

Treasury Management Update

Quarterly Report

30TH JUNE 2025

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Treasury Management Update

Quarter Ended 30th June 2025

The CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) Code of Practice for Treasury Management 2021 recommends that members be updated on treasury management activities at least quarterly. This report, therefore, ensures this Council is implementing best practice in accordance with the Code.

1. Economics update

- The first quarter of 2025/26 (1st April to 30th June) saw:
 - A 0.3% m/m fall in real GDP in April – the first fall since October 2024
 - The 3myy rate of average earnings growth excluding bonuses fall from 5.5% to 5.2% in May
 - Core CPI inflation ease from 3.8% in April to 3.5% in May as temporary Easter-related effects faded
 - The Bank of England cut interest rates from 4.50% to 4.25% in May, holding them steady in June
 - The 10-year gilt yield fluctuate between 4.4% and 4.8%, and end the quarter at 4.50%
- The 0.3% m/m fall in real GDP in April was the first fall since October 2024 and the largest fall since October 2023. This is a significant shift from the 0.7% q/q rise in Q1 2025, probably as a result of the boosts from net exports and business investment unwinding. The decline in exports was mostly due to a reversal of US tariff front-running with export values to the US falling by 31% m/m after rising 34% in total in the five months to February. April's GDP figures also showed manufacturing output falling by 0.9% m/m along with the domestic economy showing signs of weakness in April. Despite construction output growing by 0.9% m/m, services output declined by 0.4% m/m, reversing all of March's 0.4% m/m rise. This weakness in services likely reflects higher labour costs from April's rise in National Insurance Contributions for employers. May's GDP may have fallen a bit further as the boosts in Q1 continued to unwind. Overall, GDP in Q2 is likely to have flatlined and the economy will probably be hindered by subdued overseas demand and domestic businesses cutting spending given a rise in costs due to April's increase in taxes. The Bank of England expects growth in 2025 to be around 0.8%.
- Despite the rise in the composite Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) from 50.3 in May to 50.7 in June, it is still below its level in March, prior to the rise in business taxes and Trump's Liberation Day tariffs. This rise was driven by increases in both the services and manufacturing output balances. Although the services PMI rose from 50.9 to 51.3, that is consistent with non-retail services output growth slowing from 0.5% 3m/3m in April to 0.3% 3m/3m in June.
- The sharp 2.7% m/m drop back in retail sales volumes in May adds to other evidence that the burst of economic growth in Q1 is over. The weakness was widespread with sales falling in all seven of the major categories. This decline was partly due to the unwinding of the previous boost from April's unusually warm and dry weather along with inflationary pressures prompting consumers to cut back. The latter would be a more persistent drag on retail spending. Looking ahead, the rise in the GfK measure of consumer confidence from -20 in May to -18 in June is consistent with the annual rate of real retail sales growth accelerating from -1.3% in May to around +0.5%.

