



WEST LANCASHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CAPITAL STRATEGY

2023/2026

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (updated December 2021) sets out the requirement for councils to prepare a Capital Strategy, and this document has been produced in accordance with the latest guidance.
- 1.2 This strategy updates the capital strategy for both the general fund (GRA programme) and for the HRA, and sets out the direction for the Council's capital programme management and investment decisions in support of our outcomes. It sets out the principles for prioritising our capital investments, the governance, scrutiny and assurance process. It also provides an overview of the asset management process and approach to risk management.
- 1.3 The effective management of capital resources is an integral aspect in the delivery of the Council's corporate objectives. The Capital Strategy provides the framework for this delivery and ensures there is a focused approach to our capital investment. The Strategy maintains a strong link to its key strategy documents notably the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), Treasury Management Strategy, Investment strategy. The Strategy will be reviewed annually and updated to take account of the challenges facing the Council and the residents of West Lancashire.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council formulates its capital investment programme as part of its annual budget setting process. The aim is to ensure that the programme is affordable, deliverable and in line with the Council's priorities for expenditure.
- 2.2 The key priorities continue to be supported by our capital investment programme, for instance through our greener energy initiatives and the development of cycleways, we are working towards cleaner with increased provision of litter bins and CCTV initiatives to deter and address fly tipping. The programme funding for the provision of healthy hubs, to achieve the healthier community objective.
- 2.3 Although not currently in the strategy, there is work well underway to look at the long-term leisure service needs, including provision of new leisure facilities, to replace existing centres. At this stage, the affordability is still being worked upon, as we have been informed that the Council's £11m bid for levelling up funding has not been successful.

3. Objectives

- 3.1 To support the MTFs by ensuring that capital investment decisions are not taken in isolation from revenue spending with specific emphasis on delivering future savings and income streams capable of supporting the revenue budget.

Also ensuring the right capital assets are fit for purpose for the Council and partners and supports the Council's priorities.

4. Capital Programme – General Fund

General Fund – the programme includes £2.987m of new expenditure in 2023/24. In addition to this there will be estimated slippage of £4.964m, that is expenditure shown under the 2022/23 programme, that is not likely to occur until 2023/24. This forms part of the programme of £7.951m for 2023/24 shown below.

General Fund (GRA) Service Area	2022/23 F/cast Expenditure £'000s	2023/24 £'000s	2024/25 £'000s	2025/26 £'000s
Corporate and Customer Services	£1,560	£601	£250	£250
Environmental Services	£236	£297	£45	£0
Finance Procurement and Commercial Services	£235	£772	£60	£210
Housing Services	£1,722	£1,941	£1,608	£1,608
Planning and Regulatory Services	£254	£211	£0	£0
Wellbeing and Place Services	£8,910	£4,129	£1,568	£6
Total GRA Capital Programme Expenditure	£12,917	£7,951	£3,531	£2,074

4.1 General Fund New Bids 2023/24

There is £651k of new expenditure included in the overall capital programme shown above. This is to support the six schemes identified below.

Service	Budget Issue Name	2023/24 £'000s	2024/25 £'000s	2025/26 £'000s
Environment	Littering T&F group equipment	£23	£0	£0
Environment	Street recycling bins	£10	£0	£0
Finance & Procurement	Civica fixed asset register	£30	£0	£0
Finance & Procurement	Capital Works Required (Est)	£230	£10	£180
Wellbeing and leisure	Chapel Gallery building repairs	£50	£33	£6
Regulatory services	CCTV monitoring costs	£79	£0	£0
New Service Bids 2023/24		£422	£43	£186

In addition to the service bids presented here, the capital programme includes £1.726m of expenditure for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, (£191k in 2023/24 and £1.535m in 2024/25), in addition to the £170k already in the capital programme for 2022/23.

