Forward Plan Reference: FP/23/04/05

Capital Strategy 2024/25 to 2026/27

Executive Member(s): Cllr Leyshon – Executive Lead for Resources
Local Member(s) and Division: All
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Summary

1. This document sets out the proposed Capital Strategy for Somerset Council for the three-year period between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2027.

2. CIPFA's Prudential Code for Capital Finance (2021) includes the requirement for local authorities to put in place a Capital Strategy which:

   - explains how proposed capital expenditure contributes to Council objectives and supports delivery of essential services,
   - sets out the funding strategies for new items of capital investment identified, and
   - provides an overview of how the risks associated with capital investment are being identified and addressed.

3. This report is designed to meet those requirements and summarises the Council's capital investment priorities and funding plans over the next three years, taking account of financial stewardship, value for money, prudence, sustainability and affordability.

Recommendations

4. The Executive is asked to approve the Capital Strategy for 2024/25 to 2026/27 and to recommend approval by Full Council on 20th February 2024, noting that:

   a) all proposed capital investment is for operational purposes,

b) the disposal of the commercial investment portfolio,

c) total proposed investment between 2024/25 and 2026/27 is set at £363.5m, with,

d) expected new borrowing for capital purposes limited to £166.8m over this period.

Reasons for recommendations

5. The Capital Strategy is a key element of the Council's Budget Framework which must be considered and approved by Full Council prior to the start of each new financial year.

Other options considered

6. None. Developing a fit-for-purpose Capital Strategy and ensuring that all proposed capital investment can be properly funded is a regulatory requirement.

Links to Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan

7. This Capital Strategy sits alongside the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and the 2023-2027 Council Plan. The contents of the Capital Strategy are consistent with other Budget reports, namely the Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2024/25 and the Treasury Management Strategy for 2024/25.

Financial and Risk Implications

8. Paragraph 4 above sets out the key financial implications contained in this report in terms of expected spending and borrowing for capital purposes over the next three years. Paragraphs 49 to 59 identifies the key financial risks associated with delivering the Council's capital investment programme, and explains how these are being addressed.

Legal Implications

9. The Council's annual Budget setting processes must operate within specified legal and regulatory parameters. The Capital Strategy is designed to support those processes and to ensure that the Budget Framework approved by members for 2024/25 is and represents a "balanced budget" in line with the requirements of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

HR Implications

10. There are no HR implications.

Equalities Implications

11. There are no equalities implications directly associated with this report. Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) will be carried out on individual capital projects at these progress towards the delivery stage.

Community Safety Implications

12. There are no community safety implications.

Climate Change and Sustainability Implications

13. There are no climate change or sustainability implications directly associated with this report, however some of the detailed budget proposals included in Appendix A and Appendix B are designed to meet the Council's statutory responsibilities, and its own objectives, with regard to climate change and sustainability.

Health and Safety Implications

14. There are no health and safety implications directly associated with this report although some of the individual capital projects referred to will be undertaken in order to meet the Council's existing Health and Safety responsibilities or to address areas where a specific Health and Safety risk has been identified.

Health and Wellbeing Implications

15. There are no health and wellbeing implications directly associated with this report although some of the capital projects referred to have Health and Wellbeing objectives, especially those projects related to Leisure Services, Town Centre regeneration and social housing.

Social Value

16. Not directly applicable to this report. The social value of individual capital investment projects is assessed at the appraisal stage.

Scrutiny recommendations

17. The Audit Committee is responsible for reviewing the Capital Strategy prior to its approval by elected members. This review is due to take place on 25 January 2024.

Background and Introduction

18. CIPFA's Prudential Code for Capital Finance (2021) includes the requirement for local authorities to put in place a Capital Strategy which:

- explains how proposed capital expenditure contributes to Council objectives and supports delivery of essential services,
- sets out the funding strategies for new items of capital investment identified, and
- provides an overview of how the risks associated with capital investment are being identified and addressed.

19. This Capital Strategy is a key element of the Council's Budget Framework and supports both Revenue and Capital budgets for 2024-25.

Report

Proposed Capital Programme

20. The proposed Capital Programme for the General Fund (GF) is shown below in summary with more detail provided in Appendix A.

Table 1 – Approved GF Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2026/27, with latest forecast position for 2023/24

Directorate Area	Expenditure				
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Adults and Health	7.6	2.5	1.4	0.0	**11.5**
Children's Services	47.2	21.7	8.2	5.8	**82.9**
Climate & Place - Other Services	3.7	5.1	1.1	0.0	**9.9**
Climate & Place - Economy and Regeneration	60.1	32.9	19.4	0.0	**112.4**
Climate & Place - Infrastructure	78.4	53.4	42.0	25.3	**199.1**
Community Services	4.1	1.5	0.2	0.0	**5.8**
Resources & Corporate Services	18.3	14.7	2.9	0.1	**36.0**
Strategy and Workforce	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.0	**0.5**
Total	**219.6**	**132.0**	**75.3**	**31.2**	**458.1**

21. Capital investment programmes for the Council's social housing function are developed on a longer-term basis culminating in a 30-year Business Plan. This Business Plan is based on:

- expected future rental income and anticipated Right to Buy Sales,
- expected need for social housing,
- stock condition surveys, and
- government guidelines on the quality of social housing, see www.gov.uk/government/collections/social-housing-quality for further details.

22. The Council is required to maintain a separate Housing Revenue Account (HRA) which is ring-fenced to ensure that the social housing function neither subsidises, nor is subsidised by, local taxpayers. Somerset Council acts as Landlord to the tenants of properties in Somerset West and Taunton, whereas the properties in Sedgemoor are managed through an ALMO (Arms-Length Management Organisation).

23. Table 2 below summarises the proposed Capital Programme for the HRA. Further detail is provided in Appendix B.

Table 2 – Approved HRA capital programme 2024 to 2026/27, with latest forecast position for 2023/24

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Major Works	27.2	22.4	20.3	19.1	89.1
Fire Safety	0.7	2.6	1.5	0.5	5.2
Related Assets	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.6	1.4
Exceptional & Extensive	0.7	1.5	1.6	1.2	5.0
Vehicles	0.0	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.9
ICT & Transformation	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Aids & Adaptations	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	1.5
Major works & Improvements	**29.1**	**27.6**	**24.4**	**22.1**	**103.2**
Social Housing Development	20.8	22.1	18.1	10.6	71.7
Total HRA capital expenditure	**49.9**	**49.8**	**42.5**	**32.7**	**174.9**

24. Therefore, in the three-year period between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2027, total approved capital expenditure is £238.5m for the General Fund and £125m for the HRA, a combined total of £363.5m.

25. Within these overall budgets, reprofiling of expenditure between financial years is expected to be an ongoing process which is necessary to reflect:

- any identified slippage
- notifications of additional grant funding or other changes to available financial resources.
- new or emerging operational risks.

26. All significant changes will be identified and reported to members as part of the Council's in-year reports on budget monitoring.

27. Capital budgets for 2023/24 were primarily a compilation of anticipated spending plans and existing contractual commitments already put in place by the previous five authorities together with new schemes approved in February 2023. Those spending plans have now been revisited with the objective of:

- reducing pressure on General Fund revenue budgets by minimizing debt charges and maximizing asset use, and
- reprofiling capital investment into future years where appropriate.

28. On this basis, new programme approvals have been restricted to which are either Health and Safety related, represent legal requirements, demonstrate a clear link to Council priorities, Invest to Save or can be externally funded.

