APPENDIX A

Mid-Year Treasury Management Report 2023/24

East Staffordshire Borough Council

1. Introduction and Background

Treasury Management

Treasury Management is defined by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy (CIPFA):

“The management of the local authority’s borrowing, investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.”

This means a key purpose of Treasury Management operations is to manage investments and borrowing to ensure cash flow from the revenue budget, Collection Fund and the Capital Programme is adequately planned and managed. To manage cash flow requires that the Council has sufficient, but not excessive, cash balances (liquidity) in order to deliver its services.

The Council sets a balanced revenue budget. This means in broad terms with the revenue budget, receipts raised will equal cash expenditure during any one financial year. There will be some mismatching of receipts and expenditure where earmarked reserves set aside in one financial year, are used to balance the revenue budget in a following financial year. There will also be a short-term mismatch of expenditure and receipts over the course of the revenue budget year impacting on cash flow, due to timing.

Receipting and distribution of Council Tax and NNDR from the Collection Fund further impacts on the timing of cash flows within and across financial years.

The most significant impact on cash flow management is if a Council borrows to finance the Capital Programme. The Council can borrow for the Capital Programme when it cannot be directly financed from resources such as capital grants or receipts from property sales.

CIPFA’s definition, as set out above, also highlights the importance of controlling risks. Controlling risks includes planning for and managing the safety of all cash balances held and any investments made. When investing surplus balances, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy (CIPFA) is clear that the priorities are security, liquidity and yield, in that order. Security means that the overriding priority is that the Council gets back the amount that it has invested.

The Council has also adopted the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management (revised 2017).

The primary requirements of the Code are as follows:

1. Creation and maintenance of a Treasury Management Policy Statement which sets out the policies and objectives of the Council’s treasury management activities.

2. Creation and maintenance of Treasury Management Practices which set out the manner in which the Council will seek to achieve those policies and objectives.
3. Receipt by the full council of an annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement - including the Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy - for the year ahead, a **Mid-year Review Report** and an Annual Report (stewardship report) covering activities during the previous year.
4. Delegation by the Council of responsibilities for implementing and monitoring treasury management policies and practices and for the execution and administration of treasury management decisions.
5. Delegation by the Council of the role of scrutiny of treasury management strategy and policies to a specific named body. For this Council the delegated body is the Audit Committee.

2. This Mid-Year Treasury Report Covers

This mid-year report has been prepared in compliance with CIPFA's Code of Practice, and covers the following:

- An economic update for 2023/24
- A review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy
- A review of the Council's investment portfolio for 2023/24
- A review of the Council's borrowing strategy for 2023/24
- A review of compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits for 2023/24

3. Economic Update

3.1 The main headlines to date for 2023/24 saw:

- Interest rates rise by a further 100bps, taking Bank Rate from 4.25% to 5.25% and, possibly, the peak in the tightening cycle.
- Short, medium and long-dated gilts remain elevated as inflation continually surprised to the upside.
- A 0.5% m/m decline in real GDP in July, mainly due to more strikes.
- CPI inflation falling from 8.7% in April to 6.7% in August, its lowest rate since February 2022, but still the highest in the G7.
- Core CPI inflation declining to 6.2% in August from 7.1% in April and May, a then 31 years high.
- A cooling in labour market conditions, but no evidence yet that it has led to an easing in wage growth (as the 3myy growth of average earnings rose to 7.8% in August, excluding bonuses).

3.2 For information in relation to the economic outlook is set out in **Annex 3**.

3.3 **Interest rate forecasts**

The Council's treasury advisor, Link Asset Services, have provided the interest rate forecasts and commentary, which is attached at **Annex 4**.

4. The Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy Update

4.1 Background

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2023/24, which includes the Annual Investment Strategy, was approved by the Council in February 2023. 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

Accordingly, the Council will aim to achieve the optimum return (yield) on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity and with the Council's risk appetite. Further, the TMSS for 2023/24 affirmed that in accordance with proper levels of security and liquidity, no more that £5m would be invested for a fixed term period in excess of one year.