- While the £17.7bn of public sector borrowing in May was higher than the Office of Budget responsibility (OBR) forecast of £17.1bn, borrowing was £2.9bn below the OBR's forecast in the first two months of the 2025/26 fiscal year. The current budget deficit was £12.8bn in May, a touch below the OBR's forecast of £13.0bn. Within that, government spending surprised to the downside. Central government expenditure was £0.5bn lower than the OBR's forecast in May, leaving it £1.6bn lower in April and May combined. That has been largely driven by debt interest payments, which were £1.1bn below the OBR's forecast in May. But if the rises in gilt yields since the Spring Statement in March are sustained, the OBR will revise up its forecast for debt interest payments in the years ahead. That of itself would knock £1.0bn off the Chancellor's £9.9bn of headroom against her fiscal mandate and the subsequent Government U-turns on benefit and welfare spending and higher borrowing costs may mean to maintain her current £9.9bn buffer, Reeves has to raise upwards of £13bn later this year. And with the gilt market sensitive to significant increases in borrowing, all this means substantial tax rises are looking very likely.
- The weakening in the jobs market is gathering pace. May's 109,000 m/m fall in the PAYE measure of employment was the largest decline (barring the pandemic) since the data began and the seventh in as many months. The monthly change was revised lower in five of the previous seven months too, with April's 33,000 fall revised down to a 55,000 drop. Overall, the payroll measure of employment has now fallen by 276,000 since the announcement of the rise in payroll taxes and the minimum wage in the October Budget. The job vacancies data also portrays a rapidly weakening labour market. The number of job vacancies is now falling a bit faster, dropping from 760,000 in the three months to April to 736,000 in May. Capital Economics' seasonally adjusted measure of single-month vacancies declined sharply from 763,000 in April to 713,000 in May.
- A looser labour market is driving softer wage pressures. The 3myy rate of average earnings growth excluding bonuses fell from 5.5% to 5.2% in May. The rate for the private sector slipped from 5.5% to 5.1%, putting it on track to undershoot the Bank of England's Q2 forecast of 5.2%. And after rising in April as the 6.7% rise in the minimum wage took effect, the timelier PAYE median earnings measure fell back from 6.2% y/y in April to 5.8% in May. Softer wage growth is feeding through to lower services inflation, pointing to a slowdown from 4.7% in May to around 3.0% by the end of the year.
- CPI inflation fell slightly from 3.5% in April to 3.4% in May – close to consensus. The sharp falls in services inflation from 5.4% to 4.7% and in core inflation from 3.8% to 3.5% confirmed that the previous month's jumps partly reflected an Easter-related blip. Services inflation is expected to continue to fall as wage growth slows, supporting a view that CPI inflation will fall close to 2.0% by the start of 2027. An upside risk, however, in the near term is that higher oil/gas and food prices could trigger another bout of second-round effects on wages and inflation expectations, meaning CPI inflation stays above 3.0% for longer and causes the Bank to shift to an even slower rate cutting path. CPI is expected to peak at 3.8% in September.
- The yield on the 10-year gilt moved sideways in the second quarter of 2025. After rising from 4.4% in early April to 4.8% in mid-April following wider global bond market volatility stemming from the "Liberation Day" tariff announcement, gilt yields eased back as trade tensions began to de-escalate. By the end of April, the 10-year gilt yield had returned to 4.4%. In May, concerns about stickier inflation and shifting expectations about the path for interest rates led to another rise, with the 10-year gilt yield fluctuating between 4.6% and 4.75% for most of May. Thereafter, as trade tensions continued to ease and markets increasingly began to price in looser monetary policy, the 10-year yield edged lower, and ended Q2 at 4.50%. We expect this trend to continue over the next year. However, it is more difficult to be confident that the longer part of the curve will also see falls in yields, although that is still our central case, as that part of the curve is increasingly held by transient investors, such as foreign investors and hedge funds. Pension funds and insurance companies have more appetite in the short to medium part of the curve nowadays.

The FTSE 100 fell sharply following the “Liberation Day” tariff announcement, dropping by more than 10% in the first week of April - from 8,634 on 1st April to 7,702 on 7th April. However, the de-escalation of the trade war coupled with strong corporate earnings led to a rapid rebound starting in late April. As a result, the FTSE 100 closed Q2 at 8,761, around 2% higher than its value at the end of Q1 and more than 7% above its level at the start of 2025.

MPC meetings: 8th May & 19th June 2025

- There were two Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meetings this quarter. In May, the Committee cut Bank Rate from 4.50% to 4.25%, while in June policy was left unchanged. In June’s vote, three MPC members (Dhingra, Ramsden and Taylor) voted for an immediate cut to 4.00%, citing loosening labour market conditions. The other six members were more cautious, as they highlighted the need to monitor for “signs of weak demand”, “supply-side constraints” and higher “inflation expectations”, mainly from food prices rising. By repeating the well-used phrase “gradual and careful”, the MPC continued to suggest that rates will be reduced further.
- At the start of June, amid escalating tensions between Israel and Iran, oil prices surged to over \$75 per barrel. However, following a ceasefire agreement near the end of the month, oil prices eased back to levels prior to the conflict. Given the drop back in energy prices and the relatively muted reaction to fears of a ceasefire violation, along with a large drop in the services PMI output prices balance, our central view is that once inflation begins to trend downwards in the final months of 2025, Bank Rate reductions can begin again from November (pause in August as inflation remains close to its peak), falling to a low of 3.5% in May 2026. However, if the conflict in the Middle East were to result in higher energy prices and/or domestic inflationary pressures grow stronger, there is a risk the Bank of England may skip cutting rates further.

