

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2025/2026

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Prudential Code is the key element in the system of capital finance that was introduced from 1 April 2004 as set out in the Local Government Act 2003. CIPFA published their updated 2021 edition of the Prudential Code on 20th December 2021.
- 1.2 Individual authorities are responsible for deciding the level of their affordable borrowing, having regard to the CIPFA code, (which has legislative backing). Prudential limits apply to all borrowing, qualifying credit arrangements (e.g. some forms of lease) and other long-term liabilities. The system is designed to encourage authorities that need, and can afford, to borrow for capital investment to do so.

2 CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities

- 2.1 The Code has been developed to support Local Authorities in taking capital investment decisions and to ensure that these decisions are supported by a framework which ensures proportionality, prudence, affordability and sustainability. The Code requires authorities to look at capital expenditure and investment plans in the light of overall organisational strategy and resources, including the forecast financial position and borrowing and investment plans and any risks associated with these.
- 2.2 Another objective of the Code is that treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice and in full understanding of the risks involved and how these risks will be managed to levels that are acceptable to the organisation. The rationale behind these concepts is set out in the code.
- 2.3 To demonstrate compliance with these objectives of proportionality, prudence, affordability and sustainability each local authority is required to produce a set of prudential indicators. These indicators are designed to support and record local decision making and are not for comparison with other authorities. The setting and revising of these indicators must be approved by Cabinet and Council.
- 2.4 In setting or revising its prudential indicators, the local authority is required to have regard to the following matters:
- service objectives (e.g. strategic planning).
 - stewardship of assets (e.g. asset management planning).
 - value for money (e.g. options appraisal).
 - prudence and sustainability (e.g. risks, whole life costing and implications for external debt).
 - affordability (e.g. implications for long-term resources including the council tax).
 - practicality (e.g. achievability of the forward plan).

3 Prudential Indicators for Prudence

3.1 Estimates of Capital Expenditure to be Incurred

3.1.1 This is an estimate of the total amount of investment planned over the period. Not all investment necessarily has an effect on the Council Tax. Schemes funded by grant, third party contributions or by capital receipts mean that the effect on the Council Tax is greatly reduced.

	Estimate 2025/26 £000	Estimate 2026/27 £000	Estimate 2027/28 £000	Estimate 2028/29 £000	Estimate 2029/30 £000
General Fund	76,449	20,693	2,550	2,550	4,989
Housing Revenue Account	18,748	13,921	12,039	6,100	0
Total	95,197	34,614	14,589	8,650	4,989

3.2 Estimate of the Capital Financing Requirement

3.2.1 Each year, the Council finances the capital investment programme by a number of means, one of which is borrowing. The capital financing requirement represents the cumulative amount of borrowing that has been incurred to pay for the Council's capital assets, less amounts that have been set aside for the repayment of debt over the years (i.e. Minimum Revenue Provision and Reserved Capital Receipts).

The estimates for the capital financing requirement are:

	Estimate 31st March 2026 £000	Estimate 31st March 2027 £000	Estimate 31st March 2028 £000	Estimate 31st March 2029 £000	Estimate 31st March 2030 £000
General Fund	379,137	394,582	409,579	424,033	437,847
Housing Revenue Account	101,128	101,128	101,128	101,128	101,128
Total	480,265	495,710	510,707	525,161	538,975

The Council is only allowed to borrow long term to support its capital investment programme. It is not allowed to borrow long term to support its revenue budget.

3.3 Operational Boundary and Authorised Limit 2025/26 to 2029/30

3.3.1 The Council must set an operational boundary and authorised limit for its total gross external debt, separately identifying borrowing from other long-term liabilities. The operational boundary is how much gross external debt the Council plans to take up, and reflects the decision on the amount of debt needed for the Capital Investment Programme for the relevant year. If at any time during the year, it is likely that this limit will be breached it will be reported to members as soon as possible and the Leader advised immediately.

The authorised limit is higher than the operational boundary as it allows sufficient headroom to take account of unusual cash movements.

Operational boundary	Estimate 2025/26 £000	Estimate 2026/27 £000	Estimate 2027/28 £000	Estimate 2028/29 £000	Estimate 2029/30 £000
Borrowing	375,800	376,300	371,700	367,100	362,400
Liabilities outstanding under credit arrangements	4,200	3,700	3,300	2,900	2,600
Total	380,000	380,000	375,000	370,000	365,000

Authorised Limit	Estimate 2025/26 £000	Estimate 2026/27 £000	Estimate 2027/28 £000	Estimate 2028/29 £000	Estimate 2029/30 £000
Borrowing	385,800	386,300	381,700	377,100	372,400
Liabilities outstanding under credit arrangements	4,200	3,700	3,300	2,900	2,600
Total	390,000	390,000	385,000	380,000	375,000

3.4 *Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement*

3.4.1 Gross external debt is long term external debt (e.g. PWLB loans taken out), short-term borrowing from other Local Authorities and credit arrangements relating to finance leases. The estimates for the external debt are:

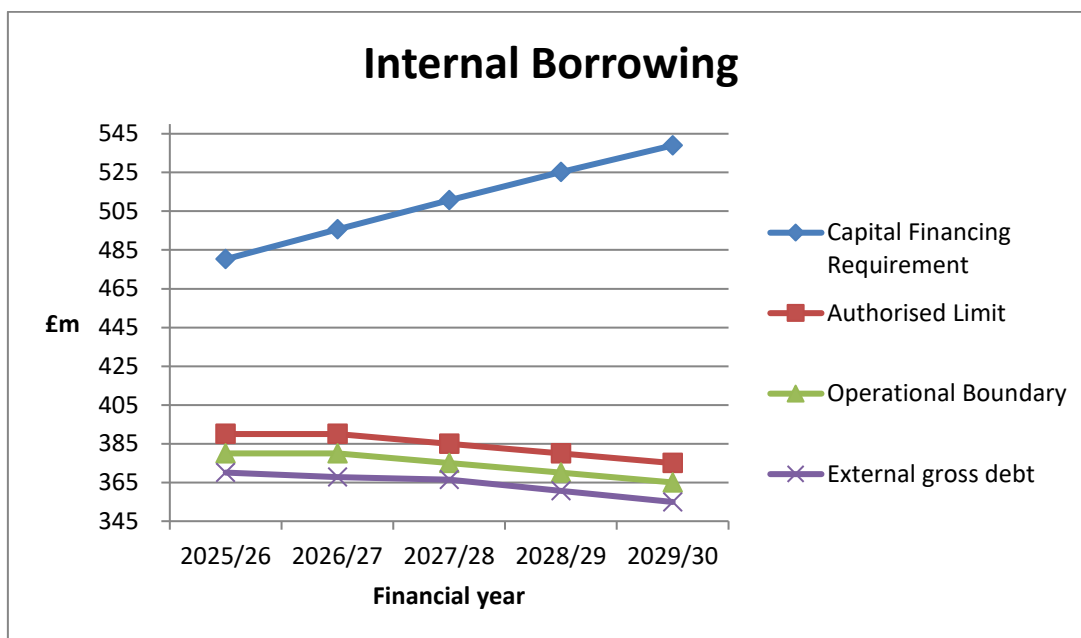
	Estimate 31st March 2026 £000	Estimate 31st March 2027 £000	Estimate 31st March 2028 £000	Estimate 31st March 2029 £000	Estimate 31st March 2030 £000
External gross debt	370,097	367,688	366,384	360,679	354,916

3.4.2 Under the Prudential Code, gross external borrowing must not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the capital financing requirement for the previous year, plus any additional amounts for the current year and the next two financial years. This means that gross external borrowing cannot exceed £510.707m at 31 March 2026, £525.161m at 31 March 2027 and £538.975m at 31 March 2028.

4 Prudential Indicators for Affordability and Proportionality

4.1 Internal Borrowing/Interest Rate Risk

4.1.1 The graph below shows the estimated Capital Financing Requirement, Authorised Limit, Operational Boundary and levels of external borrowing over the next five years.



4.1.2 The gap between the Capital Financing Requirement and the levels of external debt illustrates the level of internal borrowing. This reflects the Council's exposure to interest rate movements equivalent to the interest lost on investment income. Also, when the borrowing is taken out the rate will be dependent on the prevailing economic and market conditions at the time. This is a risk if PWLB rates rise significantly. For every 1 basis point (0.01%) increase in rates the interest paid on borrowing £10m for 50 years rises by £50,000 over the life of the loan. A 1% increase in rates on a £10m loan would increase the cost to £5m over the life of a 50 year loan.

4.1.3 The gap between the Capital Financing Requirement and the Operational Boundary/Authorised Limit highlights the potential scope and flexibility to borrow further, if the cash flow and treasury management position allows.

4.2 Estimates of the Proportion of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream

4.2.1 This indicator records estimated capital financing costs as a percentage of the net revenue stream.

4.2.2 Capital financing costs are the revenue cost of financing the debt which includes the interest payments and the amount set aside annually to repay debt. This is an important indicator because it shows how much of the Council's revenue resources are 'tied up' in fixed capital financing costs. Setting and reviewing this, means that

the Council can ensure that its capital financing costs do not become too large a part of the revenue budget, compared to the cost of running services.

	Estimate 2025/26 %	Estimate 2026/27 %	Estimate 2027/28 %	Estimate 2028/29 %	Estimate 2029/30 %
General Fund	10.75	10.66	10.66	10.83	10.80
Housing Revenue Account	30.95	31.40	30.99	30.66	30.29

4.3 *Estimates of Net Income from Commercial and Services Investments to Net Revenue Stream*

Net income from commercial and service investments comprises net income from financial investments (other than treasury management investments), together with net income from other assets held primarily for financial return, such as investment properties. The costs, which may be netted off, comprise investment management costs and any other direct revenue costs of investment.

This indicator is intended to show the financial exposure of the authority to the loss of income, should that occur.