4.2 Creditworthiness

Following the Government's fiscal event on 23rd September 2022, both S&P and Fitch placed the UK sovereign debt rating on Negative Outlook, reflecting a downside bias to the current ratings in light of expectations of weaker finances and a challenging economic outlook.

Fitch continue to place UK sovereign debt on Negative Outlook. S&P changed the Outlook for UK sovereign debt from Negative to Stable on 24 April 2023.

4.3 Overview

The Council held £61.2m of investments as at 30 September 2023 (£69.5m at 30 September 2022) and the average investment portfolio yield for the first six months of the year was 4.63% (1.75%, 2022). A breakdown of the Council's investment portfolio at the end of September is shown at **Annex 2** of this report.

The average investment portfolio yield of 4.63% for the first six months of the year is higher was anticipated when the 2023/24 budget was set. As a result, actual investment income for 2023/24 is forecast to be £0.9m higher than budgeted investment income, as reported in the quarter 2 financial monitoring.

The Chief Financial Officer confirms that the approved limits within the Annual Investment Strategy were not breached during the first six months of 2023/24.

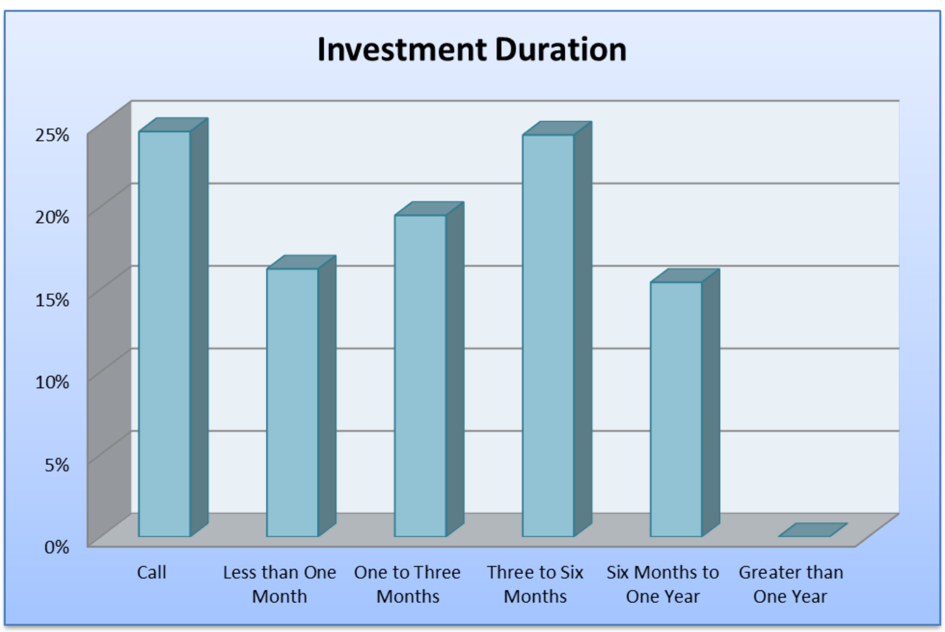
5. Investment Portfolio

5.1 In accordance with the Code, it is the Council's priority to ensure security of capital and liquidity, and to obtain an appropriate level of return which is consistent with the Council's risk appetite.