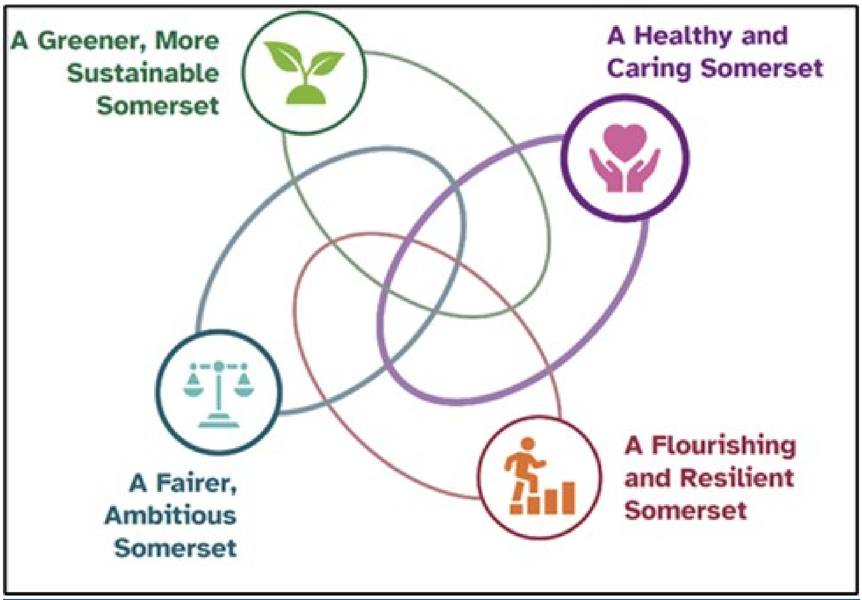
29. Table 3 below compares the Council's proposed capital investment plans for 2023/24 – 2026/27 with the 2022/23 – 2025/26 plans approved by the vesting authority in March 2023:

Table 3 – Current and previous capital investment plans

	GF £'m	HRA £'m	Total £'m
2022/23 to 2025/26 capital expenditure approved in March 2023	512.4	165.1	677.5
2023/24 to 2026/27 capital expenditure proposals - March 2024	458.1	174.9	633.0
Net increase/ (reduction)	**54.3**	**(9.8)**	**44.5**

Capital Investment Plans and Council Priorities

30. This Capital Strategy sits alongside the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and the 2023-2027 Council Plan. The Council Plan sets out the agreed vision for the new Council and its priorities over the next four years, which are set out below.



31. Further information about the Council Plan can be accessed via [www.somerset.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/somerset-council-council-plan-2023-2027.](www.somerset.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/somerset-council-council-plan-2023-2027)

32. Table 4 below sets out the major capital projects which contribute to these four priorities. These projects represent over 80% of proposed capital spending. Other projects mainly relate to:

- the maintenance of Council property, vehicles and equipment, (£20m, see paragraph 65 below), or to
- expenditure which is necessary to meet Health and Safety or other legal requirements.

Table 4 – Major Capital Projects 2023/24 to 2026/27

A greener, more sustainable Somerset	Forecast 2023/24 £m	2024/25 – 2026/27 £m	Total £m
Transport is a key contributor to our carbon footprint, and providing wider and sustainable travel options is an integral part of our drive to net zero. This work includes: • improving the roads and highways network • developing alternative options to car travel • encouraging the use of clean energy, and • maintaining an effective public transport system.	70	110	180
A Healthy and Caring Somerset			

Good housing is key to good health, and we will contribute to this objective by building new social housing for local people as well as maintaining and improving our existing housing stock.	50	125	175
A Fairer, Ambitious Somerset			
We want all local children to get an excellent education which will help them to achieve their goals in life. To do this we will continue to invest in schools' facilities for all age groups and abilities.	35	25	60
A flourishing and resilient Somerset			
We will work to maintain a stable and flourishing local economy in Somerset, focusing in this financial period on the communities of Taunton including Staplegrove, Bridgwater, Yeovil, Wellington and Glastonbury.	50	46	96
Total	205	306	511

33. Further information on major capital schemes is provided in Appendix C.

Capital funding strategies

34. Capital expenditure represents the acquisition of assets with an expected useful life of more 12 months. Funding is available as follows:

- capital grants from Government departments together with a limited amount of third-part funding, eg from developers in the form of section 106 contributions.
- disposal proceeds from the sale of existing property and other assets,
- contributions from revenue budgets
- use of available cash resources not required for day-to-day service delivery, and
- external borrowing.

35. More detail on these various sources of funding is provided in Appendix D.

36. Due to the long-term nature of capital investment, the revenue implications of decisions taken by the Council now will extend into future years the Section 151 Officer must be satisfied that any new capital investment plans are prudent, affordable and sustainable. In practice this means that:

- the Council's usual approach is only to approve the use of external borrowing when the proposed item of expenditure is a necessity, but no alternative source of financing can be identified,
- only schemes that have fully identified funding in place are included in the proposed capital programme, and
- the cost impact of borrowing forms part of the 2024/25 revenue budget medium term financial planning.

37. The main source of funding for the GF capital programme are government grant receipts, which accounts for 76% of forecast expenditure. The only other significant funding source is borrowing, which accounts for 23%. Principal sources of financing for the HRA Capital Programme are prudential borrowing (34%) and the Major Repairs Reserve (42%).

38. In January 2024 the Council applied for a Capitalisation Directive of £20m, to bridge the shortfalls identified in revenue budgets for 2024/25. Reports to members have also identified further shortfalls of £86.2m and £117.2m for the following two years respectively. If approved, some of this capitalised expenditure can be financed from asset disposals but the remainder would need to be financed from borrowing.

39. Table 5 below summarises the Council's net funding position for 2023/24 to 2026/27.

Table 5 – Net funding position 2023/24 to 2026/27

	2023/24 Forecast £m	2024/25 Estimate £m	2025/26 Estimate £m	2026/27 Estimate £m
General Fund	219.6	132.0	75.4	31.2
HRA	49.9	49.8	42.5	32.7
	269.5	**181.7**	**117.9**	**63.9**
Funding				
General Fund				
Capital Grants	(126.3)	(93.8)	(66.3)	(25.3)
Capital Receipts	(6.7)	(0.0)	0.0	0.0
Contributions	(22.3)	(7.0)	(1.0)	0.0
Reserves	(3.3)	(0.8)	0.0	0.0
Direct revenue financing	(0.8)	0.0	0.0	0.0
HRA				
Major Repairs Reserve	(22.2)	(18.0)	(16.3)	(16.3)
Capital Receipts	(5.9)	(4.5)	(5.6)	(3.1)
Capital Grants	(8.3)	(12.3)	(1.1)	(0.4)
Funding for capital programme	**(195.8)**	**(136.4)**	**(90.3)**	**(45.1)**
Financing need for capital programme	**73.7**	**45.4**	**27.6**	**18.8**
Capitalisation Direction				
Capitalised expenditure		20.0	86.2	117.2
Funding from Capital Receipts		(20.0)	(61.0)	(67.4)
Financing need for CD	**0.0**	**0.0**	**25.2**	**49.8**
Net Financing need for the year	**73.7**	**45.4**	**52.8**	**68.6**

40. As shown by Table 6 below, the total new borrowing requirement over the three-year period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2027 is therefore currently estimated at £166.8m, which means that the Council's overall borrowing is expected to increase from £806.9m at 1 April 2024 to £968.7m by 31 March 2027.

