AGENDA ITEM: 13

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

18 March 2013

Prudential Indicators, Treasury Management Strategy, Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy

Report by Ken Finch, Treasurer

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1 To present to Members the Prudential Indicators, Treasury Management Strategy, Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy for 2013/14.

2 This report was presented to the Audit Committee on the 28 January 2013 so they could review the contents before submission to the Fire and Rescue Authority.

THE AUDIT COMMITTEE'S OPINION

3 The Audit Committee queried the reason for the projected increase in capital expenditure between 2013/14 and 2015/16 and the affordability of the programme. Following a verbal explanation, it was recommended that information be included in the report to the Fire and Rescue Authority explaining the level of expenditure. Details of the programme approved by the Authority are contained in Appendix E along with an explanation of the levels of expenditure.

4 Members discussed the possibility that interest rates could increase if the UK lose their AAA sovereign rating and whether the Authority has a contingency plan in place. The Chair of the Audit Committee commented that it was important that assurance

should be given that the Authority could manage its repayments should interest rates rise and if necessary a reserve be set aside to cover possible additional costs. An assessment of the effect of an interest rate rise is detailed in paragraph 8 below and the findings included as part of the recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

5 The draft budget for 2013/14 was presented to Members for approval on 19 December 2012 and the Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy have been prepared using the relevant data contained in the revenue and capital budgets approved by Members.

6 This report shows the Prudential Indicators for 2013/14 to 2015/16 and outlines the strategy to be followed regarding borrowing and investing the Authority's funds in the financial year 2013/14. The report also sets out proposals for the Authority's policy on MRP for 2013/14. The papers attached set out:-

(i) a list of prudential indicators as required by the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (Appendix A);

(ii) the Treasury Management Strategy outlining the strategy to be followed regarding short and long-term borrowing for 2013/14 in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management (Appendix B);

(iii) the strategy to be followed regarding the investment of Fire and Rescue Authority funds (Appendix C);

(iv) Minimum Revenue Provision Statement (Appendix D);

(v) Capital Expenditure details (Appendix E).

7 The Committee should note that the strategies in the report have been prepared using guidance from the Treasury Management advisors, Sector, used by Conwy County Borough Council who has the responsibility for the Fire and Rescue Service Treasury function.

ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF AN INCREASE IN INTEREST RATES

8 The budget for interest rates for 2013/14 includes additional headroom to manage payments should interest rates rise. The estimate includes new borrowing at 2.5% and allows for an increase on short term borrowing of 0.75%. Given current interest rates following the downgrading of the UK's AAA rating the budget is sufficient to meet the interest repayments on current debt and new borrowing. However, if there is no sign of recovery in the UK economy then later in the year it could be that the UK is perceived as a more risky option for investments and interest rates could rise. If interest rates were to rise by 1% then for 2013/14 an additional budget of £100k would be required.

9 The Fire and Rescue Authority currently has a General Reserve for contingent liabilities and there are sufficient funds within this reserve to cover any additional costs that should arise during 2013/14. It is recommended that £100k from this reserve be transferred to an earmarked reserve specifically to cover possible interest rate rises.

RECOMMENDATIONS

10 Members are recommended to approve each of the four key elements of these reports and approve the transfer of funds:

(i) Prudential Indicators set out in Appendix A;

(ii) Treasury Management Strategy for 2013/14 set out in Appendix B;

(iii) Investment Strategy set out in Appendix C;

(iv) Minimum Revenue Provision Policy set out in Appendix D;

(v) Transfer £100k from the General Reserve into an Interest Reserve.

APPENDIX A

PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Authority to adopt the CIPFA Prudential Code and produce prudential indicators. Each indicator either summarises the expected capital activity or introduces limits upon that activity, and reflects the outcome of the Authority's capital appraisal systems. This report updates currently approved indicators and introduces new indicators for 2015/16. A revised code was issued in 2009 and this report complies with the new requirements, which ask that this report be subject to greater scrutiny by those charged with governance - for the Fire and Rescue Authority this is the Audit Committee.

1.2 The Capital Programme for 2013/14 was approved by the Fire and Rescue Authority in December 2012 and these indicators support that programme. The Authority has freedom over capital expenditure so long as it is prudent, affordable and sustainable. In order to show it is working within these limits the Audit Committee must approve, revise and monitor at least a basic range of Prudential Indicators for the forthcoming three years.