This expenditure is fully funded from a grant of £4.3m split across revenue (£2.361m) and capital (£1.896m). At this stage, the apportionment between revenue and capital is under review, to ensure that it is accounted for in accordance with local authority accounting practice, which may result in some of the expenditure and grant being accounted for as revenue.

4.2 Capital Resources – General Fund

The above programme is to be resourced by the resources as identified below:

General Fund (GRA) Funding:	2022/23 F/cast Expenditure £'000s	2023/24 £'000s	2024/25 £'000s	2025/26 £'000s
Capital Receipts	£3,306	£1,228	£0	£0
GRA Contributions	£0	£0	£0	£0
Prudential Borrowing	£5,284	£1,506	£552	£630
CIL funding	£1,053	£3,191	£0	£0
S106 funding	£698	£36	£0	£0
Other Grant Funding	£2,576	£1,991	£2,979	£1,444
Total GRA Capital Programme Funding	£12,917	£7,951	£3,531	£2,074

4.3 Sources of Finance for the Capital Programme

There are both external and internal sources of financing available to fund the capital programme. When these resources are depleted, the council needs to resort to prudential borrowing.

External Funding

Where external resources available to support the Capital Programme these are applied first, to reduce the borrowing burden on the council. These can include grants from government bodies such as funding to enable the award of disabled facilities grants, statutory and other developer contributions (e.g. S.106/CIL - Community Infrastructure Levy) and partner contributions from bodies interested in specific projects. It can be seen from the table in 4.2 that £5.219m of CIL, s106 and other grant funding will be used in delivering the 2023/24 capital programme.

Forecast Movement on Capital Resources	31 Mar '22	22/23 receipts	22/23 utilised	31 Mar '23
Unfinanced:				
Prudential borrowing			(5,284)	0
Capital Resources				
Capital Receipts Reserve	2,978	799	(3,306)	471
S106	2,606	0	(698)	1,908
HCA	1,402			1,402
Capital Grants unapplied Account	779	1,911	(2,576)	114
Community Infrastructure Levy	11,622	0	(1,053)	10,569
Available Resources Applied 2022/23	19,386	2,710	(7,633)	14,463
Capital financing available and used 2022/23	19,386	2,710	(12,917)	14,463

In addition to this, a further £191k for 2023/24 and £1.535m for 2024/25 has been identified in delivering UK prosperity fund scheme objectives. This forms part of a total grant of £4.257m which is split across revenue (£2.361m) and capital (£1.896m). The apportionment of the expenditure will need to be made in accordance with proper accounting practice across revenue and capital, and agreed with the awarding body to ensure that we both account for this correctly and act in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant.

The Council has also secured funding in the form of a Heritage Action Zone grant. The total project is for £3.426m, of which the council's share is £1.130m. The current programme all of which is included in the capital programme presented. This includes s106 receipts held for transport initiatives which have been applied in agreement with the Lancashire County Council.

The Council has not yet received an award letter for 2023/24 Disabled Facilities Grant funding, but has included in the strategy £1.444m annually, shown as fully funded, which will be modified when the actual award is published.

It is expected that projects with 100% external funding will be added to the programme once business case requirements are met: namely, that the scheme meets the Council's strategy objectives; the scheme is subject to investment appraisal to ensure best use of funders resources; an assessment is made of the ongoing financial impact on the Council; there is evidence of a commercial approach to the decision; and that the Council has the availability of management resources to deliver the project effectively.

Internal Funds

When the Council has exhausted its available external grant funding, it then applies its own resources. These may include the setting aside of earmarked reserves to deliver capital priorities, or the use of the Council's capital receipts.

Capital receipts

The largest source of capital receipts available to the council are from right to buy sales. These are sales from the disposal of council owned dwellings.

From 2024/25, it is proposed that these receipts are used exclusively in the HRA capital programme. This is to recognise that these are assets lost to the HRA, and the income streams that would have been due to the HRA from these assets is now not available to undertake the essential capital works in achieving carbon targets on dwellings. The policy does not undo the commitments already included within the capital programme, so the receipts for 2023/24 will still be available to meet those projects previously planned to be financed.