2. Interest rate forecasts

The Council has appointed MUFG Corporate Markets as its treasury advisors and part of their service is to assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates. The PWLB rate forecasts below are based on the Certainty Rate (the standard rate minus 20 bps) which has been accessible to most authorities since 1st November 2012. For Housing Revenue Account authorities, the lower Housing Revenue Account (HRA) PWLB rate has also been available since 15 June 2023 (standard rate minus 60 bps) but is available for HRA borrowing only.

The latest forecast was provided on 10th February:

MUFG Corporate Markets Interest Rate View 10.02.25													
	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27	Jun-27	Sep-27	Dec-27	Mar-28
BANK RATE	4.50	4.25	4.25	4.00	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
3 month ave earnings	4.50	4.30	4.30	4.00	3.80	3.80	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
6 month ave earnings	4.40	4.20	4.20	3.90	3.70	3.70	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
12 month ave earnings	4.40	4.20	4.20	3.90	3.70	3.70	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.60
5 yr PWLB	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.70	4.60	4.50	4.40	4.40	4.30	4.20	4.20	4.10	4.00
10 yr PWLB	5.30	5.20	5.10	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.70	4.70	4.60	4.50	4.50	4.40	4.40
25 yr PWLB	5.80	5.70	5.60	5.50	5.40	5.30	5.20	5.10	5.00	5.00	4.90	4.90	4.80
50 yr PWLB	5.50	5.40	5.30	5.20	5.10	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.70	4.70	4.60	4.60	4.50

- Money market yield forecasts are based on expected average earnings by local authorities for 3 to 12 months.
- The MUFG Corporate Markets forecast for average earnings are averages i.e., rates offered by individual banks may differ significantly from these averages, reflecting their diverse needs for borrowing short-term cash at any one point in time.

The forecast has proved robust over the period since February, setting out a central view that short and long-dated interest rates will start to fall once it is evident that the Bank of England has been successful in squeezing excess inflation out of the economy, despite a backdrop of stubborn inflationary factors. Nonetheless, the longer dated part of the forecast also reflects the increased level of Government borrowing over the term of the current Parliament and the weakness in the public

finances, with the Government struggling to deliver on the efficiencies detailed in the 30th of October Budget.

Moreover, there is still on-going debate as to when, and if, the Government's policies will lead to a material uptick in growth given their reliance on the logistics of fast-tracking planning permissions, identifying sufficient skilled labour to undertake a resurgence in building, and an increase in the employee participation rate within the economy.

Overall, our central view is that monetary policy is sufficiently tight at present to cater for some further moderate loosening, the extent of which, however, will continue to be data dependent. We forecast the next reduction in Bank Rate to be made in November and for a pattern to evolve whereby rate cuts are made quarterly and in keeping with the release of the Bank's Quarterly Monetary Policy Reports (February, May, August and November). Any movement below a 4% Bank Rate will, nonetheless, be very much dependent on inflation data releases in the coming months.

International factors could also impact the prospect for longer dated gilt yield falls. President Trump's "big, beautiful bill" has successfully made its way through the House of Representatives in July and given that it will signal a continued large budget deficit position in the US finances, any uptick in Treasury yields will likely impact other developed economies markets too. There will also be a keen focus on whether US-driven tariff policies result in upward pressures on inflation.