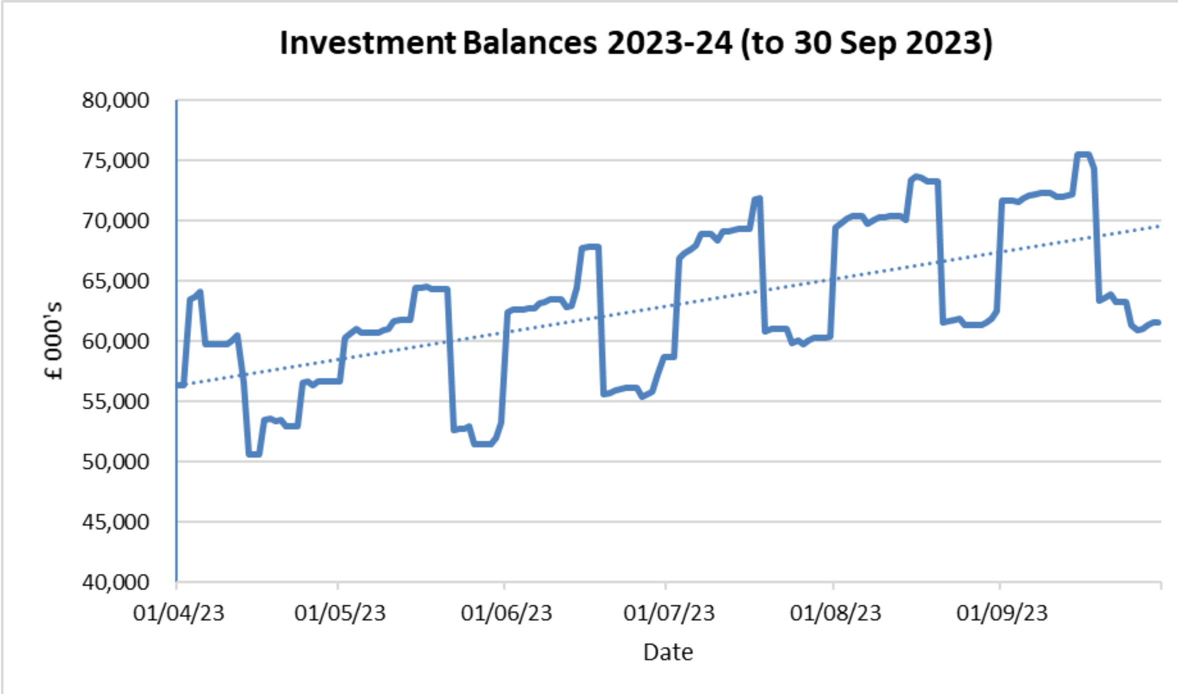
5.2 The investment portfolio yield for the first six months of the year is 4.63%, while the average rate as at 30th September was 5.21%. The Bank of England base rate is 5.25%.

	Average Rate Year to 30/9/23
ESBC average 1April to 30 Sept	4.63%
ESBC average at 30 Sept 2023	5.21%
Base Rate	5.25%

5.3 A full list of investments held as at 30th September 2023, totalling £62.9m is shown in **Annex 2**. The graph below demonstrates the maturity profile of these investments. The investment listing includes fixed deposits, certificates of deposits and call accounts held with a number of UK banks and highly rated foreign banks, as well as UK Government Treasury Bills/Deposit account and AAA rated money market funds. These instruments offer significant counterparty strength as well as diversification of the portfolio.



5.4 Average cash balances in the first six months of 2023/24 were £62.9m (£68.9m Apr to Sept 2023/24). The graph below demonstrates how these balances have fluctuated so far this year which follows the "normal pattern" as Council Tax and NNDR receipts are received and then precept payments are paid out.



5.5 The Council benchmarks against around 80 non-metropolitan district Council, in relation to credit risk (Security), liquidity and yield. As can be seen from the table below, the Council performs above the average of the comparator authorities.

	Benchmarking Results
Weighted Average Credit Risk	
East Staffordshire	2.26
Non-Met district	2.78
Weighted Average maturity	
East Staffordshire	94 days
Non-Met district	78 days
Weighted average return at 30 sept	
East Staffordshire	5.21%
Non-Met district	5.07%

3 Borrowing

6.1 It is estimated that the Council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) at 31st March 2024 will be £12.236m, as compared to the 2023/24 Treasury Strategy which estimated that it would be £12.217m (see Annexe 1). The actual CFR at 31 March 2023 was £14.326m.