Table 6 – Impact of new Borrowing 2024/25 to 2026/27

New Borrowing Requirement 2024/25 to 2026/27

	2024/25 Estimate £m	**2025/26 Estimate £m**	**2026/27 Estimate £m**	**Total Estimate £m**
General Fund	30.5	8.1	5.9	44.4
HRA	14.9	19.5	12.9	47.4
Capitalisation Direction	0.0	25.2	49.8	75.0
Total	**45.4**	**52.8**	**68.6**	**166.8**

Overall Borrowing Projection 2024/25 to 2026/27

	2023/24 Forecast £m	**2024/25 Estimate £m**	**2025/26 Estimate £m**	**2026/27 Estimate £m**
Short-term borrowing	138.0	138.0	138.0	138.0
Long-term borrowing	632.9	678.3	731.1	799.7
PFI liability	36.0	34.5	32.9	31.0
Total	**806.9**	**850.8**	**902.0**	**968.7**

Revenue Implications of Capital Investment

41. As well as overall changes to borrowing levels, the Council must also take into consideration the ongoing revenue implications of capital investment plans in terms of:

- anticipated savings
- income generation potential
- future utility charges and repair and maintenance costs
- future debt costs.

42. Debt costs comprise two major elements:

- interest charges and debt management costs associated with external borrowing, and

- Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) set aside, which is applied by law to some aspects of General Fund capital expenditure. The Council's amended MRP policy is shown in appendix E.

43. Both are fully incorporated into the revenue budget setting process to ensure prudence and affordability. They are also reflected in prudential indicators calculated and reported as part of the Council's approved Treasury Management Strategy and in-year Treasury Management reports.

44. As part of its budget setting processes each year, the Council is required to produce and publish its current policy on calculating MRP. Appendix E sets out the Council's amended Policy for 2023/24, which it intends to apply again in 2024/25. The Section 151 Officer is satisfied that this represents a prudent approach in line with current guidance but acknowledges that further work is needed to update and improve the quality of asset records inherited from the previous authorities.

45. DLUHC is currently consulting on proposed changes to the MRP mechanism and the underlying requirements for the calculation each year. The Council's current Policy does not anticipate these changes but officers intend to review and update the Policy set out in Appendix E as soon as new guidance has been finalised and published.

46. The revenue impact of the forecast new borrowing requirement of £166.8m is shown in Table 7 below. Taking a prudent approach, these estimates assume that any new prudential borrowing would be external.

Table 7 – Revenue Impact of new Prudential Borrowing

	2024/25 Estimate £m	2025/26 Estimate £m	2026/27 Estimate £m	Total Estimate £m
Capital programme				
Prudential borrowing required	45.4	27.6	18.8	91.8
MRP	0.0	1.2	1.8	3.0
Interest	1.0	2.7	3.7	7.4
Total annual revenue impact	**1.0**	**3.9**	**5.5**	**10.4**
Capitalisation Direction				
Prudential borrowing required	0.0	25.2	49.8	75.0
MRP	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.9
Interest	0.0	0.6	2.3	2.8
Total annual revenue impact	**0.0**	**0.6**	**3.1**	**3.7**
Combined annual revenue impact	**1.0**	**4.4**	**8.6**	**14.1**

47. This additional revenue budget required has been incorporated into the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and 2024/25 Revenue Budgets.

Risk Management Arrangements

48. Three key risks have been identified:

- resources will not be allocated to the capital projects most closely aligned to Council priorities or judged to be most necessary to address identified operational risk,
- ineffective project monitoring means that major capital projects will not be delivered within budget, or to the timescales agreed, and
- expected capital funding does not materialize.

49. Each of these risks is considered in turn below.

Allocating Resources to Capital Projects - The Capital Appraisal Process

50. Capital investment decisions are now required to be underpinned by a robust business plan that sets out the full costs and risks and any expected financial return alongside the broader outcomes including economic and social benefits.

51. General Fund service managers bid annually to include projects in the Council's capital programme. Bids are collated by corporate finance who calculate the financing cost (which can be nil if the project is fully financed). The bids are then appraised against a set criterion including a comparison of service priorities against the affordability of expected financing costs.

Project Monitoring

52. Capital monitoring is reported quarterly to the Director of Finance and the Assistant Director of Finance. Any matters of concern are brought to the attention of the relevant Executive portfolio holder.

53. Each scheme has a nominated budget holder who is responsible for ensuring the scheme stays within budget, and for providing information on spend to date and projected total spend over each financial year and over the life of the project.

54. Re-profiling of capital projects and related funding takes place when necessary and is reported to members via in-year budget reports.

Capital funding

55. Capital grant claims are completed in accordance with grant terms and conditions to ensure all eligible funding is accessed and maximized. Grant claims income is monitored to ensure that:

   e) conditions stipulated in funding agreements are complied with (so no claw back situations arise), and that,

   f) payments in account are received as anticipated.

56. Capital receipts are analysed monthly to ensure that all expected receipts have been banked and that funding has been allocated to projects correctly.

57. Operational cash flow management ensures that there is sufficient cash available to meet contractual liabilities as they arise, and that new borrowing is taken out only when necessary and in accordance with Treasury Management Strategies approved by members at the beginning of each financial year.

PFI and Leasing

58. The former County Council made limited use of Private Finance Initiatives (PFI) and leasing arrangements as a means of funding capital investment, primarily through the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) initiative which commenced in 2011/12. The Council will continue to consider similar funding opportunities as and when they arise but is not actively pursuing this option for any new projects at the current time.

Commercial Activity

59. The Council currently holds a portfolio of commercial properties, together with some equity-based investments in limited companies. Work done during the current financial year and already reported to members has identified that these investment holdings no longer meet financial, strategic or operational objectives for the new Council. Plans to dispose of these assets either have been, or are being, put in place.

60. No new plans to invest in non-Treasury investments are being brought forward as the Council considers that its current priority should be to focus capital investment on the provision of services for local people. Moreover, borrowing to invest purely for commercial income gain is now strongly discouraged by Treasury, to the point the PWLB is explicit in not being used for this sole purpose. Amendments to the Prudential Code in 2021, also tightened regulatory controls on this type of activity.

61. On this basis a strategy for the acquisition and management of non-Treasury investments is not considered necessary and has not been presented to members as part of the 2024/25 Budget framework. Arrangements for the orderly disposal of existing non-Treasury investment s will be subject to member approval on an individual basis as and when developments occur.

Asset Management

62. Capital budgets have been put in place to maintain those assets which support delivery of Council services, as shown by Table 7 below:

Table 7 – Asset Management budgets 2024/25 to 2026/27

Key risk area	2024/25 to 2026/27 £m
Council property (non-schools)	
This budget has been established to ensure buildings are safe and functional and remain operational, focusing on urgent and essential works. Condition surveys have been undertaken to inform the proposed programme of works.	15
Fleet Management	
The Council has a fleet of over 750 vehicles. Projects are under way to review and rationalize fleet operations including procurement and management, decarbonization and vehicle utilization. This budget is for a new Fleet Management System with improved telematics and vehicle tracking, to	2

improve security and promote driver safety and fuel efficiency by providing better access to usage data	
	Corporate ICT
Budget established to: • Maintain and replace ICT components as necessary to maintain current service levels and to avoid any risks or failures that could compromise business continuity and data security. • Support the Council's hybrid work style. • Consolidate ICT systems inherited from the five previous organizations into a more cohesive, cost effective and resilient infrastructure.	3
Total	**£20m**

63. Somerset Council is committed to proactive asset management and is developing strategies to dispose of individual assets and sub-portfolios on an ongoing basis. These strategies will be presented to elected members for approval in line with the council's Scheme of Delegation and Asset Disposal Policy, and will be underpinned by work that is already ongoing to review and rationalize asset use, and to maximise income from capital receipts following the disposal of surplus assets.

Delivering this Strategy

64. The Capital Programme is revised annually as part of the budget setting process. Any significant variations to the Capital Programme require member approval which is usually sought via in-year budget reports. Delivery of the Capital Programme is part of the monthly financial monitoring process and involves close liaison between the corporate finance team and Project Officers (POs) in relevant spending departments.