3. Annual Investment Strategy

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2025/26, which includes the Annual Investment Strategy, was approved by the Council on 25th February 2025. In accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice, it sets out the Council's investment priorities as being:

- Security of capital
- Liquidity
- Yield

The Council will aim to achieve the optimum return (yield) on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity, aligned with the Council's risk appetite. In the current economic climate, over and above keeping investments short-term to cover cash flow needs, there is a benefit to seeking out value available in periods up to 12 months with high credit rated financial institutions, using the MUFG Corporate Markets suggested creditworthiness approach, including a minimum sovereign credit rating and Credit Default Swap (CDS) overlay information. *(Amend if you use your own creditworthiness approach.)*

As shown by the charts below and the interest rate forecasts in section 2, investment rates have started to taper downwards during the first quarter of 2025/26 and are expected to fall back further if inflation falls through 2025 and 2026 and the MPC loosens monetary policy more substantially.

Creditworthiness

There have been few changes to credit ratings over the quarter under review. However, officers continue to closely monitor these, and other measures of creditworthiness to ensure that only appropriate counterparties are considered for investment purposes.

Investment counterparty criteria

The current investment counterparty criteria selection approved in the TMSS is meeting the requirement of the treasury management function.

CDS Prices

For UK and international banks, these have remained low, and prices are not misaligned with other creditworthiness indicators, such as credit ratings. **Nevertheless, it remains important to undertake continual monitoring of all aspects of risk and return.**

Investment balances

The average level of funds available for investment purposes during the quarter was **£36.877 million**. The level of funds available is mainly dependent on the timing of Council Tax and Business Rate receipts, precept payments, receipt of Government grants and progress on the capital programme. The Council currently holds significant funds relating to CIL and Sectio 106 agreements.

The Council has budgeted for investment returns of £919,443 in 2025/26. Performance for the year to date is slightly above target on a straight line approach, but with the expectation that, both interest rates and our cash holdings will both reduce during the remainder of the year (especially with the building of the bereavement centre) the yearend position is expected to come in line with the budget.

The list of investments held on 30th June 2025

	Value £	Interest Rate
NatWest Bank Current Account	101,813	2.75%
Money Market Funds – Blackrock	4,950,000	4.27%
Money Market Funds – Aberdeen Standard	5,000,000	4.30%
Standard Chartered Bank	6,000,000	4.57%
Lloyds Bank	5,000,000	4.25%
Santander UK	5,101,370	4.00%
SMBC Bank	6,000,000	4.35%
TOTAL	32,153,183	4.29%

Approved limits

Officers can confirm that the approved limits within the Annual Investment Strategy were not breached during the quarter ended 30th June 2025.

4. Borrowing

The Council had no external borrowing carried forward from 2024/24 and none was undertaken during the quarter ended 30th June 2025 and it is further anticipated that no external borrowing will be needed during the remainder of the financial year.

5. Compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits

The prudential and treasury Indicators are shown in Appendix 1.

It is a statutory duty for the Council to determine and keep under review the affordable borrowing limits. During the quarter ended 30th June 2025, the Council has operated within the treasury and prudential indicators set out in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2025/26. The Director of Finance reports that no difficulties are envisaged for the current or future years in complying with these indicators.

All treasury management operations have also been conducted in full compliance with the Council's Treasury Management Practices.

APPENDIX 1: Prudential and Treasury Indicators for 2025-26 as of 30th June 2025

Treasury Indicators	Actual 30 th June 2025 £000	Actual 31 st March 2025 £000
Authorised limit for external debt	8,000	10,000
Operational boundary for external debt	0	0
Gross external debt	0	0
Investments	(32,153)	(32,288)
Net borrowing	(32,153)	(32,288)

Prudential Indicators	Forecast Yearend Position as of 30 th June 2025 £'000	Actual 31 st March 2025 £'000
Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) – Brought forward	10,197	10,652
Capital Expenditure funded from Borrowing	5,455	988
Minimum Revenue Provision & Repayment of Loan from ECTC	(3,186)	(1,443)
Annual change in CFR	2,269	(455)
Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) – Carried forward	12,466	10,197