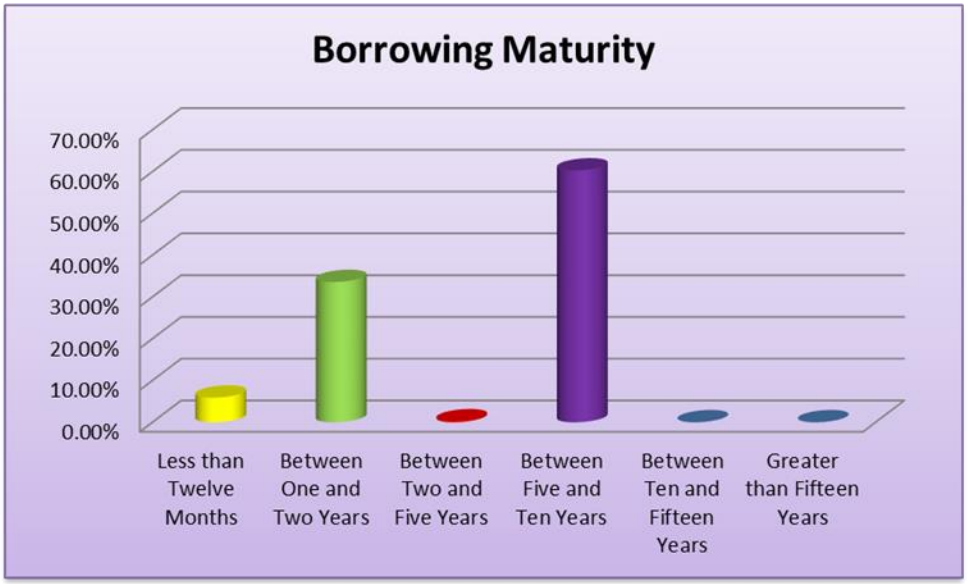
The CFR is therefore forecast to reduce from £14.326m at 31 March 2023 to £12.236m at 31 March 2024. This forecast net reduction in the year is due to the statutory debt repayment, known as the Minimum Revenue Provision and planned voluntary debt repayments, in accordance with the Medium Term Financial Strategy. No borrowing to fund the Capital Programme is planned in 2023/24. A lower CFR will deliver savings to the revenue budget.

The CFR denotes the Council's underlying need to borrow for capital purposes. If the CFR is positive the Council may borrow from the market (external borrowing) or from the Council's own balances, such as earmarked reserves, on a temporary basis (internal borrowing). The balance of external and internal borrowing is generally driven by market conditions.

6.3 Generally, an increase in the CFR denotes a draw on cash balances and a reduction in the CFR increases cash balances. However, when deciding whether to borrow externally, the Council's total cash balances are the key consideration. The Council's total cash balances are determined by the revenue budget, the Collection Fund and the Capital Programme.

The Council's external current borrowing with external bodies alongside the maturity profile of that borrowing is shown in the tables and graph below. The maturity profile means the period over which the fixed rate borrowing is due to be repaid. When repaid, this would be out of the Council's cash balances or from new borrowing.

Maturity Structure - Fixed Rate Borrowing	**%**	**Balance**
Less than Twelve Months	5.90%	377,592
Between One and Two Years	33.58%	2,147,536
Between Two and Five Years	0.23%	14,586
Between Five and Ten Years	60.29%	3,855,285
Between Ten and Fifteen Years	0.00%	-
Greater than Fifteen Years	0.00%	-
	100.00%	6,394,999