2. THE CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PLANS

2.1 The Authority's capital expenditure plans are summarised below and this forms the first of the prudential indicators to be approved by Members. All capital expenditure in the forward programme is currently unsupported and must be funded from the Authority's own resources.

2.2 However, the Government may decide to place limits on unsupported capital expenditure by introducing a long stop control on all Local Authorities plans or, in the event of an assessment by Central Government that local plans are unaffordable at a specific Authority, it may implement a local control to limit its capital expenditure plans. No such controls were implemented during 2012/13, and the situation for 2013/14 is unclear at the moment.

	2011/12 Actual £'000	2012/13 Revised £'000	2013/14 Estimate £'000	2014/15 Estimate £'000	2015/16 Estimate £'000
Capital expenditure	4,490	4,366	7,616	6,106	3,045
Financed by:					
Capital receipts	-21	0	0	-1,000	0
Capital grants	-94	0	0	0	0
Revenue	0	0	0	0	0
Net financing need for the year	4,375	4,366	7,616	5,106	3,045

3. The Authority's Borrowing Need (the Capital Financing Requirement)

3.1 The second prudential indicator is the Authority's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). The CFR is simply the total outstanding capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for from either revenue or capital resources. It is essentially a measure of the Authority's underlying borrowing need. The capital expenditure above which has not immediately been paid for will increase the CFR. Members are asked to approve the CFR projections as below:

	2011/12 Actual £'000	2012/13 Revised £'000	2013/14 Estimate £'000	2014/15 Estimate £'000	2015/16 Estimate £'000
Capital Financing Requirement					
Opening CFR	19,753	22,325	24,703	30,099	32,562
Closing CFR	22,325	24,703	30,099	32,562	32,684
Movement in CFR	2,572	2,378	5,396	2,463	122

Movement in CFR represented by					
Net financing need for the year (above)	4,375	4,366	7,616	5,106	3,045
Less MRP/VRP	-1,803	-1,988	-2,220	-2,643	-2,923
Movement in CFR	2,572	2,378	5,396	2,463	122

3.2 The Authority is required to pay off an element of the accumulated General Fund capital spend each year through a revenue charge (the Minimum Revenue Provision - MRP), although it is also allowed to undertake additional voluntary payments (VRP).

3.3 The expected impact of the capital expenditure decisions above on the Authority's debt and investment position are shown in the Treasury Strategy.

4. AFFORDABILITY PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

4.1 The previous sections cover the overall capital and control of borrowing prudential indicators, but within this framework prudential indicators are required to assess the affordability of the capital investment plans. These provide an indication of the impact of the capital investment plans on the Authority's overall finances. Members are asked to approve the following indicators:

4.2 **Actual and Estimates of the ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream** – This indicator identifies the trend in the cost of capital (borrowing and other long term obligation costs net of investment income) against the net revenue stream. The estimates of financing costs include current commitments and the Capital Programme approved by members in December.

	2011/12 Actual %	2012/13 Revised %	2013/14 Estimate %	2014/15 Estimate %	2015/16 Estimate %
Ratio	7.24	7.80	8.73	10.27	11.18

4.3 **Estimates of the incremental impact of capital investment decisions on the contributions from the Constituent Authorities** – This indicator identifies the revenue costs associated with the proposed three year capital programme recommended in the budget report.

	Proposed Budget 2013/14 £'000	Proposed Budget 2014/15 £'000	Proposed Budget 2015/16 £'000
Contribution Increase	114	880	1,484

Treasury Management Strategy for 2013/14 - 2015/16

1. Introduction

1.1 The treasury management service is an important part of the overall financial management of the Authority's affairs. The prudential indicators in Appendix A consider the affordability and impact of capital expenditure decisions, and set out the Authority's overall capital framework. The treasury strategy considers the effective funding of these decisions. Together they form part of the process which ensures the Authority meets balanced budget requirement under the Local Government Finance Act 1992. There are specific treasury prudential indicators included in this strategy which require approval.

