

This Report will be made
public on 4 February
2025

Report Number **C/24/76**

To: Cabinet
Date: 12 February 2025
Status: Key Decision
Corporate Director: Lydia Morrison – Interim Director, Finance and Governance
Cabinet Member: Councillor Tim Prater – Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance

SUBJECT: DRAFT INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2025/26

SUMMARY:

This report sets out the Council's proposed strategy for its service and commercial investments in 2025/26 to be approved by full Council.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Cabinet is asked to agree the recommendations set out below because: -

- a) The Council must have regard to both CIPFA's Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government ('MHCLG') Investment Guidance when carrying out its duties under Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- b) The Council is required to approve an Investment Strategy for the forthcoming year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To receive and note report C/24/76.
2. To recommend to Council that the 2025/26 Investment Strategy, including the Investment Indicators, set out in the appendix 1 to this report is approved.
3. To note the Council's Approach to Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Considerations for Investments (Para 7 of the attached appendix 1).

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In 2018, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities ('DLUHC' as it then was – now Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government 'MHCLG') revised their *Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments* mainly as a response to the increased commercial investment activity in the sector. The MHCLG Guidance requires all local authorities to produce an annual Investment Strategy for their non-treasury management investments which has to be approved by full Council. The MHCLG Guidance also requires local authorities to have regard to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy ('CIPFA') publications of *The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities* and *Treasury Management in the Public Services* which both complement it.
- 1.2 The authority invests its money for three broad purposes:
- because it has surplus cash as a result of its day-to-day activities, for example when income is received in advance of expenditure (known as **treasury management investments**),
 - to support local public services by lending to or buying shares in other organisations (**service investments**), and
 - to earn investment income (known as **commercial investments** where this is the main purpose).
- 1.3 The main purpose of the investment strategy is to identify the level of the authority's service and commercial investments and to set risk management parameters around these.
- 1.4 Treasury management investments and borrowing continue to be covered by a separate annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) which is due to be considered and approved by Cabinet as part of this agenda. However, the MHCLG Guidance requires some limited treasury management information to feature in the investment strategy, including the level of interest received by the General Fund.
- 1.5 The investment strategy, set out in **appendix 1** to this report, is based on the authority's existing and planned service-related and commercial investments and is consistent with the proposed General Fund Medium Term Capital Programme due to be considered by Cabinet as part of this agenda before being submitted for approval to full Council on 26 February 2025. The investment strategy 2025/26 is also required to be approved by full Council on 26 February 2025, as part of the budget process.
- 1.6 It is anticipated that the investment strategy will continue to develop and evolve over time in line with the council's own capital investment aspirations and plans. The intention is to review the investment strategy annually as part of the authority's budget setting process and in line with the statutory guidance. However, if the nature and structure of the authority's proposed service and commercial investments was to change during the year it may be necessary to revise the strategy at the same time.

- 1.7 **Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Considerations** – In line with statutory guidance and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code, the proposed TMSS includes an ESG Policy for the authority's treasury investments. For other investments the authority has committed to reducing its own carbon footprint to a net zero target by 2030 through the **Folkestone and Hythe District Carbon Action Plan** which sits within the framework provided by the draft Corporate Plan 2021-30, 'Creating Tomorrow Together'.

2. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 2.1 The main purpose of the investment strategy shown in the appendix to this report is to identify risks associated with the authority's service and commercial investments and to set parameters to help mitigate these. No other risk management issues have been identified as relevant to this report.

3. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

3.1 Legal Officer's Comments (NM)

There are no legal implications arising directly out of this report other than those already stated. For each financial year, the council should prepare at least one Investment Strategy which should contain the disclosures and reporting requirements specified in the Local Government Investment Guidance as published by the MHCLG. The Strategy should be approved by full Council.

3.2 Finance Officer's Comments (DL)

This report has been prepared by Financial Services and there are no direct financial implications arising from it.

3.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications (GE)

There are no direct diversities or equalities issues arising from this report.

3.5 Climate Change Implications (AT)

There are no climate changes implications arising directly from this report. The report sets out a proposed strategy for service and commercial investments for the period 2025/26. It is an overarching document and detail will be found in subsequent reports to Cabinet and Council. Climate change implications of the various projects referenced in the appendix will be assessed as part of the development and implementation phases of those projects through the appropriate decision-making processes.

4. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting.

Dani Loxton – Principal Accountant (Capital and Treasury)

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The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

Arlingclose Ltd – Investment Strategy Report 2025/26 Template

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Draft Investment Strategy 2025/26