Review and Governance

65. The Capital Strategy will be reviewed annually and updated to align with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, annual revenue and capital budgets, and any changes to the Council Plan. This should enable the Council to make investment decisions which are affordable, offer good value for money, and support its strategic aims.

66. The Key Prudential Indicators identified as being most relevant to the development and management of the Council's Capital Programme are set out in Table 8 as follows:

Table 8 – Key Prudential Indicators – Council objectives 2024/25

Key Prudential Indicator	Council objective
Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	Year-on-year increases to the CFR should be minimized

External Debt vs the CFR	External debt should always remain below CFR
Financing costs as a % of net revenue income - GF	% calculated should remain below 10%
Financing costs as % of net revenue income - HRA	% calculated should remain below 50%

67. These indicators are set out in detail in Appendix F and will be monitored throughout the financial year. At this stage it is anticipated that all of the above objectives will be met in 2024/25. Any significant variations will be reported to members.

Knowledge and Skills

68. The Council employs professionally qualified and experienced staff in all positions with responsibility for making capital expenditure, borrowing and investment decisions. For example, the Section 151 Officer will always be a qualified accountant with substantial local government experience and the MIFID II "opting up" process has demonstrated that there is an appropriate range of skills and expertise within the corporate Treasury Team.

69. All Finance staff are encouraged to study for relevant professional qualifications and, once qualified, to keep their professional knowledge up to date. The Council has its own in-house legal services team, and in-house valuation specialists who are Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) qualified. It also employs officers with specialist skills and experience in relation to procurement, risk management and Health and Safety.

70. Where the Council needs additional resources, for example to validate work done by officers or to provide specialist expertise in areas where Council staff do not have the knowledge and skills required, use is made of external advisers. For example, the Council currently employs Arlingclose Limited as treasury management advisers, and Jones Lang LaSalle are advising on asset disposals. This approach is more cost effective than employing additional resources directly and all consultant and advisor contracts are subject to rigorous tender evaluation.

Background Papers

2023/24 Budget, Medium-Term Financial Plan & Council Tax Setting report to Council 22 February 2023.

Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2024/25 to 2026/27 report to Corporate & Resources Scrutiny & Executive July 2023.

Financial Strategy Update report to 09 November 2023 Corporate & Resources Scrutiny and 08 November 2023 Executive.

2024/25 General Fund Revenue & Capital Programme update to 05 December 2023, Corporate & Resources Scrutiny Committee, 06 December 2023 Executive and 20 December 2023 full Council.

Monthly Budget Monitoring reports to Executive & Corporate & Resources Scrutiny Committee

Appendices

Appendix A – Proposed General Fund Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2026/27

Appendix B - Proposed HRA Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2026/27

Appendix C – Details of Major Capital Projects

Appendix D – Sources of Capital Funding

Appendix E – Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement 2023/24 and 2024/25

Appendix F - Key Prudential Indicators 2024/25

Appendix A – Proposed GF Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2026/27

2024-25 Proposed Programme Forecasts (General Fund)

Adults and Health Services					Funded by		
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27 >	Total	Borrowing	Grants/ Contributions	Total
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Adults Residential Programme	1,366	275		**1,641**	1,641		**1,641**
Disabled Facilities Grant	1,093	1,093		**2,186**		2,186	**2,186**
Learning Disabilities	53			**53**	10	43	**53**
Total	**2,512**	**1,368**		**3,880**	**1,651**	**2,229**	**3,880**

Children's Services					Funded by		
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27 >	Total	Borrowing	Grants/ Contributions	Total
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Children's Residential Homes 1-6	326	71	71	**468**	268	200	**468**
Children Residential Homes 7 and 8	950			**950**	950		**950**
Homes for Children with Disabilities Phase 2	1,500			**1,500**	1,500		**1,500**
Children Looked After	130	130		**260**		260	**260**
Special Education Needs and Disabilities	3,789	1,567		**5,356**		5,356	**5,356**
Early Years	212			**212**	212		**212**
Schools - DFCG & Energy Efficiency	750			**750**		750	**750**
Schools - Basic Need	975	150		**1,125**	1,125		**1,125**
Pyrland School - Dining Facilities Expansion	900			**900**		900	**900**
Heathfield School - Dining Facilities Expansion	1,000			**1,000**		1,000	**1,000**
St Pauls School Expansion	400			**400**	400		**400**
Orchard Grove New Primary School	3,500	200		**3,700**	3,700		**3,700**
Courtfields School - Dining Facilities Expansion	700			**700**	700		**700**
Dulverton Primary School (Single Site)	100			**100**	100		**100**
Schools Condition General	5,714	5,714	5,714	**17,142**	10,442	6,700	**17,142**
Stawley Modular Replacement	475	400	25	**900**	900		**900**
Albert Street Modular Replacement	291	9		**300**	300		**300**
Total	**21,712**	**8,241**	**5,810**	**35,763**	**20,597**	**15,166**	**35,763**

Climate & Place - Other Services					Funded by		
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27 >	Total	Borrowing	Grants/ Contributions	Total
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Flood Alleviation Projects (Somerset West & Taunton area)	4,035	1,000		**5,035**	106	4,929	**5,035**
Somerset Waste Partnership - Bin Stock	1,020	70		**1,090**	1,090		**1,090**
Chard Reservoir Dam Works	3	18		**21**	21		**21**
Total	**5,058**	**1,088**		**6,146**	**1,217**	**4,929**	**6,146**

Climate & Place - Economy and Regeneration					Funded by		
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27 >	Total	Borrowing	Grants/ Contributions	Total
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Business Growth Fund & Other Projects	434			**434**	434		**434**
Bridgwater Town Deal	8,985	7,249		**16,234**		16,234	**16,234**
Bridgwater Levelling Up Fund	7,211	6,144		**13,355**		13,355	**13,355**
Glastonbury Town Deal	10,050	6,000		**16,050**		16,050	**16,050**
Taunton Town Centre Regeneration	897			**897**		897	**897**
Firepool Development, Taunton	4,000			**4,000**		4,000	**4,000**
Chard Regeneration	500			**500**		500	**500**
Frome Enterprise Centre Building Improvements	806	19		**825**	825		**825**
Total	**32,883**	**19,412**		**52,295**	**1,259**	**51,036**	**52,295**

Appendix A (continued) - Proposed GF Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2026/27

Climate & Place - Infrastructure and Transport	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27 >	Total	Funded by Borrowing	Funded by Grants/ Contributions	Funded by Total
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Bridge Structures	7,448	4,000	12,000	**23,448**		23,448	**23,448**
Road Structures	29,500	31,625		**61,125**		61,125	**61,125**
Traffic Control	2,800	2,800	5,100	**10,700**		10,700	**10,700**
Active Travel Projects	1,666			**1,666**		1,666	**1,666**
Small Improvement - Safety Schemes	500	500	1,500	**2,500**		2,500	**2,500**
Highway Lighting	1,000	1,000	3,000	**5,000**		5,000	**5,000**
Rights of Way	1,121	1,237	3,711	**6,069**		6,069	**6,069**
Car Parks & Parking Services	248	248		**496**	496		**496**
Major Road Network	200	100		**300**	200	100	**300**
A38 Chelston Link	4,610			**4,610**		4,610	**4,610**
Fleet Management - Vehicles	500	500		**1,000**	1,000		**1,000**
Silk Mills Park & Ride Security Measures	125			**125**	125		**125**
Bus Service Improvement Programme	3,743			**3,743**		3,743	**3,743**
Total	**53,461**	**42,010**	**25,311**	**120,782**	**1,821**	**118,961**	**120,782**