1.2 The Authority's treasury activities are strictly regulated by statutory requirements and a professional code of practice (the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management). The Authority adopted the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and a Treasury Management Policy Statement on 15 December 2003. This adoption meets the requirements of the first of the Treasury Prudential Indicators. A revised policy was issued in April 2010 and this report is based on the new policy.

1.3 The Code requires an annual strategy to be reported to the Authority outlining the expected treasury activity for the forthcoming 3 years. A further mid-year monitoring report is produced and after the year-end a report on actual activity for the year.

1.4 A key requirement of this report is to explain both the risks, and the management of the risks, associated with the treasury service. The strategy report will cover several areas as follows:

(i) The Authority's debt and investment projections;
(ii) The Authority's estimates and limits on future debt levels;
(ii) The expected movement in interest rates;
(iii) The Authority's borrowing strategy;
(iv) The Authority's investment, counterparty and liquidity framework;
(vi) Treasury performance indicators.

2. DEBT AND INVESTMENT PROJECTIONS 2012/13 – 2015/16

2.1 The current position as at 9 January 2013 is as follows:

Public Works Loan Board (PWLB)	- £13,797,169	Fixed Rate
	- £2,274,000	Variable Rate
Other Local Authorities	- £7,000,000	Fixed Rate

Investments - £3,660,000

2.2 The borrowing requirement comprises the expected movement in the CFR and any maturing debt which will need to be re-financed. The table below shows this effect on the treasury position over the next three years. It also highlights the expected change in investment balances.

	2012/13 Revised £'000	2013/14 Estimated £'000	2014/15 Estimated £'000	2015/16 Estimated £'000
External Debt				
Debt at 1 April	20,724	24,703	30,099	32,562
Movement in CFR	2,378	5,396	2,463	122
Maturing Debt Replacement	5,774	11,000	11,000	7,000
Adjustment for prior years /under borrowing	1,601	0	0	0
Debt at 31 March	24,703	30,099	32,562	32,684
Annual change in debt	3,979	5,396	2,463	122
Investments				
Total Investments at 31 March	2,000	2,000	1,500	1,000
Investment change	-240	0	-500	-500

3. LIMITS TO BORROWING ACTIVITY

3.1 Within the prudential indicators there are a number of key indicators to ensure the Council operates its activities within well-defined limits.

3.2 For the first of these the Authority needs to ensure that its total borrowing does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2013/14 and the following two financial years. This allows some flexibility for limited early borrowing for future years, but ensures that borrowing is not undertaken for revenue purposes.

	2012/13 Revised £'000	2013/14 Estimate £'000	2014/15 Estimate £'000	2015/16 Estimate £'000
Debt at 1 April	20,724	24,703	30,099	32,562
Expected Change in Debt	3,979	5,396	2,463	122
Other Long Term Liabilities	0	0	0	0
Gross Debt at 31 March	24,703	30,099	32,562	32,684
CFR	24,703	30,099	32,562	32,684

3.3 The Treasurer reports that the Authority complied with this prudential indicator in the current year and does not envisage difficulties for the future. This view takes into account current commitments, existing plans, and the proposals in the budget report.

3.4 **The Authorised Limit** – this represents a limit beyond which external debt is prohibited, and this limit needs to be set or revised by the Fire and Rescue Authority. It reflects the level of external debt which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable in the longer term. This is the statutory limit determined under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003.

3.5 **The Operational Boundary** – this indicator is based on the probable external debt during the course of the year; it is not a limit. Actual external debt could vary around this boundary for short times during the year. It should act as a monitoring indicator to ensure the authorised limit is not breached.

3.6 Members are asked to approve the following authorised limit and operational boundary:

	2012/13 Revised £'000	2013/14 Estimate £'000	2014/15 Estimate £'000	2015/16 Estimate £'000
Authorised Limit	26,703	32,099	34,562	34,684
Operational Boundary	24,703	30,099	32,562	32,684

4. ECONOMIC BACKGROUND AND EXPECTED MOVEMENT IN INTEREST RATES

4.1 Interest rate movement can be linked to the economic activity of the major economies and to estimate the movement in rates economists will look at current conditions and estimate future economic growth to predict the changes in rates. Given the current conditions Sector believes that the longer run trend is for PWLB rates to rise and the bank rate to remain at the current level until 2015. The advice from our Treasury Consultants is to delay borrowing activity as long as possible and use reserves and balances to temporarily fund loan debt. However, if there is a need to borrow any new debt should be for longer than 5 years due to the current maturity profile of the debt portfolio and the need to mitigate the risk of possible interest rate changes. A brief outline of the current economic outlook and the estimated movement in interest rates is discussed below.

