back in **2021** after this initial surge of recovery from the pandemic and looks likely to be particularly weak in 2022. China has been struggling to contain the spread of the Delta variant through using sharp local lockdowns - which depress economic growth. Chinese consumers are also being very wary about leaving home and so spending money on services. However, with Omicron having now spread to China, and being much more easily transmissible, this strategy of sharp local lockdowns to stop the virus may not prove so successful in future. In addition, the current pace of providing boosters at 100 billion per month will leave much of the 1.4 billion population exposed to Omicron, and any further mutations, for a considerable time. The **People's Bank of China** made a start in December 2021 on cutting its key interest rate marginally so as to stimulate economic growth. However, after credit has already expanded by around 25% in just the last two years, it will probably leave the heavy lifting in supporting growth to fiscal stimulus by central and local government.
- Supply shortages, especially of coal for power generation, were causing widespread power cuts to industry during the second half of 2021 and so a sharp disruptive impact on some sectors of the economy. In addition, recent regulatory actions motivated by a political agenda to channel activities into officially approved directions, are also likely to reduce the dynamism and long-term growth of the Chinese economy.

- **JAPAN.** 2021 has been a patchy year in combating Covid. However, recent business surveys indicate that the economy has been rebounding rapidly in 2021 once the bulk of the population had been double vaccinated and new virus cases had plunged. However, Omicron could reverse this initial success in combating Covid.
- The Bank of Japan is continuing its **very loose monetary policy** but with little prospect of getting inflation back above 1% towards its target of 2%, any time soon: indeed, inflation was actually negative

in July. New Prime Minister Kishida, having won the November general election, brought in a supplementary budget to boost growth, but it is unlikely to have a major effect.

- **WORLD GROWTH.** World growth was in recession in 2020 but recovered during 2021 until starting to lose momentum in the second half of the year, though overall growth for the year is expected to be about 6% and to be around 4-5% in 2022. Inflation has been rising due to increases in gas and electricity prices, shipping costs and supply shortages, although these should subside during 2022. While headline inflation will fall sharply, core inflation will probably not fall as quickly as central bankers would hope. It is likely that we are heading into a period where there will be a **reversal of world globalisation** and a decoupling of western countries from dependence on China to supply products, and vice versa. This is likely to reduce world growth rates from those in prior decades.

- **SUPPLY SHORTAGES**. The pandemic and extreme weather events, followed by a major surge in demand after lockdowns ended, have been highly disruptive of extended worldwide supply chains. Major queues of ships unable to unload their goods at ports in New York, California and China built up rapidly during quarters 2 and 3 of 2021 but then halved during quarter 4. Such issues have led to a misdistribution of shipping containers around the world and have contributed to a huge increase in the cost of shipping. Combined with a shortage of semi-conductors, these issues have had a disruptive impact on production in many countries. The latest additional disruption has been a shortage of coal in China leading to power cuts focused primarily on producers (rather than consumers), i.e., this will further aggravate shortages in meeting demand for goods. Many western countries are also hitting up against a difficulty in filling job vacancies. It is expected that these issues will be gradually sorted out, but they are currently contributing to a spike upwards in inflation and shortages of materials and goods available to purchase.