Prudential Indicators

The Prudential Code

The current system of capital finance is CIPFA's Prudential Code.

It is a professional Code of practice to support the decisions local authorities have to make to plan for capital investment at a local level. Authorities are required by regulation to have regard to the Prudential Code when carrying out their duties under Part I of the Local Government Act 2003 i.e. compliance with the Code is a statutory requirement.

Objectives of the Code

The key objectives of the Code are:-

- To ensure within a clear framework that capital expenditure plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable
- That Treasury Management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice
- That local strategic planning, asset management planning and proper option appraisal are supported
- To provide a clear and transparent framework to ensure accountability

Prudential Indicators

The indicators required are shown below, with further explanation as to their meaning:

1(a). External Debt - Operational Boundary

The most likely, prudent view of the level of gross external indebtedness. External debt includes both borrowing and long term liabilities (e.g. finance leases). It encompasses all borrowing, whether for capital or revenue purposes.

1(b). External Debt - The Authorised Limit

The upper limit on the level of gross external indebtedness, which must not be breached without Council approval. It is the worst-case scenario. It reflects the level of borrowing which, while not desired, could be afforded but may not be sustainable. Any breach must be reported to the executive decision making body, indicating the reason for the breach and the corrective action undertaken or required to be taken.

1(c). External Debt - Actual External Debt

The indicator for actual external debt will not be directly comparable to the operational boundary and authorised limit, since the actual external debt will reflect the actual position at one point in time.

2. Financing cost to Net Revenue Stream

The percentage of revenue budget set aside each year to service debt financing costs

3. Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)

The Capital Financing requirement (CFR) replaced the ‘Credit Ceiling’ measure of the 1989, Local Government and Housing Act. It measures an authority’s underlying need to borrow or use other long-term liabilities, to pay for capital expenditure.

4. Capital Expenditure

The level of capital expenditure incurred and likely to be incurred in future years. This is to be based on an accruals basis and on the definition of capital expenditure.

5. Incremental impact of Capital Investment decisions on Council Tax / Average weekly Housing Rents

This shows the impact of new capital investment decisions included in the budget on the Council Tax and average weekly rent for HRA.

6. Gross External Borrowing and the Capital Financing Requirement

The level of external borrowing is required to be compared to the Capital Financing Requirement which represents the underlying need to borrow. Requires that borrowing in the medium term can only be for capital purposes.

7. Adoption of CIPFA’s Treasury Management Code of Practice

CIPFA’s Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services (the CIPFA Code) primary aim is to ensure that public services manage and control the risks attached to its treasury functions in an efficient effective and economic manner.

Accordingly the adoption of the Code has been encapsulated in Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations that call for explicit compliance with the CIPFA Code.

8. Interest Rate Exposures

Recognition of the impact on revenue budgets of changes in interest rates as well as the need to ensure that local authorities maintain flexibility in their treasury strategy has resulted in the adoption of an interest rate exposure indicator.
This indicator sets out for the following three years an upper limit for both fixed rate and variable rate exposure.

9. Maturity Structure of Borrowing

Local Authority debt portfolios consist of a number of loans with differing maturities. Setting limits assists in ensuring any new borrowing in particular when combined with existing borrowing does not result in large concentrations of borrowing maturing in a short period of time.

10. Principal sums invested for greater than one year

This indicator measures the exposure of a local authority to investing for periods of greater than one year.