Community Services	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27 >	Total	Funded by Borrowing	Funded by Grants/ Contributions	Funded by Total
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Library Services	326			**326**	254	72	**326**
Grants to Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)	790			**790**		790	**790**
IAC Staffing and Support	102	102		**204**		204	**204**
Energy Efficiency Grants	62	62		**124**		124	**124**
Home Maintenance	57	57		**114**		114	**114**
Prevention Grants	71			**71**		71	**71**
Ports and Harbours Safety Improvements	70			**70**	70		**70**
Bridgwater Port and River Brue Dredging	30			**30**	30		**30**
Bridgwater Port Navigation Aids and Beacons	30			**30**	30		**30**
Total	**1,538**	**221**		**1,759**	**384**	**1,375**	**1,759**

Resources and Corporate Services	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27 >	Total	Funded by Borrowing	Funded by Grants/ Contributions	Funded by Total
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Corporate ICT Investment	2,098	780		**2,878**	2,776	102	**2,878**
Property Services General	798			**798**	798		**798**
Wellington Library Improvements	1,158	34		**1,192**	1,192		**1,192**
Building Compliance Health & Safety	190			**190**	190		**190**
Property Rationalisation	700			**700**	700		**700**
Building Condition Programme (Non Schools)	2,466	236		**2,702**	2,702		**2,702**
Wincanton Sports Centre - New Roof and Colley Lane, Bridgwater - New Bay Roof (24/25/Corp Contingencey)		825	19	**844**	844		**844**
Bridgwater Library - Condition, Roof (22/23)	444	11		**455**	455		**455**
Taunton Library - New Boiler (22/23)	224	5		**229**	229		**229**
Orchard Multi-Storey - Structural and waterproofing repairs. (23/24)	330	8		**338**	338		**338**
Outdoor Education Centres Improvements	525	375	21	**921**	921		**921**
Outdoor Education Centres Building Condition	625	550	25	**1,200**	1,200		**1,200**
South West Heritage Trust Building Condition	325	75		**400**	400		**400**
Wellington Sports Centre Decarbonisation	2,383			**2,383**	2,341	42	**2,383**
Dulverton Weir Essential Works	30			**30**	30		**30**
Closed Churchyards	150			**150**	150		**150**
Capital Works for Investment Properties	2,213			**2,213**	2,213		**2,213**
Total	**14,659**	**2,899**	**65**	**17,623**	**17,479**	**144**	**17,623**

Strategy, Workforce, and Localities	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27 >	Total	Funded by Borrowing	Funded by Grants/ Contributions	Funded by Total
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Various Other Schemes	135	136		**271**		271	271
Total	**135**	**136**		**271**		**271**	**271**

GF total	**131,958**	**75,375**	**31,186**	**238,519**	**44,408**	**194,111**	**238,519**

Appendix B – Proposed HRA Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2033/34

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	Total
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Major Works	22,449	20,293	19,146	19,262	19,245	15,887	14,432	14,550	12,447	12,442	170,153
Fire Safety	2,573	1,508	508	291	291	250	250	250	250	250	6,421
Related Assets	400	400	580	580	580	558	480	480	480	480	5,018
Exceptional & Extensive	1,531	1,569	1,169	1,069	1,407	226	226	226	226	226	7,875
Vehicles	280	285	291	297	303	309	315	321	328	334	3,063
ICT & Transformation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Aids & Adaptations	370	370	370	370	370	370	370	370	370	370	3,700
Major works & Improvements	**27,603**	**24,425**	**22,064**	**21,869**	**22,196**	**17,600**	**16,073**	**16,197**	**14,101**	**14,102**	**196,230**
Social Housing Development	22,148	18,065	10,642	1,585	52	0	0	0	0	0	52,492
Total HRA capital expenditure	**49,751**	**42,490**	**32,706**	**23,454**	**22,248**	**17,600**	**16,073**	**16,197**	**14,101**	**14,102**	**248,722**
Funded by:											
Major Repairs Reserve	(17,983)	(16,301)	(16,281)	(16,281)	(16,281)	(16,281)	(16,073)	(16,197)	(16,281)	(16,073)	(164,032)
Capital Receipts	(4,549)	(5,584)	(3,080)	(2,030)	(1,828)	(1,319)	0	0	2,180	1,971	(14,239)
Capital Grants	(12,317)	(1,100)	(396)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	(13,813)
External borrowing	(14,902)	(19,505)	(12,949)	(5,143)	(4,139)	0	0	0	0	0	(56,638)
Total Funding	**(49,751)**	**(42,490)**	**(32,706)**	**(23,454)**	**(22,248)**	**(17,600)**	**(16,073)**	**(16,197)**	**(14,101)**	**(14,102)**	**(248,722)**

Appendix C – Details of major capital projects

A Fairer, Ambitious Somerset

Children with Special Education Needs & Disabilities

High Needs Provision Capital Allocations (HNPCA) grant will be used to fund projects that:

- enable and/or increase access to mainstream placements for children and young people who might otherwise require more specialist provision.
- increase the local availability of High Needs places, and
- adapt, re-model or improve existing High Needs places to make them suitable for a wider range of needs.

This involves a combination of expanding, repurposing and reconfiguring provision so that they better meet the needs of children and young people with complex needs, for example by improving:

- physical access to school buildings (e.g. ramps, handrails, and automated doors).
- access to the curriculum (e.g., specialist furniture and IT equipment).
- facilities within school buildings (e.g., medical rooms and acoustic improvements).
- access to specialist provision.

Schools - Energy Efficiency

This annual budget relates to a government funded grant allocated for individual schools for small capital projects and energy efficiency schemes. The grant is passported by Somerset Council onto Local Authority maintained schools for us in accordance with the conditions of the scheme.

Schools - Basic Need

The purpose of this investment is to meet the Council's statutory duty to deliver sufficient fit for purpose school places for all children in Somerset. The Council is facing increasing demand for school places, both mainstream and specialist provision, as the school age population in the county continues to rise. A number of projects to provide additional school places across the county will need to be undertaken over the coming years with funding being received from a number of sources including: Department for education (Dfe), Section106, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF)

Schools condition programme

As well as ensuring a sufficient provision of new places, schools must be maintained in an appropriate condition. This funding is to ensure school building are safe and functional and that their condition does not detract from teaching and learning or lead to unplanned school closures. The Department for Education (DfE) provides an annual capital grant to support this activity. However, there is a major and growing shortfall in funding between the level of need and the grant funding available, with a significant maintenance backlog currently identified. Grant funding will therefore be allocated to areas of highest need identified in the most recent condition surveys ie essential funding to replace critical building components (boilers/heating/roofs/windows etc) and major works which Schools would in most cases be unable to afford through their devolved funds.

Appendix C (continued) – Details of major capital projects

A flourishing and resilient Somerset

Bridgwater Town Deal

Bridgwater is one of the Governments 101 Towns Fund Towns. In 2021-2022, the local authority secured £23.2m of investment to deliver eleven different projects within the town, ranging from travel to cultural improvements and diversifying what the town centre has to offer. The largest single project, which commenced in February 2023, will improve large parts of Bridgwater's public realm alongside better accessibility within the town centre.

Plans are also in place to regenerate the former Bridgwater Hospital, a significant Grade 2 building which has become dilapidated over recent years. Converting the building into a Training Academy for Health and Social Care will not only bring back into use a significant town centre site but also deliver wider benefits such as increasing town centre footfall, and training thousands of individuals to work across the health and care sectors.

For more information on the Bridgwater Town Deal, see https://www.bridgwatertowndeal.co.uk/ ? Do you want to remove links?