4.2 The Euro zone debt crisis has continued to cast a pall over the world economy and has depressed growth in most countries. The UK has been depressed with very weak growth or negative growth due partly to weak trading in the Euro zone. Tax receipts have not kept pace with additional welfare benefit payments and wage increases have been well below inflation which has been between 2% and 3%. These factors have contributed to the economy flatlining and credit remaining tight.

4.3 The UK continues to hold an AAA sovereign rating which is periodically reviewed by the credit rating agencies, low or negative growth in the economy could see the rating change as confidence in the Government's ability to turn the economy around is eroded. The current AAA position has ensured that the UK Government is able to fund itself at historically low levels and with the safe haven status from Eurozone debt it is also drawing in external investment resulting in a downward pressure on rates. Changes to the ratings could see a rise in interest rates as the UK could be perceived as a more risky option for investments.

4.4 It is thought that the longer run trend is for gilt yields and PWLB rates to rise due to the high volume of gilt issuance in this country and the high volume of debt issuance in other western countries. Given the weak outlook for economic growth, the prospect for any interest rate changes before 2015 is very limited. There is the potential of Bank Rate increases to be even further delayed if growth disappoints.

	Base Rate	5-year Gilt	25-year Gilt	50-year Gilt
2012/13	0.5%	1.5%	3.8%	4.0%
2013/14	0.5%	1.6%	3.8%	4.0%
2014/15	0.5%	2.0%	4.1%	4.25%
2015/16	0.8%	2.2%	4.3%	4.5%

5. BORROWING STRATEGY 2012/13 – 2015/16

5.1 The uncertainty over future interest rates and the weakness of counterparties increases the risks associated with treasury activity. As a result the Authority will take a cautious approach to its treasury strategy.

5.2 Long-term fixed interest rates are at risk of being higher over the medium term, and short term rates are expected to remain at their current rate over the short term. The Treasurer, under delegated powers, will take the most appropriate form of borrowing depending on the prevailing interest rates at the time, taking into account the risks shown in the forecast above. It is likely that shorter term fixed rates may provide lower cost opportunities in the short/medium term. However, as detailed above (paragraph 4.1) Sector have advised that any new borrowing should be for longer than 5 years due to the maturity structure of the current portfolio.

5.3 The PWLB has structured its lending arrangements such that debt restructuring is difficult however with the likelihood of long term rates increasing any possible debt restructuring is likely to focus on switching from longer term fixed rates to cheaper shorter term debt, although the Treasurer and treasury consultants will monitor prevailing rates for any opportunities during the year.

5.4 The option of postponing borrowing and running down investment balances will also be considered. This would reduce counterparty risk and hedge against the expected fall in investments returns. It should be appreciated that the Authority will have to borrow in the future to fund the capital programme.

6. INVESTMENT, COUNTERPARTY AND LIQUIDITY FRAMEWORK

6.1 All investments will be made as cash deposits to banks, building societies and local authorities. Some loans will be made through one of several broking firms who are used by Conwy and others will be direct with the institution. The majority of investments will be no longer than 364 days and will be made according to the latest market forecasts.

6.2 The Treasurer will maintain a counterparty list in compliance with the following criteria:-

Banks £5m limit
All UK banks and their subsidiaries that have good ratings (Fitch or equivalent). This is currently defined as

short term	F1
long term	A
Viability Rating	bbb
Support	3

Banks whose ratings fall below those in the table above will be used if wholesale deposits are covered by a government guarantee.

Central Government £5m limit
Debt management Office

Local Authorities £2m limit
All, except those subject to limitation of council tax and precepts under Part 1 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Building Societies £2m limit
Building societies with a rating (as for the banking sector).

Building Societies (Assets £1bn) -£2m /9mths limit
Building societies without a rating but with assets of £1billion or more.