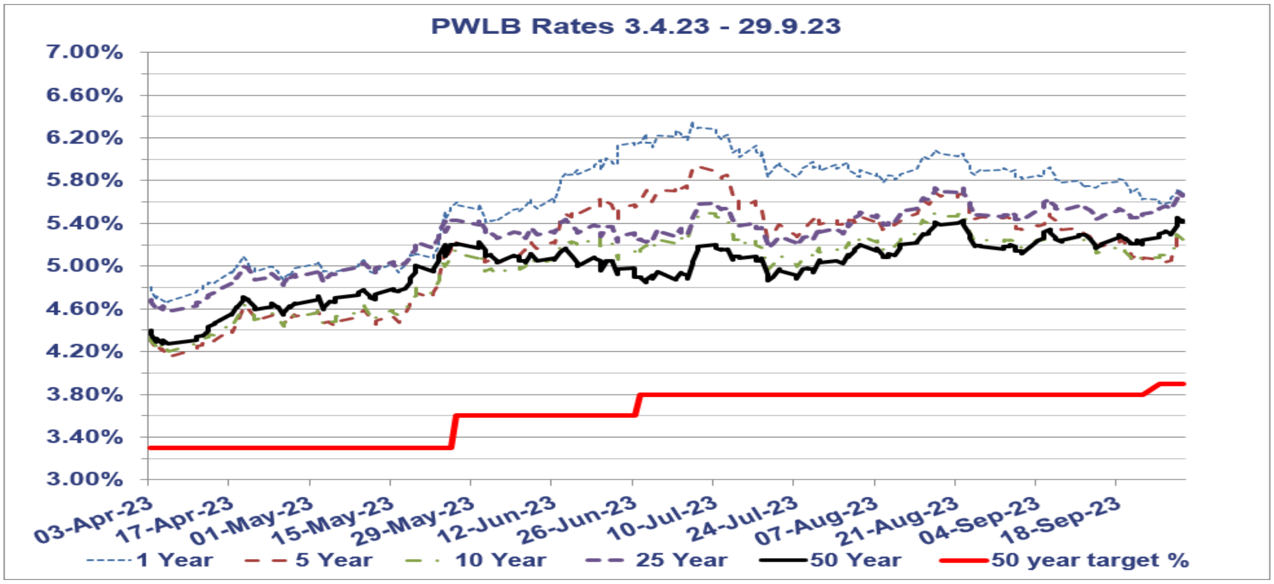


6.4 **PWLB maturity certainty rates year to date to 30th September 2023**

Gilt yields and PWLB certainty rates were on a generally rising trend throughout the first half of 2023/24. At the beginning of April, the 5-year rate was the cheapest part of the curve and touched 4.14% whilst the 25-year rate was relatively expensive at 4.58%.

July saw short-dated rates peak at their most expensive. The 1-year rate spiked to 6.36% and the 5-year rate to 5.93%. Although, in due course, short-dated rate expectations fell, the medium dates shifted higher through August and the 10-year rate pushed higher to 5.51% and the 25-year rate to 5.73%. The 50-year rate was 4.27% on 5th April but rose to 5.45% on 28th September.

The forecast of the Council's Treasury Management Advisors (Link) is that rates will fall back over the next two to three years as inflation dampens. The CPI measure of inflation is expected to fall below 2% in the second half of 2024, and we forecast 50-year rates to stand at 3.90% by the end of September 2025. However, there is considerable gilt issuance to be digested by the market over the next couple of years, as a minimum, so there is a high degree of uncertainty as to whether rates will fall that far.



6.5 As has already been noted, and in accordance with the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement, there are no plans for external borrowing to be undertaken in 2023/24.

4 Debt Re-Scheduling

The Council opted to repay £4.5m of loans in April 2023. This reduces the Council's ongoing interest expenditure and the Council's level of external loans.

5 Compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits

It is a statutory duty for the Council to determine and keep under review the "Affordable Borrowing Limits". The Council's approved Treasury and Prudential Indicators (affordability limits) are outlined in the 2023/24 TMSS. During the financial year to date the Council has operated within the treasury limits and Prudential Indicators set out in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement and in compliance with the Council's Treasury Management Practices. The Prudential and Treasury Indicators are shown in **Annex 1**.

Annex 1: Prudential and Treasury Indicators

PRUDENTIAL INDICATOR	2022/23	2022/23	2023/24
	Outturn	Original Estimate	Probable
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Capital Expenditure (Note 1)	8,063	17,906	**13,486***
Ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream (Note 2)	(0.27)%	9.15%	**(8.03)%****
Capital Financing Requirement (Note 3)	14,326	13,002	**12,236**
External Debt (including finance leases) (Note 4)	10,550	10,676	**6,392**

* The spend profiles of the capital project are currently being reviewed.