Glastonbury Town Deal

Glastonbury is also one of the Government's 101 Town Deal towns and will benefit from £23.6m investment between 2021 and 2026. Some key projects have already been delivered, for example the Robert Richards Initiative has created a popular multi-user path at Tor Leisure and a learning and skills website in partnership with the Open University. Other initiatives include:

- local hubs for Sport and Leisure, Enterprise and Innovation
- clean energy initiatives
- improvements to Glastonbury Abbey, and

- a new Community Health and Wellbeing Centre.

For more details see www.glastonburytowndeal.co.uk)

Yeovil Refresh

Yeovil Refresh was launched in 2018 with the aim of re-designing and re-developing the town centre so that the local economy could grow and flourish over the coming years. Ambitious plans include:

- a new public amphitheatre at the Triangle
- an integrated transport system
- various improvements to Middle Street, including widened footpaths, new street furniture and ornamental planting, new street lighting and blue badge parking bays.

Expected completion date is 31 March 2024.

Staplegrove Housing Investment Fund (HIF)

In March 2019 the Government confirmed £14.2m of HIF funding to assist with the development of 1,500 homes together with a new spine road, primary school and associated infrastructure. Work is now ongoing with expected completion by the end of 2023/24.

Appendix C (continued) – Details of major capital projects

A greener, more sustainable Somerset

Bridges, Road structures and Traffic Control

Highways Agency funding will be used to maintain the highways network and the various bridges and structures which Somerset Council is responsible for. This includes the core annual maintenance cycle relating to carriageways, footways and cycleways, drainage, street lighting, and traffic control. Grant funding has also been made available to complete the A38 Chelston Link to junction 26 of the M5 motorway.

There are currently 299 Traffic signal sites across Somerset. Approximately 137 of these sites have been identified as being in a critical condition with urgent works required, and 220 will be affected by national plans to connect all traffic signals to a digital network by the end of 2025.

Lighting

The Council currently maintain circa 50,495 street lights, 1704 illuminated bollards, 4,839 illuminated signs and 401 Belisha Beacons/Beacon post lights. 64% of these have been replaced with LEDs, with the remainder due to be replaced over the next three years.

Bus Service Improvement Programme

Three separate infrastructure projects will be carried out as part of the BSIP programme:

- BSIP 'Greenwaves': A series of bus priority measures in Taunton along key routes into the town, including new bus lanes and upgrades to signals and traffic lights,
- Taunton Mobility Hub: These works will return the old bus station site to its original use a bus interchange together with cycle parking, cycle hire, e-bike charging, community and commercial space and an indoor waiting area.
- Somerton Rural Mobility Hub: A smaller, rural mobility hub which will act as an interchange for existing bus services and DDRT service trial.

A Healthy and Caring Somerset

New Social Housing

New housing developments are planned at:

- The "Woolaway Project", in North Taunton, which will provide a net increase of 69 new homes over the next 10 years.
- 40 new homes in Bridgewater, Sydenham, North Petherton and Nether Stowey.

Maintaining and improving HRA housing stock

Major items of capital expenditure will relate to:

- kitchens and bathrooms (£31m),
- windows and roofing (£21m)
- heating and insulation (£14m).

Further information about the Council's financial plans for social housing can be found at Housing Revenue Account (HRA) updated 30 year Business Plan and Rent Set 202324.pdf (somerset.gov.uk)

Appendix D – Sources of Capital Funding

Capital Receipts

Capital Receipts come from the sale of Council's assets. If the disposal relates to HRA land or property, then a percentage of the sales receipt must be paid over to the Government. In most cases capital receipts can be made available to support the capital programme as a corporate resource, irrespective of which service area the asset previously belonged to. The main exception to this is any Right to Buy (RTB) receipts held under Section 11(6) agreements, which must be used for the specific purpose providing replacement affordable housing.

Government Grants

Capital grants from the Government can be split into two categories:

- *Non-ring fenced* - grant that can be utilised on any project, albeit for a specific purpose. This is now the vast majority of Government funding.

- *Ring-fenced* - resources which are ring fenced to particular projects and therefore have restricted uses, specified by the funder. Any grant receipt not used for the specified purposes must be returned.

Non-Government Contributions

Where there is a requirement to make an application to an external agency to receive external funding, and to commit Council resources as matched funding to any bid which is successful, a business case should first of all be presented to demonstrate how the project aligns to Council's priorities and how matched funding and any revenue consequences of the project can be managed within the context of the capital and revenue budget overall.

Revenue Contributions

Subject to affordability, an element of the revenue budget can be set aside to fund the Capital Programme (Direct Revenue Financing). This practice mainly relates to capital expenditure within the HRA which is funded from rental income via the Major Repairs Reserve.

Prudential Borrowing

The term Prudential Borrowing does not automatically lead to external borrowing as the Council may be able to use cash it holds in reserves and short-term investments. The Council will resource capital projects using prudential borrowing only where plans put forward are sustainable, affordable, and prudent. Full appraisal will take place to ensure that, wherever possible, sufficient revenue income or cost savings returns are generated to cover the cost of borrowing. Where it is considered that prudential borrowing is the most appropriate method of funding, but it requires additional revenue financing, those additional costs must be built into the revenue budget planning process before the project can be approved.

Appendix E – Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement 2023/24 and 2024/25

Introduction

1. Regulation 27 of the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003 ('the 2003 Regulations') requires local authorities to 'charge to a revenue account a minimum revenue provision (MRP) for that year'. The minimum revenue provision is an annual amount set aside from the General Fund to meet the cost of capital expenditure that has not been financed from available resources, namely: grants, developer contributions (e.g. s.106 and community infrastructure levy) revenue contributions, earmarked reserves or capital receipts.

2. MRP is sometimes referred to as the mechanism for setting aside monies to repay external borrowing. In fact, the requirement for MRP set aside applies even if the capital expenditure is being financed from the Council's own cash resources and no new external borrowing or other credit arrangement has been entered into.

3. Regulation 28 of the 2003 Regulations requires full Council to approve a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement setting out the policy for making MRP and the amount of MRP to be calculated which the Council considers to be prudent. This statement is designed to meet that requirement.

4. In setting a prudent level of MRP local authorities must "have regard" to guidance issued from time to time by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government. The latest version of this guidance (version four) was issued by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in February 2018.

5. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) published a consultation on changes to the Capital Finance Regulations and the Statutory MRP Guidance in December 2023. A summary of the proposed changes is set out at paragraph 11 below. The changes being consulted upon will take effect from 1 April 2024. Consequently the MRP Policy Statement for 2024/25 must have regard to the proposed changes as well as the extant legislation and MRP Guidance.

6. In setting a level which the Council considers to be prudent, the Guidance states that the broad aim is to ensure that debt is repaid over a period reasonably commensurate with that over which the capital expenditure provides benefits to the Council.

7. The Guidance sets out four "possible" options for calculating MRP, as set out below,

Option	Calculation method	Applies to
1: Regulatory method	Formulae set out in 2003 Regulations (later revoked)	Expenditure incurred before 1 April 2008

2: CFR method	4% of Capital Financing Requirement	Expenditure incurred before 1 April 2008
3: Asset life method	Amortises MRP over the expected life of the asset	Expenditure incurred after 1 April 2008
4: Depreciation method	Charge MRP on the same basis as depreciation	Expenditure incurred after 1 April 2008

8. Two main variants of Option 3 are set out in the Guidance (i) the equal instalment method and (ii) the annuity method. The annuity method weights the MRP charge towards the later part of the asset's expected useful life and is increasingly becoming the most common MRP option for local authorities.