6.3 The criteria set out above for choosing counterparties provide a sound approach to investment and are designed to reduce the financial risks to the Authority of investing money on the money market. Counterparties are monitored closely to ensure institutions on the counterparty list meet the above criteria and treasury staff will adjust activities at short notice to protect the Authority's position. The controls detailed in the framework are subject to change according to the market conditions. Currently investments are only made for a maximum of 3 months as advised by our Treasury Consultants, Sector.

7. TREASURY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

7.1 There are three treasury prudential indicators the purpose of which is to contain the activity of the treasury function within certain limits, thereby managing risk and reducing the impact of an adverse movement in interest rates. However, if these are set to be too restrictive they will impair the opportunities to reduce costs.

7.2 It is recommended that the Authority sets upper and lower limits for the maturity structure of its fixed rate borrowings as follows:

	Upper Limit	Lower Limit
Under 12 Months	45%	0%
12 Months and within 24 Months	45%	0%
24 Months and within 5yrs	45%	0%
5 yrs and within 10 yrs	75%	0%
10 yrs and above	100%	0%

The upper limit for the short term borrowing positions, under 12 months to 5 years, have been decreased from 55% to 45% due to the uncertainty in the markets over interest rate rises and on advice from our Treasury Consultants to reduce shorter term borrowing in order to spread risk.

7.3 It is recommended that the Authority approve the following limits on Fixed and Variable interest rates.

	% Borrowing
Fixed Interest Rate	55 – 100
Variable Interest Rate	0 – 35

INVESTMENT STRATEGY

1. CURRENT OUTLOOK

1.1 **Key Objectives** - The Authority's investment strategy primary objectives are safeguarding the re-payment of the principal and interest of its investments on time first and ensuring adequate liquidity second – the investment return being a third objective. The current investment climate has one over-riding risk that of counterparty security risk. As a result of these underlying concerns officers are implementing an operational investment strategy which tightens the controls already in place in the approved investment strategy.

1.2 Expectations on shorter-term interest rates, on which investment decisions are based, show a likelihood of the current 0.5% Base rate remaining into 2015, with a small increase to 0.8% by 2016. The Authority's investment decisions are based on comparisons between the rises priced into market rates against the Authority's and advisers own forecasts.

1.3 There is a clear operational difficulty arising from the current market conditions. Ideally investments would be invested longer to secure better returns, however uncertainty over counterparty creditworthiness suggests shorter dated would provide better security.

1.4 The money available for core investments is currently around £2m and arises from money held in reserves and the balance remaining from the pensions Top Up Grant.

2. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES INVESTMENT GUIDANCE

2.1 The National Assembly for Wales issued Investment Guidance in March 2004, and this forms the structure of the Authority's policy below.

2.2 The key intention of the Guidance is to maintain the current requirement for Authorities to invest prudently, and that priority is given to security and liquidity before yield. In order to facilitate this objective, the guidance requires this Authority to have regard to the CIPFA publication "Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes". This Council adopted the Code on 15 December 2003 and will apply its principles to all investment activity. In accordance with the Code the Treasurer has produced its treasury management practices, TMP 1(5), covering investment counterparty policy which requires approval each year.

2.3 Annual Investment Strategy - Approved Instruments

The key requirements of both the Code and the investment guidance are to set an annual investment strategy, as part of its annual treasury strategy for the following year, covering the identification and approval of following:

(i) The strategy guidelines for decision making on investments, particularly non-specified investments.

(ii) The principles to be used to determine the maximum periods for which funds can be committed.

(iii) Specified investments the Authority will use. These are high security and high liquidity investments in sterling and with a maturity of no more than a year.

(iv) Non-specified investments, clarifying the greater risk implications, identifying the general types of investment that may be used and a limit to the overall amount of various categories that can be held at any time.

2.4 The investment policy proposed for the Authority is:

(i) Strategy Guidelines –
The main strategy guidelines are outlined above with the emphasis on security and liquidity.

(ii) Investment Periods –
The Authority's policy is to lend funds for a maximum of 364 days.