	Estimate 2025/26 %	Estimate 2026/27 %	Estimate 2027/28 %	Estimate 2028/29 %	Estimate 2029/30 %
Net income to net revenue stream	2.09	2.09	2.11	2.15	2.18

5 Prudential Indicators for Treasury Management

5.1 *Maturity Structure of Borrowing during 2025/26*

5.1.1 The table below shows the limits within which the Council delegates its length of borrowing decisions to the Executive Director (Finance and Resources)/Section 151 Officer in 2025/26.

	Upper limit %	Lower limit %	Estimated outstanding debt maturity at 31st March 2026 %
Under 12 months	20	0	6
12 months and within 24 months	30	0	3
24 months and within 5 years	40	0	12
5 years and within 10 years	60	5	16
10 years and within 20 years	60	5	16
20 years and within 30 years	80	0	3
30 years and above	80	20	44

5.1.2 The percentages in each category for the upper and lower limits do not add up to 100% as they do not represent an actual allocation.

5.1.3 The actual maturities of new borrowing will be decided taking account of the maturities of existing loans and the interest rates for the various maturity periods available at the time.

5.2 *Long Term Treasury Management Investments*

5.2.1 Some of the Council's investments are managed internally by the Council. Part of this cash balance is utilised to smooth out the day-to-day movements on the cash flow. It is not therefore the intention that this part of the balance would be invested for more than 365 days. The rest of the cash balance is invested to achieve the optimum returns consistent with the effective control of risk. Some of this could be invested for periods over 365 days.

5.2.2 Some of the Council's investments are managed by external fund managers. These investments do not have a fixed maturity date and are invested for periods over 365 days.

5.2.3 This indicator sets a prudential limit for principal sums invested for periods over 365 days.

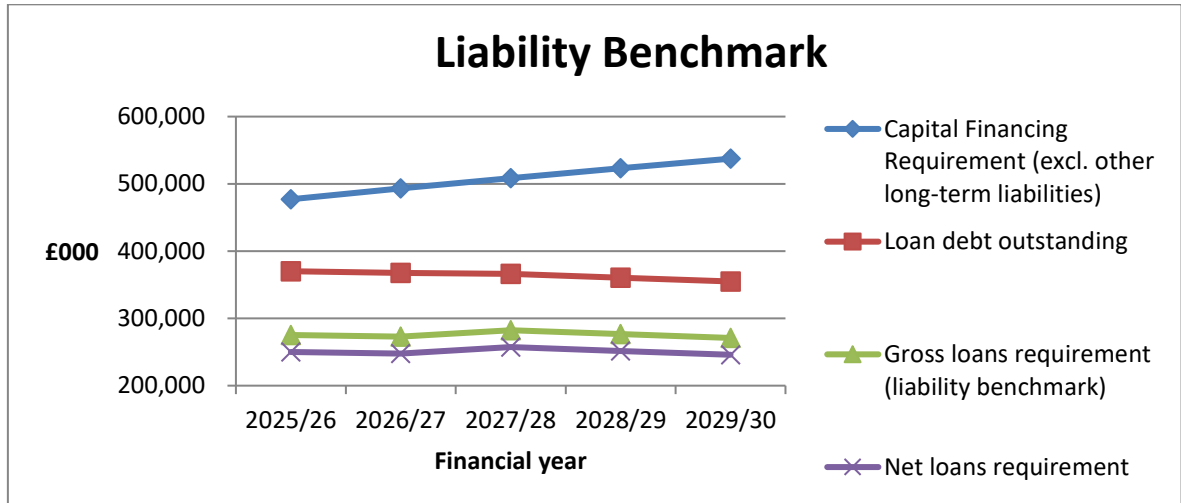
Limit	Estimate 2025/26 %	Estimate 2026/27 %	Estimate 2027/28 %	Estimate 2028/29 %	Estimate 2029/30 %
Fixed-rate investments with maturities over one year	25	25	25	25	25
Long term investments with no fixed maturity date					
Enhanced cash funds	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5
Short-dated bond funds	25	25	25	25	25
Property funds	50	50	50	50	50

5.3 *Liability Benchmark*

The liability benchmark is not a single measure but consist of four balances:

- Existing loan debt outstanding: the authority's existing loans that are still outstanding in future years.
- Loans Capital Financing Requirement: calculated in accordance with the definition in the Prudential Code and projected into the future based on approved prudential borrowing and planned MRP. This excludes any part of the Capital Financing Requirement related to other long-term liabilities rather than borrowing.

- Net loans requirement: the authority's gross loan debt less treasury management investments at the last financial year-end, projected into the future.
- Liability benchmark (or gross loans requirement) equals net loans requirement plus a short-term liquidity allowance. A short-term liquidity allowance means an adequate (but not excessive) allowance for a level of excess cash to be invested short term to provide access to liquidity if needed.



Any years where the loan debt outstanding is less than the gross loans requirement indicates a future borrowing requirement. Any years where the loan debt outstanding exceeds the gross loans requirement indicates there is excess cash available for investment. As such, local authorities should refer to their current liability benchmark when taking new borrowing decisions.