

Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority
Statement of Prudential Indicators;
& Minimum Revenue Provision Policy

Introduction : Prudential Indicators

The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (Prudential Code) has been developed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) to provide a code of practice to underpin the new system of capital finance embodied in Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003. Since 1 April 2004, Local Authorities are no longer subject to government controlled borrowing approvals and are free to determine their own level of capital investment controlled by self-regulation.

The key objectives of the Prudential Code are to ensure that capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable.

The Prudential Code supports a system of self-regulation that is achieved by the setting and monitoring of a suite of Prudential Indicators that directly relate to each other. The indicators establish parameters within which the Fire Authority should operate to ensure the objectives of the Prudential Code are met.

Introduction : Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy

This is the amount charged every year to provide for the repayment of long term loans used to finance capital assets.

Under provisions of the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Amendment) Regulations 2008, the FRA is required to “determine an amount of MRP which is considered to be prudent”.

The Fire Authority has a statutory requirement to determine an MRP policy prior to the start of the financial year.

In considering a prudent MRP policy the Fire Authority needs to take into account the statutory guidance provided by CLG, and the issue of affordability. The guidance states that “provision for the borrowing which financed the acquisition of an asset should be made over a period bearing some relation to that over which the asset continues to provide a service” – the “Asset Life” method.

Prudential Indicators

The Prudential Indicators for which the Fire Authority is sets limits are as follows:

1. Net Borrowing and the Capital Financing Requirement

This Prudential Indicator provides an overarching requirement that all the indicators operate within and is described in the Prudential Code as follows:

“In order to ensure that over the medium term net borrowing will only be for a capital purpose, the local authority should ensure that net external borrowing does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of capital financing requirement in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional capital financing requirement for the current and next two financial years”.

The Treasurer reports that the Fire Authority had no difficulty meeting this requirement since 2002/03, nor are any difficulties envisaged for the current or future years. This view takes into account all plans and commitments included in the 2020/21 Budget and MTFP.

2 Capital Expenditure

The actual amount of capital expenditure that was incurred since 2019/20, and the estimates of capital expenditure to be incurred for the current and future years that are proposed in the 2020/21 Budget and MTFP are:

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Capital Expenditure	6,637	7,411	11,488	1,568	2,603

2. Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream

Financing Costs include the amount of interest payable in respect of borrowing or other long term liabilities and the amount the Fire Authority is required to set aside to repay debt, less interest and investments income.

The actual Net Revenue Stream is the ‘amount to be met from government grants and local taxation’ taken from the annual Statement of Accounts, and the estimated figure is the Fire and Rescue Authority’s budget net of any transfers to or from the balances.

The prediction of the Net Revenue Stream in this Prudential Indicator for future years assumes increases in the Fire Authority's funding from government and the local taxpayer consistent with expectations in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. This is indicative only and in no way meant to influence the actual future years funding or in particular the funding from Precepts.

The indicator only requires that the costs associated with capital expenditure are measured in this way. However the Fire Authority has used, and may continue to use Operational Leasing as a cost effective method of acquiring vehicles. In the spirit of the Prudential Code these costs are included for comparative purposes.

The rise in this ratio is partially due to the fact that capital expenditure prior to the formation of the FRA is not charged to the Fire Authority; (In other words, the Fire Authority inherited all its assets without any cost. Thus, as investment is made in vehicles, for example the increased costs are in the Fire Authority accounts but the savings are elsewhere); and partly due to inflation between original purchase and replacement purchase e.g. over 15 years for a fire appliance.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Financing Costs	2,964	2,964	3,064	3,164	3,264
Net Revenue Stream	31,751	35,827	36,080	36,870	37,651
Ratio	9.34%	8.27%	8.49%	8.58%	8.67%

3. Capital Financing Requirement

The capital financing requirement (CFR) is a measure of the extent to which the Fire Authority needs to borrow to support capital expenditure. It does not necessarily relate to the actual amount of borrowing at any one point in time. The Fire Authority arranges its treasury management activity via a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Worcestershire County Council (WCC) which has an integrated treasury management strategy where there is no distinction between revenue and capital cash flows and the day to day position of external borrowing and investments can change constantly.

The capital financing requirement concerns only those transactions arising from capital spending, whereas the amount of external borrowing is a consequence of all revenue and capital cash transactions combined together following recommended treasury management practice.

Estimates of the end of year capital financing requirement are shown overleaf.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
CFR at 31st March	18,079	20,448	23,237	22,605	22,801

4. Authorised Limit

The Authorised Limit represents an upper limit of borrowing that could be afforded in the short term but may not be sustainable. This limit includes a risk assessment of exceptional events taking into account the demands of revenue and capital cash flows. The Authorised Limit gauges events that may occur over and above those transactions which have been included in the Operational Boundary.

These limits are higher than set in previous years to reflect the decisions taken by the Fire Authority to switch from leasing to more cost effective borrowing for the acquisition of operational vehicles.

The Fire Authority should note that the Authorised Limit represents the limit specified in section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003 (Duty to determine affordable borrowing limit).

The following Authorised Limits for external debt, excluding temporary investments are recommended:

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Authorized Limit	£000	£000	£000	£000
External Borrowing	34,000	36,000	37,000	40,000

5. Operational Boundary

The Operational Boundary represents an estimate of the most likely, prudent, but not worst case scenario and provides a parameter against which day to day treasury management activity can be monitored.