** Bank of England Interest Rate has increased to 5.25%

Annex 2: Prudential and Treasury Indicators

	2022/23	2023/24	2023/24
(2). TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS	**Outturn**	**Estimate**	**Probable**
Authorised Limit for external debt			
borrowing	18,000	18,000	18,000
other long term liabilities	1,500	1,500	1,500
TOTAL	**19,500**	**19,500**	**19,500**
Operational Boundary for external debt -			
borrowing	17,000	17,000	17,000
other long term liabilities	500	500	500
TOTAL	**17,500**	**17,500**	**17,500**
Upper limit for total principal sums invested for over 1 year	5,000	5,000	**5,000**

Annex 2: Investments as at 30th September 2023

Borrower	Principal (£)	Interest Rate	Start Date	Maturity Date
Call Accounts and Money Market Funds				
RBS SIBA	102,813	1.05%		
Barclays	-	0.20%		
Santander 95 day notice account	-	0.25%		95 day notice
Bank of Scotland 95 Day Notice Account	-	0.05%		95 day notice
Lloyds 95 Day Notice Account	-	0.05%		95 day notice
MMF Insight	3,025,000	5.30%		Call
MMF Aberdeen	-	5.24%		Call
MMF Federated	6,000,000	5.26%		Call
MMF Blackrock	-	5.16%		Call
MMF CCLA	6,000,000	5.18%		Call
Fixed Deposits / Certificates of Deposit				
Lloyds Bank CD	2,000,000	4.63%	03/04/2023	03/10/2023
Lloyds Bank CD	1,500,000	4.96%	15/05/2023	15/11/2023
National Westminster Bank CD	1,000,000	4.40%	13/12/2022	13/12/2023
National Westminster Bank CD	1,000,000	4.45%	13/01/2023	12/01/2024
National Westminster Bank CD	2,000,000	4.70%	19/04/2023	19/01/2024
National Westminster Bank CD	1,000,000	6.00%	18/08/2023	16/08/2024
Santander CD	2,000,000	4.62%	17/04/2023	17/10/2023
Santander CD	1,500,000	5.40%	26/09/2023	01/02/2024
Toronto Dominion Bank CD	1,000,000	4.78%	12/12/2022	12/12/2023
Toronto Dominion Bank CD	1,000,000	4.85%	08/03/2023	08/03/2024
DZ Bank CD	2,000,000	6.02%	21/07/2023	19/07/2024
DZ Bank CD	1,500,000	5.55%	27/09/2023	27/03/2024
Bank of Montreal CD	1,000,000	4.85%	18/11/2022	17/11/2023
Rabobank CD	1,500,000	4.75%	01/12/2022	01/12/2023
Rabobank CD	1,000,000	5.74%	31/05/2023	30/05/2024
Rabobank CD	1,000,000	6.22%	24/07/2023	23/07/2024
National Australia Bank CD	1,500,000	6.35%	27/06/2023	24/05/2024
Royal Bank of Canada CD	1,500,000	5.84%	23/09/2022	20/09/2024
Commonwealth Bank of Australia CD	1,500,000	5.97%	13/09/2023	12/09/2024
UK Treasury Bill	1,500,000	4.44%	11/04/2023	09/10/2023
UK Treasury Bill	1,500,000	4.47%	17/04/2023	16/10/2023
UK Treasury Bill	1,500,000	4.63%	24/04/2023	23/10/2023
UK Treasury Bill	1,500,000	4.70%	02/05/2023	30/10/2023
UK Treasury Bill	1,500,000	4.74%	15/05/2023	13/11/2023
UK Treasury Bill	1,500,000	5.04%	30/05/2023	27/11/2023
UK Treasury Bill	1,500,000	5.06%	05/06/2023	04/12/2023
UK Treasury Bill	1,500,000	5.55%	26/06/2023	27/12/2023
UK Treasury Bill	1,500,000	5.74%	10/07/2023	08/01/2024
UK Treasury Bill	1,500,000	5.64%	24/07/2023	22/01/2024
UK Treasury Bill	1,500,000	5.58%	14/08/2023	12/02/2024
UK Treasury Bill	1,500,000	5.66%	21/08/2023	19/02/2024
UK Treasury Bill	2,000,000	5.56%	18/09/2023	18/03/2024

Investments rate of interest as at 30 Sep 2	Principal (£)	Interest Rate
Total Investments	61,627,813	5.21%

Average rate of interest (Year to date)	Principal (£)	Interest Rate
Total Investments	62,939,993	4.63%