9. The Guidance also includes specific recommendations for setting MRP in respect of finance lease, investment properties and revenue expenditure which is statutorily defined as capital expenditure under the 2003 Regulations (also referred to as revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute or REFCUS). Examples of REFCUS include capitalised redundancy costs, loans or grants to third parties for capital purposes, and the purchase of shares in limited companies.

10. Other approaches are not ruled out however they must meet the statutory duty to make prudent MRP provision each financial year.

DLUHC consultation

11. DLUHC published a consultation on changes to the Capital Finance Regulations and Statutory Guidance in respect of MRP in December 2023. This follows two earlier consultations in November 2021 and February 2022. The aim of the changes proposed is to strengthen the requirement for local authorities to make a prudent MRP provision, in response to two issues which have led to underpayment of MRP at a number of authorities including Woking:

    (a) excluding a proportion of debt from the MRP determination in two areas:

        (i) firstly, debt associated with investment properties or investments defined as capital expenditure, on the basis that such assets retain their capital value and that the asset can be sold at any time in the future to repay the associated debt. The Government have stated that this is not prudent. The proposals will amend the 2003 Capital Finance Regulations to make clear that MRP is required on such expenditure;

        (ii) secondly, debt associated with making loan advances to third parties for a capital purpose. The argument put forward by authorities exempting such debt from MRP calculations is that the repayments of principal would be used to repay debt. The proposed changes will require local authorities to continue to set aside MRP on “commercial loans” (defined as a loan undertaken for profit), but allows local authorities an exemption from charging MRP for non-commercial loans, but will require local authorities to set aside as MRP an amount for any expected credit loss calculated under IFRS9. In other words for non-commercial loans as soon as there is evidence that the debtor might be unable to repay all or some of the loan, the authority would be required to set aside the full amount of the estimated loss.

(b) using capital receipts in place of charging MRP to revenue. Authorities following this approach would use capital receipts to pay for the amount of MRP due for the individual financial year. This practice effectively treated capital receipts as a revenue source, which is not permissible under Regulation 23 of the Capital Finance Regulations. The proposed changes to the Capital Finance Regulations make clear that capital receipts can only be used to reduce the overall level of the CFR, which in turn forms the basis for calculating the MRP charge, based on the residual CFR after the application of capital receipts.

12. In addition, paragraph 46 of the draft MRP Guidance states that for local authorities where the Government has made arrangements to intervene and has, or is in the process of, put in place financial support arrangement for the authority, that it may be appropriate to reflect the nature of any such financial support when determining a prudent level of MRP for the forthcoming financial year. The draft Guidance goes onto state that the authority must seek agreement from the Government on how any such assumptions with respect to support are reflected in the determination of MRP. The draft Guidance goes onto explain that paragraph 46 is not a new policy but clarifies an issue that previous editions of the Guidance was silent on. As such, the Government expects this to apply to prior periods (or MRP from prior periods).

Local Government Reorganisation

13. Prior to vesting day for the new Somerset Council, all five abolished authorities had different MRP policies and practices. When the MRP policy was set for the new Council as part of the budget setting process for 2023/24, the MRP Policy Statement set out that past charges would not be re-visited but that a consistent approach would be developed for the new Council.

14. The quality of the records available to date inherited have not been sufficient to enable this as explained below:

- Only one authority appeared to have any MRP stream in respect of pre 2007/08 and supported capital expenditure incurred 2008-2011. This seems unlikely given that the amortisation period would have been a minimum of 25 years from 1 April 2008 when the current system of MRP came into force;

- For unsupported capital expenditure incurred since 1 April 2008, only two authorities appeared to have capital finance records which showed expenditure on an asset by asset basis necessary to support the asset life method which all five authorities reported they were following;

- Asset lives used for the MRP calculations at three authorities appeared to default to 50 years. The asset life method is required to charge MRP over a period commensurate with the period over which their capital expenditure provides benefits. Therefore it is extremely unlikely that the asset lives would all be 50 years. Potentially this means that the authorities would be setting MRP for a period longer than that which provided benefits, which would be imprudent.

- There were no detailed asset life records for the former county council and it has been necessary to apportion the county's CFR pro rata to the net book value of the assets held by the county, in order to estimate a split of the CFR by asset type and then apply asset lives more appropriate to the relevant asset class.

15. In view of this the MRP Policy Statement for 2023/24 is to be amended and the 2024/25 to provide a continuation of the MRP policies for the legacy expenditure from the abolished authorities and a standard policy for unfinanced capital expenditure incurred by the new Council since 1 April 2023.

16. This approach is recommended subject to work being undertaken to establish more accurate records from the abolished authorities over the next 12 months and revisit the MRP policy during 2024/25 where necessary in order to move to a consistent MRP policy across the whole Council and one which fully complies with the Statutory MRP Guidance – both the current 2018 edition and the 2024 edition currently out to consultation.

Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy statement

17. Having regard to current Guidance on MRP issued by MHCLG and the "options" outlined in that Guidance, the Council is recommended to approve the following MRP Statement to take effect from 1 April 2024, on the basis that this represents "a prudent provision" in line with Regulation 28.

MRP stream	Policy	Explanation
Legacy MRP		
Mendip DC: 1. Operational expenditure	MRP will be calculated on a straight-line basis over the expected asset lives established by the former authority.	This complies with Option 3(i) of the MRP Guidance.

2. Investment property	MRP will be calculated on an annuity basis over the expected asset lives established by the former authority of 20 years	This complies with Option 3(i) of the MRP Guidance.
Sedgemoor DC: 1. Pre-2008 capital expenditure and supported capital expenditure 2. Unsupported capital expenditure incurred since 1 April 2008 3. Commercial investment 4. Loans to third parties	MRP will be charged on a 4% reducing balance in respect of the previous year's CFR MRP will be charged on annuity basis over the expected asset lives established by the former authority MRP will be charged on a straight-line basis over the remaining 47 year asset lives established by the former authority. MRP will be charged on a straight-line over the remaining period of the loans	This complies with Option 2 This complies with Option 3(ii), but will need detailed asset records to be established to confirm use of the method. This complies with Option 3(i) but will need detailed asset records to be established to confirm use of the method. This complies with Option 3(i) but will need detailed asset records to be established to confirm use of the method.
South Somerset DC Unsupported capital expenditure incurred since 1 April 2008	MRP will be charged on a straight-line basis over the remaining period of the standard 50 year asset lives	This complies with Option 3(i) but will need detailed asset records to be established to confirm use of the method and to reflect the actual asset lives of the assets financed.
South West and Taunton DC Unsupported capital expenditure incurred since 1 April 2008	MRP will be charged on a straight-line basis over the remaining 10 year asset life MRP will be charged on an annuity basis over the residual	This complies with Option 3(i) but will need detailed asset records to be established to confirm use of the method and to reflect the actual asset lives of the assets financed.

Unsupported capital expenditure on investment property	asset life of the asset(s) acquired	This complies with Option 3(ii) but will need detailed records to be established to confirm use of the method and to reflect the actual assets financed.