The Treasurer reports that procedures are in place to monitor the Operational Boundary on a daily basis, via the SLA with WCC and that sufficient authorisation is in place to take whatever action is necessary to ensure that, in line with the Treasury Management Strategy, the cash flows of the Fire Authority are managed prudently.

Occasionally, the Operational Boundary may be exceeded (but still not breach the Authorised Limit) following variations in cash flow. Such an occurrence

would follow controlled treasury management action and may not have a significant impact on the prudential indicators when viewed all together.

Both the Authorised Limit and the Operational Boundary include an element relating to debt restructuring where, for the short term only, external borrowing may be made in advance of the repayment of loans. In this circumstance External Borrowing is increased temporarily until the replaced loans are repaid. The converse can also apply where loans are repaid in advance of borrowings.

The following limits (shown overleaf) for each year's Operational Boundary, excluding temporary investments are recommended:

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
<u>Operational Boundary</u>	<u>£000</u>	<u>£000</u>	<u>£000</u>	<u>£000</u>
External Borrowing	31,000	34,000	35000	36,000

6. Actual External Debt

The Fire Authority's actual external debt as at 31 March 2019 was £10.637m; comprising £10.637m External Borrowing and £0 (zero) Other Long Term Liabilities. During 2019/20, £3.000m of additional borrowing was taken.

7. The Incremental Impact of Capital Investment Decisions on the Council Tax

This indicator identifies specifically the additional cost to the taxpayer of the **new** capital investment proposed in the 2020/21 – 2023/24 Capital Programme. As the indicator deals only with new investment the impact of the previously approved programme was included in the equivalent report provided to the Fire Authority in Feb 2019.

The incremental impact identifies transactions that will occur **over and above** what has already been provided for in the 2020/21 revenue budget and projected in the MTFP and assumes the funding available in 2020/21 will be carried forward in the future year's base budgets.

The incremental impact has been calculated using forward estimates of funding consistent with expectations in the Medium Term Financial Plan.

The impact on the revenue budget, and therefore the Council Tax, is felt by a combination of the following: debt costs of the new borrowing, the amount set aside from revenue to repay the principal element of external borrowing (Minimum Revenue Provision) and the revenue impact of a capital project

It should be noted that borrowing itself does not fund capital expenditure since the loans have to be repaid eventually. The actual funding comes from the Minimum Revenue Provision which is statutorily charged to revenue each year.

The estimate of the incremental impact of the capital investment detailed in the 2020/21 Budget on the Council Tax is as follows:

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Incremental Impact on Band D	£ 0.00	£0.24	£0.48	0.71

PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS FOR TREASURY MANAGEMENT

8. Treasury Management Code of Practice

The Fire Authority has adopted the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA): Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services.

The Treasury Management function is carried out on behalf of the Authority by Worcestershire County Council, who have also adopted the Treasury Management Code of Practice.

9. Fixed Interest Rate Exposures

It is recommended that the Fire Authority sets an upper limit on its fixed interest rate exposures as follows.

Upper limits for net principal sums outstanding at fixed rates

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Fixed Interest Rate Exposure	£000	£000	£000	£000
Upper Limit	34,000	36,000	37,000	40,000

This represents the position that all of the Fire Authority's authorised external borrowing may be at a fixed rate at any one time.

10. Variable Interest Rate Exposures

It is recommended that the Fire Authority sets an upper limit on its variable interest rate exposures as follows.

Upper limits for net principal sums outstanding at variable rates

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Variable Interest Rate Exposure	£000	£000	£000	£000
Upper Limit	9,000	9,000	9,000	10,000

This is the maximum external borrowing judged prudent by the Treasurer that the Fire Authority should expose to variable rates.

11. **Maturity Structure of Borrowing**

It is recommended that the upper and lower limits for the maturity structure of borrowings are as follows:

Amount of projected borrowing that is fixed rate maturing in each period as a percentage of total projected borrowing that is fixed rate.

Period of Maturity	Upper Limit	Lower Limit
	%	%
Under 12 months	25	0
12 months and within 24 months	25	0
24 months and within 5 years	50	0
5 years and within 10 years	75	0
10 years and above	95	25

12. **Investments for longer than 364 days**

It is recommended that the upper limits of total principal sums invested for periods longer than 364 days are £5 million for each year.

Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy

To continue the policy previously adopted i.e.:

1. Vehicle Expenditure before 2008/09 – MRP on a proxy Asset Life basis using original cost, less cumulative MRP, over the remaining useful life of the individual vehicle types.
2. Expenditure before 2008/09, (other than vehicles) - MRP on a proxy Asset Life basis using original cost, less cumulative MRP over average asset life as above
3. All expenditure from 2008/09 onwards - MRP using an Asset life basis:-
 - Buildings over 50 years – per depreciation policy (taking account of remaining useful life);
 - IT equipment over 5 years - reflecting average life
 - Other Equipment over 7 years – reflecting actual average usage within the FRS;
 - Vehicles – on actual estimated life of each vehicle type

This means that after a specified time (depending on the life expectancy of the individual asset) there will be no further charge to the Revenue Account for MRP in relation to these assets. For a significant proportion of pre-2008/09 assets this point had been reached by 2014/15.