

Brewood and Coven Parish Council with Bishop's Wood and Coven - Investment Strategy

1. Introduction

1.1 Brewood and Coven Parish Council acknowledges the importance of prudently investing the temporarily surplus funds held on behalf of the community.

1.2 This Strategy has been prepared in accordance with the Guidance on Local Government Investments ('the Guidance'), issued under section 15(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 2003, effective on or after 1st April 2018.

1.3 The Guidance states:

a) Where a town or parish council expects its investments at any time during a financial year to exceed £100,000, the Guidance should apply in relation to that year.

b) Where a town or parish council expects its investments at any time during a financial year to exceed £10,000 but not £100,000, it should decide on the extent, if any, to which it would be reasonable to have regard to the Guidance in relation to that year.

c) Where a town or parish council expects its investments at any time during a financial year not to exceed £10,000, no part of the Guidance need be treated as applying in relation to that year.

1.4 Brewood and Coven Parish Council expects its investments during the 2020-21 financial year to exceed £100,000 and therefore has agreed to apply the Guidance as set out below.

2. Definitions

2.1 The following definition of terms apply;

2.1.1 Investment covers all of the financial assets of a local authority as well as other non-financial assets that the authority holds primarily or partially to generate a profit; for example, investment property portfolios. This may therefore include investments that are not managed as part of normal treasury management processes or under treasury management delegations.

For the avoidance of doubt, the definition of an investment also covers loans made by a local authority to one of its wholly-owned companies or associates, to a joint venture, or to a third party. The term does not include pension funds or trust fund investments, which are subject to separate regulatory regimes and therefore are not covered by this guidance.

2.1.2 A credit rating agency is one of the following three companies:

- Standard and Poor's;
- Moody's Investors Service Ltd; and
- Fitch Ratings Ltd.

2.1.3 A loan is a written or oral agreement where a local authority temporarily transfers cash to a third party, joint venture, subsidiary or associate who promises to return it according to the terms of the agreement, normally with interest. This definition does not include a loan to another local authority, which is classified as a specified investment.

3. Investment Objectives

3.1 Investments made by a local authority can be classified into one of two main categories:

- Investments held for treasury management purposes: and
- Other investments

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3.2 In 2020-21 the Parish Council's investments will be held for treasury management purposes only.

3.3 In line with the guidance, the Parish Council's investment priorities are:

- 1) the **security** of its investments;
- 2) the **liquidity** of its investments;
- 3) the **yield** from its investments

3.4 The Parish Council will not enter into any arrangement where there is a risk of losing its initial investment.

3.5 All investments will be made in sterling and, as a minimum, surplus funds will be aggregated in an interest bearing account.

3.6 The Government maintains that borrowing of monies purely to invest, or to lend and make a return, is unlawful and this Parish Council will not engage in such activity.

4. Security of Investments

4.1 Financial investments can fall into one of three categories:

- **Specified Investments;**
- **Loans;** and
- Other **non-specified investments**

4.2 Specified Investments

4.2.1 An investment is a specified investment if all of the following apply:

- The investment is denominated in sterling and any payments or repayments in the respect of the investment are payable only in sterling.
- The investment is not a long term investment. This means that the local authority has contractual right to repayment within 12 months, either because that is the expiry term of the investment or through a non-conditional option.
- The making of the investment is not defined as capital expenditure by virtue of Regulation 25(1)(d) of the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003 [as amended].
- The investment is made with a body or in an investment scheme described as high quality or with one of the following bodies:
 - i. The United Kingdom Government;
 - ii. A local authority in England or Wales (as defined in section 23 of the 2003 Act) or a similar body in Scotland or Northern Ireland; or
 - iii. A parish council or community council.

4.2.2 For the prudent management of its treasury balances, maintaining sufficient levels of security and liquidity, the council will use:

- UK banks and UK building societies;
- Public Bodies (including the UK Government and local authorities);

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- UK FCA regulated qualifying money market funds with a triple A rating.

4.3 Loans

4.3.1 A local authority may choose to make loans to local enterprises, local charities, wholly owned companies and joint ventures as part of a wider Strategy for local economic growth.

4.3.2 Such loans will conform with the Strategy if:

- Total financial exposure to these type of loans is proportionate;
- The local authority has used an allowed 'expected credit loss' model for loans and receivables as set out in International Financial Reporting Standard (IFRS) 9 Financial Instruments as adopted by proper practices to measure the credit risk of their loan portfolio;
- The local authority has appropriate credit control arrangements to recover overdue repayments in place; and
- The local authority has formally agreed the total level of loans by type that it is willing to make and their total loan book is within their self-assessed limit.

4.3.3 **No provision to make loans has been made for 2020-21.** Any such decision would require the approval of Full Council.

4.4 Non-specified investments.

4.3.1 Non-specified investments are usually for longer periods (i.e. more than one year) and with bodies that are not highly credit-rated.

4.3.2 **No non-specified investments are included in the Investment Strategy for the Parish Council.**

5. Liquidity of Investments

5.1 The Clerk, as Responsible Finance Officer, in consultation with the Finance Committee and approved by the Parish Council will determine the maximum periods for which funds may prudently be committed so as not to compromise liquidity.

6. Long Term Investments

6.1 Long term investments shall be defined as greater than one year. The Parish Council will use the same criteria for assessing long term investment as identified above for specified investments.

6.2 **The Parish Council does not hold any long term investments.**

7. Risk Assessment

7.1 The Parish Council's reserves are covered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme up to the deposit limits of the scheme and must therefore be carefully managed to mitigate the risk of losses, currently £85,000.

7.2 The Parish Council will only invest in institutions of 'high credit quality' as set out in section 2.1.2 of this Strategy. Investments will be spread over different providers where appropriate to minimise risk.

7.3 The Parish Council will monitor the risk of loss on investments by reference to credit ratings. The Parish Council should aim for ratings equivalent to the Fitch F1 rating (AAA) for short-term investments or Fitch A- for long term investments. The Parish Council will also have regard for the general economic and political environment in which institutions operate.

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7.4 The Parish Council will not employ, in-house or externally, any financial advisors but will rely on information which is publicly available.

8. Use of Investment Managers

8.1 If external investment managers are used, they will be contractually required to comply with this Strategy.

9. Investment Approval

9.1 The Finance Committee has the delegated authority to consider and recommend any short-term investments (maximum of twelve months), in accordance with this Strategy, subject to the final approval of the investment provider by the Parish Council. All resolutions relating to investments will be minuted at a full Parish Council meeting.

9.2 Any decision on loan activity may only be approved by resolution of the Parish Council and minuted accordingly.

10. Investment Reports

10.1 The Clerk, as Responsible Financial Officer, will report investment activity to the Parish Council on a monthly basis as part of the bank reconciliation.

10.2 The Guidance requires councils to develop quantitative indicators (how investments are funded and the rate of return received) to assess the council's risk exposure as a result of its investment decisions. The Responsible Financial Officer will produce these indicators based upon the recommendations of the statutory guidance.

11. Review and Amendment of Regulations

11.1 The Investment Strategy will be reviewed annually. The Investment Strategy for the coming financial year will be prepared and reviewed by the Finance Committee which will then make a recommendation to the Parish Council.

11.2 The Parish Council reserves the right to make variations to the Strategy at any time. Any variations will result in an updated Strategy being published.

12. Transparency

12.1 This Strategy will be posted on the Parish Council website and a hard copy will be available from the Clerk.