Revenue and reserves

The Council may also, if affordable, make a GRA revenue contribution to the capital programme. As can be seen from the financing in the table above, there are no proposed GRA contributions.

At the end of the 2021/22 the Council had £19.4m in capital resources available (internal and external). There are £7.6m of commitments against these in 2022/23.

Unfinanced expenditure / Prudential borrowing

Where there is no identified source of either internal or external financing for a scheme, this is said to be unfinanced, and requires borrowing. It may be that the council will need to borrow from the PWLB, incurring an interest charge.

Where available, the Council may use its own cash balances to delay the need for borrowing. These balances could be, for example, cash sitting in reserves which has not been spent yet, or cash set aside to meet a future provision. Where internal cash is used there is still an interest cost in the form of a loss of interest earned on investments, but this will be cheaper than the market rate.

In addition to interest, the council will be required to set aside a 'minimum revenue provision'; essentially setting aside funds for the repayment of debt. This is paid back over the life of the asset.

The Council has £7.972m in the general fund capital strategy that is not financed, which requires prudential borrowing.

4.4 Capital Expenditure – Housing Revenue Account

HRA Service Area	2022/23 £'000s	2023/24 £'000s	2024/25 £'000s	2025/26 £'000s
Housing investment Plan	£7,612	£6,328	£6,328	£6,328
Other Housing Schemes	£4,977	£6,421	£6,203	£2,203
TVDC Expenditure	£9,781	£0	£0	£0
Emerging Capital Requirements	£0	£2,010	£2,575	£0
Total HRA capital programme	£22,370	£14,759	£15,106	£8,531

The HRA capital programme includes the four themed headings above. The first section, housing investment plan, ensures decency and that homes are maintained to a habitable standard.

Tawd Valley Developments Limited (TVD) is the Council's commercial company, which builds affordable homes across Skelmersdale and Westhead and has so far delivered 81 new homes for the residents of West Lancashire.

There is a further scheme at Fairlie, Skelmersdale. This is due to be completed by June 2024 that will provide a further 50 affordable homes to the people of Skelmersdale.

This project has a project team that covers all disciplines and when required external professional advice will be sought.

4.5 Financing HRA Capital Programme

HRA Financing	2022/23 £'000s	2023/24 £'000s	2024/25 £'000s	2025/26 £'000s
Capital Receipts	£0	£0	£798	£799
Government Grants	£2,708	£500	£0	£0
HRA Contributions	£3,521	£3,403	£3,281	£3,155
Major Repairs Reserve	£3,948	£4,066	£4,188	£4,314
Prudential Borrowing	£12,193	£6,790	£6,839	£263
Total Capital Funding	£22,370	£14,759	£15,106	£8,531

5. Risk Management

- 5.1 An important part of the Council's investment and risk strategy is that all potential risks are investigated. This is done by logging all risks on the Council's risk platform (Pentana) which analyses the likelihood of the risk occurring and mitigations are put in place to manage these risks.

The monitoring and management of mitigating these risks is a key part of the Capital programme.

6. Knowledge and Skills

- 6.1 The Council's Capital and Treasury Programmes are managed by professionally qualified Accountants. All Finance Business Partners at the Council are qualified Chartered Accountants with extensive Local Government Experience, and all keep up to date with new developments and complete Continuous Professional Development (CPD) on an ongoing basis.
- 6.2 The Council's Head of Finance, Procurement and Commercial Property is the S151 officer and has overall control and responsibility for the Capital Programme. He is also a professionally qualified accountant and follows an ongoing CPD programme.
- 6.3 The Council's Investment Project Manager reviews all commercial and investment activity from inception right through to project completion and ongoing performance management and is also a professionally qualified Chartered Public Financial Accountant (CPFA).