(iii) Specified Investments –
These investments are sterling investments of not more than one-year maturity. These are low risk assets where the possibility of loss of principal or investment income is small. These would include investments with:

- The Treasury Debt Management Office
- Other Local Authorities (except rate capped)
- All UK Banks and Building Societies with a high credit rating

(iv) Non-Specified Investments –
Non-specified investments are any other type of investment (i.e. not defined as Specified above). This includes Building Societies with no rating and lending for more than 364 days. The limit for "non-specified" investments had been set at £3m.

APPENDIX D

Minimum Revenue Provision Statement

Background

1. The Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) is simply the total outstanding capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for from either revenue or capital resources and is essentially a measure of the Authority's underlying borrowing need. The Authority is required to pay off an element of the accumulated capital spend each year through a charge to the revenue account (the MRP) although it is also allowed to undertake additional voluntary payments.

2. Regulations have been issued which require the Fire and Rescue Authority to approve an MRP statement in advance of each year.

MRP Policy

3. Members are recommended to approve the following MRP policy:

   For capital expenditure incurred before 1 April 2013 and any subsequent expenditure the MRP policy will be to repay
   - 4% of the outstanding balance of capital expenditure incurred on Land & Buildings
   - and for Vehicles, Plant, Equipment and Infrastructure the MRP will be based on the estimated life of the assets.

4. The above policy is in line with the Regulations and also follows the practice operated by the Fire and Rescue Authority for a number of years. The budget for 2013/14 approved by Members in December 2012 was set using the above practices.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE 2013/14 to 2015/16

Subjective Heads	Proposed 2013/2014 £	Forecast 2014/2015 £	Forecast 2015/2016 £
PREMISES			
Minor Building Works	100,000	100,000	100,000
Planned Maintenance	700,000	700,000	750,000
Remodel Deeside	0	2,750,000	0
Remodel Wrexham	3,900,000	0	0
Relocation Conwy Offices	0	100,000	0
Demolish Archive Caernarfon	0	0	50,000
TOTAL PREMISES	**4,700,000**	**3,650,000**	**900,000**
TRANSPORT			
Water Tenders	1,225,000	1,272,000	1,275,000
Aerial Unit	510,000	0	0
Light Vehicles	292,000	379,850	328,000
Other Vehicles & Upgrades	90,000	430,000	200,000
TOTAL TRANSPORT	**2,117,000**	**2,081,850**	**1,803,000**
SUPPLIES			
IT and Other Equipment	799,000	374,000	342,000
TOTAL SUPPLIES	**799,000**	**374,000**	**342,000**
TOTAL	**7,616,000**	**6,105,850**	**3,045,000**

1. The Capital Programme for 2013/14 was approved by the Fire and Rescue Authority in December 2012 and the indicators in this report support that programme (see Appendix A). The Authority has freedom over capital expenditure so long as it is prudent, affordable and sustainable. In order to show it is working within these limits the Audit Committee must approve, revise and monitor at least a basic range of Prudential Indicators for the forthcoming three years and following this review recommended that further information with regards the programme is presented to Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority.

2. The Audit Committee expressed concern about the projected substantial increase in capital expenditure between 2013/14 and 2015/16. The increase over these years is due mainly to two large projects; the proposed new Fire Station for Wrexham; and the major re-modelling of Deeside.

3. When the Estates department was merged with North Wales Police in 2008/09 a review of the Fire and Rescue Service's property portfolio was undertaken and a programme was established over a period of 8 years that would ensure that all buildings met the needs of the service and complied with DDA requirements. It is estimated that the programme will be complete by 2014/15 and thereafter buildings will only require maintenance. Following completion of the plan expenditure on capital will be significantly less than that spent in previous years.

4. The Authority also has a vehicle replacement programme in place which is funded as part of the capital programme. The replacement programme ensures that the vehicles and plant used by the Authority to deliver services are fit for purpose and the timings for replacing a vehicle are the most cost effective taking in to account the repair costs inherent in holding older vehicles as part of the fleet. Before Prudential Borrowing was introduced vehicles were funded through leasing and paid for directly from revenue budgets but it is now more cost effective to purchase vehicles through the capital programme.

5. Members can be assured that the Authority has in place Asset Management plans which ensure that the assets used in delivering service objectives are cost effective and that for future years expenditure on the capital programme will reduce significantly.