Annex 3: Economic Update

- The first half of 2023/24 saw:
  - Interest rates rise by a further 100bps, taking Bank Rate from 4.25% to 5.25% and, possibly, the peak in the tightening cycle.
  - Short, medium and long-dated gilts remain elevated as inflation continually surprised to the upside.
  - A 0.5% m/m decline in real GDP in July, mainly due to more strikes.
  - CPI inflation falling from 8.7% in April to 6.7% in August, its lowest rate since February 2022, but still the highest in the G7.
  - Core CPI inflation declining to 6.2% in August from 7.1% in April and May, a then 31 years high.
  - A cooling in labour market conditions, but no evidence yet that it has led to an easing in wage growth (as the 3myy growth of average earnings rose to 7.8% in August, excluding bonuses).
- The 0.5% m/m fall in GDP in July suggests that underlying growth has lost momentum since earlier in the year. Some of the weakness in July was due to there being almost twice as many working days lost to strikes in July (281,000) than in June (160,000). But with output falling in 10 out of the 17 sectors, there is an air of underlying weakness.
- The fall in the composite Purchasing Managers Index from 48.6 in August to 46.8 in September left it at its lowest level since COVID-19 lockdowns reduced activity in January 2021. At face value, it is consistent with the 0.2% q/q rise in real GDP in the period April to June, being followed by a contraction of up to 1% in the second half of 2023.
- The 0.4% m/m rebound in retail sales volumes in August is not as good as it looks as it partly reflected a pickup in sales after the unusually wet weather in July. Sales volumes in August were 0.2% below their level in May, suggesting much of the resilience in retail activity in the first half of the year has faded.
- As the growing drag from higher interest rates intensifies over the next six months, we think the economy will continue to lose momentum and soon fall into a mild recession. Strong labour demand, fast wage growth and government handouts have all supported household incomes over the past year. And with CPI inflation past its peak and expected to decline further, the economy has got through the cost-of- living crisis without recession. But even though the worst of the falls in real household disposable incomes are behind us, the phasing out of financial support packages provided by the government during the energy crisis means real incomes are unlikely to grow strongly. Higher interest rates will soon bite harder too. We expect the Bank of England to keep interest rates at the probable peak of 5.25% until the second half of 2024. Mortgage rates are likely to stay above 5.0% for around a year.

- The tightness of the labour market continued to ease, with employment in the three months to July falling by 207,000. The further decline in the number of job vacancies from 1.017m in July to 0.989m in August suggests that the labour market has loosened a bit further since July. That is the first time it has fallen below 1m since July 2021. At 3.0% in July, and likely to have fallen to 2.9% in August, the job vacancy rate is getting closer to 2.5%, which would be consistent with slower wage growth. Meanwhile, the 48,000 decline in the supply of workers in the three months to July offset some of the loosening in the tightness of the labour market. That was due to a 63,000 increase in inactivity in the three months to July as more people left the labour market due to long term sickness or to enter education. The supply of labour is still 0.3% below its pre-pandemic February 2020 level.
- But the cooling in labour market conditions still has not fed through to an easing in wage growth. While the monthly rate of earnings growth eased sharply from an upwardly revised +2.2% in June to -0.9% in July, a lot of that was due to the one-off bonus payments for NHS staff in June not being repeated in July. The headline 3myy rate rose from 8.4% (revised up from 8.2%) to 8.5%, which meant UK wage growth remains much faster than in the US and in the Euro-zone. Moreover, while the Bank of England's closely watched measure of regular private sector wage growth eased a touch in July, from 8.2% 3myy in June to 8.1% 3myy, it is still well above the Bank of England's prediction for it to fall to 6.9% in September.
- CPI inflation declined from 6.8% in July to 6.7% in August, the lowest rate since February 2022. The biggest positive surprise was the drop in core CPI inflation, which declined from 6.9% to 6.2%. That reverses all the rise since March and means the gap between the UK and elsewhere has shrunk (US core inflation is 4.4% and in the Euro-zone it is 5.3%). Core goods inflation fell from 5.9% to 5.2% and the further easing in core goods producer price inflation, from 2.2% in July to a 29-month low of 1.5% in August, suggests it will eventually fall close to zero. But the really positive development was the fall in services inflation from 7.4% to 6.8%. That also reverses most of the rise since March and takes it below the forecast of 7.2% the Bank of England published in early August.
- In its latest monetary policy meeting on 20 September, the Bank of England left interest rates unchanged at 5.25%. The weak August CPI inflation release, the recent loosening in the labour market and the downbeat activity surveys appear to have convinced the Bank of England that it has already raised rates far enough. The minutes show the decision was "finely balanced". Five MPC members (Bailey, Broadbent, Dhingra, Pill and Ramsden) voted for no change and the other four (Cunliffe, Greene, Haskel and Mann) voted for a 25bps hike.
- Like the US Fed, the Bank of England wants the markets to believe in the higher for longer narrative. The statement did not say that rates have peaked and once again said if there was evidence of more persistent inflation pressures "further tightening in policy would be required". Governor Bailey stated, "we'll be watching closely to see if further increases are needed". The Bank also retained the hawkish guidance that rates will stay "sufficiently restrictive for sufficiently long".
- This narrative makes sense as the Bank of England does not want the markets to decide that a peak in rates will be soon followed by rate cuts, which would loosen financial conditions and undermine its attempts to quash inflation. The language also