MRP stream	Policy	Explanation
Somerset CC Unsupported capital expenditure incurred since 1 April 2008	MRP will be charged on a straight-line over the standard asset lives of the CFR at 31/3/2023 apportioned to heritage, infrastructure, intangible and plant and equipment assets. MRP on land and buildings will be charged on an annuity basis over a standard asset life of the CFR at 31/3/2023 apportioned to this asset category	This complies with Option 3(i) but will need detailed records to be established to confirm use of the method and to reflect the actual assets financed. This complies with Option 3(ii) but will need detailed records to be established to confirm use of the method and to reflect the actual assets financed
All pre-2007/08 capital expenditure	MRP will be calculated on the reducing balance method set out in Option 1	This complies with Option 1 but will need the records checking for each abolished authority to establish whether such expenditure was outstanding at 31/3/2023.
Ongoing MRP since 1 April 2023		
All operational capital expenditure incurred since 2007/08	MRP will be calculated on a straight-line using the expected useful asset lives of the assets (Option 3 – asset life), subject to a maximum useful asset life of 50 years.	This complies with the Option 3(ii) of the MRP Guidance and the requirement for a maximum asset life of 50 years.
All capital expenditure on commercial assets	MRP will be calculated on an annuity basis using the expected useful asset lives of the assets (Option 3 – asset	The use of the annuity method complies with Option 3(ii) of the MRP Guidance.

incurred since 2007/08	life), subject to a maximum useful asset life of 20 years and discounted using the PWLB new loan annuity rate applicable on 1 April in the year when MRP commences.	
Expenditure capitalised by virtue of a capitalisation direction under section 16(2)(b) of the Local Government Act 2003	MRP on any expenditure capitalised by way of a Direction will be charged over 20 years using the asset-life method using an annuity approach.	The 20 year life is the period specified in para 47 of the MRP Guidance. The use of the annuity method complies with Option 3(ii) of the MRP Guidance.
Loans to third parties	MRP will be charged on a straight-line basis over the expected useful life for which the loan is to be used, subject to a maximum useful asset life of 50 years	The straight-line approach complies with Option 3(i) of the MRP Guidance and the useful life is that set out in para 47 of the MRP Guidance.
Expenditure on the acquisition of share capital	MRP will be charged on a straight-line over 20 years	The straight-line approach complies with Option 3 of the MRP Guidance and the 20 year life is that set out in para 47 of the MRP Guidance.

MRP stream	Policy	Explanation
MRP for service concession contracts	The amount of the MRP charge will be equal to the amount by which the balance sheet liability is written by the unitary charge (i.e. the principal element of the unitary charge)	This complies with para 43 of the MRP Guidance
Asset lives	Asset lives used for MRP calculations will be determined by the Council's RICS-registered valuers, and will be consistent with the depreciation policies set out in the Council's annual Statement of Accounts, and will be kept under regular review. If no life can reasonably be attributed to an asset, such as freehold land, the estimated useful life will be taken to be a maximum of 50 years	This complies with para 42 of the MRP Guidance.
Discount rate for use when applying the annuity method for calculating MRP under Option 3	MRP will be discounted using the PWLB new loan annuity rate applicable on 30 September in the year before MRP commences	The MRP Guidance does not suggest what discount rate(s) to use. By specifying the PWLB new loan annuity rate at 30 September in the year before MRP aligns the discount rate to the middle of the year in which the expenditure is incurred and provides a clearly evidenced trail to the discount rate to be used and reflects the type of borrowing undertaken by the Council.
MRP commencement	MRP should normally begin in the financial year following the one in which the expenditure was incurred. However, in	This approach complies with para 41 of the MRP Guidance

	accordance with the statutory Guidance, commencement of MRP may be deferred until the financial year following the one in which the asset becomes operational	
Use of capital receipts to reduce indebtedness	Capital receipts may be applied to reduce the CFR. This means that subsequent year's MRP charges will reduce by the amount of receipts applied. The MRP reduction will be on a straight line basis over 20 years, [unless the capital receipt relates to identifiable MRP charges, in which case the section 151 officer may determine the annual MRP reduction consistent with those MRP charges.]	This approach complies with para 68 of the draft MRP Guidance

18. On the basis of the above MRP Policy, the MRP for the forthcoming financial year (2024/25) would be £26.2m (equivalent to 2.3% of the closing CFR at 31 March 2024) comprising:

MRP element	£m
Legacy MRP	22.7
PFI	1.3
Unsupported capital expenditure for 2023/24	2.2
TOTAL MRP	**26.2**

19. In amending the MRP Policy for 2023/24 to the above and setting the 2024/25 MRP policy based on the MRP Policy above, this will comply with the Council's duty to set a prudent level of MRP. This MRP Policy is recommended on the basis that work will be done within the next 12 months to improve the quality of records from the abolished authorities to properly support the use of the asset-life approach underpinning the legacy MRP to:

- ensure improved compliance with the MRP Guidance; and

- transition the new Council to a consistent MRP Policy for all unfinanced capital expenditure.

20. The MRP Policy will be kept under review and updated if necessary in the light of the changes to the Capital Finance Regulations and Statutory MRP Guidance currently being consulted upon by DLUHC.

Appendix F – Key Prudential Indicators 2024/25

Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)

The CFR essentially measures the Council's underlying borrowing need. Any capital expenditure which is being financed from prudential borrowing will increase the CFR, whereas the annual MRP charge reduces it.

The Council's CFR is expected to increase by £82.7m (or 7%) between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2027, from £1,143.7m to £1,226.4m. The major contributor to the increase is the unfunded element of the Capitalisation Direction of £99.2m, which is necessary to avoid the Council's General Fund being in deficit for the forthcoming years. The size of the CFR is a major driver of the amount required to be charged to council tax as MRP.

2022/23 Forecast £m		2023/24 Forecast £m	2024/25 Estimate £m	2025/26 Estimate £m	2026/27 Estimate £m
	CFR at 31 March				
909.5	General Fund	946.1	950.3	930.5	907.3
184.0	HRA	197.6	212.5	232.0	245.0
0.0	Capitalisation Direction	0.0	0.0	25.2	74.1
1,093.5	**Total CFR**	**1,143.7**	**1,162.8**	**1,187.7**	**1,226.4**
	Annual change				
	General Fund	36.6	4.2	(19.9)	(23.2)
	HRA	13.6	14.9	19.5	13.0
	Capitalisation Direction	0.0	0.0	25.3	48.9
0.0	**Total change**	**50.2**	**19.1**	**24.9**	**38.7**
	Reason for change				
	Net financing	73.8	45.3	27.6	18.8
	Capitalisation Direction	0.0	20.0	86.2	117.2
	Less repayment of debt from asset sales	0.0	(20.0)	(61.0)	(67.4)
	Less MRP	(23.6)	(26.2)	(28.0)	(29.9)
0.0	**Net financing**	**50.2**	**19.1**	**24.8**	**38.7**

It should be noted that the 2022/23 figure of £1,093.5m for the CFR is provisional pending completion of the audit of the abolished authorities' accounts.

External Debt vs the Capital Financing Requirement

The table below confirms that the Council's gross debt is not expected to exceed the total CFR for the current year (2023/24) and future years

	2023/24 Forecast £m	2024/25 Estimate £m	2025/26 Estimate £m	2026/27 Estimate £m
Gross Projected Debt	806.9	850.8	902.0	968.7
CFR	1,143.7	1,162.8	1,187.7	1,226.4
Under/(Over) Borrowing	**336.7**	**312.0**	**285.7**	**257.7**

Affordability of capital investment plans

The objective of the affordability indicator is to ensure that the level of investment in capital assets proposed remains within sustainable limits and, in particular, highlights the impact of capital financing costs (i.e. MRP and interest) on the Council's "bottom line". The estimates of financing costs include current commitments and the proposals in the capital strategy.

The affordability is the total of financing costs expressed as a percentage of net revenue streams ie:

- for GF budgets, the total of Council Tax, business rates and government grants, and
- for HRA budgets, annual rental income.

These ratios are shown below.

	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Estimate	2025/26 Estimate	2026/27 Estimate
General Fund	9.7%	9.3%	9.5%	8.8%
HRA	45.0%	45.2%	45.5%	45.5%