gives the Bank of England the flexibility to respond to new developments. A rebound in services inflation, another surge in wage growth and/or a further leap in oil prices could conceivably force it to raise rates at the next meeting on 2nd November, or even pause in November and raise rates in December.

- The yield on 10-year Gilts fell from a peak of 4.74% on 17th August to 4.44% on 29th September, mainly on the back of investors revising down their interest rate expectations. But even after their recent pullback, the rise in Gilt yields has exceeded the rise in most other Developed Market government yields since the start of the year. Looking forward, once inflation falls back, Gilt yields are set to reduce further. A (mild) recession over the next couple of quarters will support this outlook if it helps to loosen the labour market (higher unemployment/lower wage increases).
- The pound weakened from its cycle high of $1.30 in the middle of July to $1.21 in late September. In the first half of the year, the pound bounced back strongly from the Truss debacle last autumn. That rebound was in large part driven by the substantial shift up in UK interest rate expectations. However, over the past couple of months, interest rate expectations have dropped sharply as inflation started to come down, growth faltered, and the Bank of England called an end to its hiking cycle.

The FTSE 100 has gained more than 2% since the end of August, from around 7,440 on 31st August to 7,608 on 29th September. The rebound has been primarily driven by higher energy prices which boosted the valuations of energy companies. The FTSE 100's relatively high concentration of energy companies helps to explain why UK equities outperformed both US and Euro-zone equities in September. Nonetheless, as recently as 21st April the FTSE 100 stood at 7,914.

Annex 4: Interest Rate Forecasts

Interest rate forecasts

The Council has appointed Link Group 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.

The latest forecast on 25th September sets out a view that short, medium and long-dated interest rates will be elevated for some little while, as the Bank of England seeks to squeeze inflation out of the economy.

Our PWLB rate forecasts below are based on the Certainty Rate (the standard rate minus 20 bps, calculated as gilts plus 80bps) which has been accessible to most authorities since 1st November 2012.

Link Group Interest Rate View	25.09.23												
	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26
BANK RATE	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.00	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75
3 month ave earnings	5.30	5.30	5.30	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.00	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80
6 month ave earnings	5.60	5.50	5.40	5.10	4.60	4.10	3.60	3.10	2.90	2.90	2.90	2.90	2.90
12 month ave earnings	5.80	5.70	5.50	5.20	4.70	4.20	3.70	3.20	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
5 yr PWLB	5.10	5.00	4.90	4.70	4.40	4.20	4.00	3.90	3.70	3.70	3.60	3.60	3.50
10 yr PWLB	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.60	4.40	4.20	4.00	3.80	3.70	3.60	3.60	3.50	3.50
25 yr PWLB	5.40	5.20	5.10	4.90	4.70	4.40	4.30	4.10	4.00	3.90	3.80	3.80	3.80
50 yr PWLB	5.20	5.00	4.90	4.70	4.50	4.20	4.10	3.90	3.80	3.70	3.60	3.60	3.60