



EPSOM AND EWELL BOROUGH COUNCIL

**CAPITAL STRATEGY STATEMENT
February 2021**

Capital Investment 2021/22 to 2023/24

1. Introduction

The Council's Capital Strategy provides a framework for asset planning and for decisions on capital investment – expenditure on larger projects or schemes which generally leads to improved long-term assets.

The Financial Policy Panel provides guidance on the level of investment in the core capital programme that is consistent with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. The core capital programme will be reviewed annually with options reassessed with specific reference to priorities in the Corporate Plan and the Asset Management Plan.

The development of the Capital Strategy and the Asset Management Plan assists the Council in major investment decisions. The latest Asset Management Plan was approved by Strategy & Resources Committee in July 2020.

As in previous years, due to limited capital reserves and the continued challenging funding environment, the core capital programme 2021-2024 has been limited to only priority projects which meet one of the strict criteria set-out in section 7.

2. Development of the Capital Strategy

Member and officer capital groups have been established to oversee the core capital programme and monitor capital schemes. The Capital Member Group is made up of Members nominated by Strategy & Resources Committee, supported and attended by the Chief Finance Officer as appropriate. The officer group with responsibility for overseeing the core capital programme is the Leadership Team and comprises of the Heads of Service.

Service and financial planning timetables are submitted to Financial Policy Panel annually. The Capital Strategy is presented to the Council for approval each year. The current strategy includes the current and following two years, which is consistent with the Medium Term Financial Strategy and proportionate to the size of the authority.

3. Commercial Activity & Investment Strategy

Commercial Property

The Council retains one in-Borough commercial property acquisition fund, which has a remaining balance of £49.6m available for investment. The fund can be financed from prudential borrowing. The Council formally closed its out-of-Borough commercial property acquisition fund in February 2020, as part of agreeing the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020-24, in order to comply with the MHCLG's Statutory Guidance on Investments,

Residential Property

In 2016/17, the Council established a £3m fund to purchase residential property, principally to assist the Council to manage homelessness and reduce associated costs. To date, no new purchases have been identified during 2020/21.

The remaining balances on the Property Acquisition Funds are shown in the following table. Please note that the £80m funds are not reserves that the Council holds; they are limits (approved by Full Council) up to which borrowing could be undertaken.

The expenditure to date and current balance of each property fund is detailed in the following table.

	Commercial Property	Residential Property	Total
Property Acquisition Funds	In-Borough		

	£000	£000	£000
Opening fund balance	80,000	3,000	83,000
Purchases during 2016/17	(19,206)	(811)	(20,017)
Purchases during 2017/18	(5,148)	(562)	(5,710)
Purchases during 2018/19	0	(257)	(257)
Purchases during 2019/20	(6,077)	(20)	(6,097)
YTD purchases during 2020/21	0	0	0
Fund balances at 31/12/2020	49,569	1,350	50,919

Of the Residential Property Acquisition Fund balance, £105k is due to be spent in January 2021 to fund any modifications required to 87 East Street (Defoe Court) to make it suitable for use as temporary accommodation, as agreed at S&R Committee in December 2018.

The Council's Investment Strategy is set out in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy which is included as Appendix 11 to the same report.

4. Main Capital Programme 2021-24

Based on the available capital resources and subject to external funding, including grants and developer contributions, and securing revenue savings, Council has been asked to approve the following programme for 2021-24 in February 2021.

Project	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	Total £'000
Disabled Facility Grants *	600	600	600	1,800
ICT programme of works	225	0	0	225
Ashley Centre Car Park Expansion Joints	30	0	0	30
Improvements to Great Dam – EC LNR	75	0	0	75
Harrier Centre Track Repairs	40	0	0	40
Replacement of EEBC Lamp Columns	425	0	0	425
King George's Field Football Pitch Drainage	90	10	0	100
Total	1,485	610	600	2,695

* Subject to additional external funding

In addition schemes may be added where:-

- there is a carry forward from 2020/21 with specific funding already allocated
- new schemes supported by a business case (self-financing), or
- they can be funded by additional external funding sources e.g. Section 106 agreements or specific grants

Funding for the approved programme is set out below.

Funding Type	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	Total £'000
Planned Revenue Contribution	255	0	0	255

S106 Funds	110	10	0	120
Government Grants	600	600	600	1,800
Other External Grants	20	0	0	20
Community Infrastructure Levy Receipts	500	0	0	500
Total	1,485	610	600	2,695

5. Use of Capital Reserves

The Council's financial position is reviewed annually following the closure of accounts and prior to service and financial planning for the following year. This includes a review of the projected capital receipts reserve position and other sources of funding for capital schemes.

The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy targets a minimum balance of capital reserves of £1 million to be retained as a contingency for unplanned capital commitments over the next four years.

Due to the low level of receipts from the disposal of property assets since 2009, the Capital Member Group has limited investment from reserves to high priority and spend-to-save schemes. The forecast of capital receipts at 31 March 2021 is £2.57 million. This assumes full delivery of the 2020/21 capital programme and no new capital receipts.

6. Capital Financing and Resources

Potential capital resources have been identified from

- estimated capital reserves at the end of March 2021;
- approved sales of property assets, subject to market recovery;
- revenue funding, as identified as part of the revenue budget setting process;
- use of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and S106;
- external funding, including grants and commuted sums.

The Council has earmarked CIL receipts from developers to part finance the Step-free Access to Stoneleigh Station project. The Local Plan seeks to shape development in the borough and, along with the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, will continue to help inform the Council's use of future CIL receipts.

As capital reserves decrease, the Council needs to achieve additional receipts from sale of assets or other external funding, or identify contributions from revenue, if the capital programme is to be sustainable over the long-term. The Council will continue to review its property through the Asset Management Plan.

In 2021/22, the draft budget includes £300,000 of revenue funding for the 2021/22 capital programme, of which £255k is expected to be used, leaving a balance of £45k available to be set-aside reserves for future capital programmes. In subsequent years, the Council's current 10 year forecast projects an annual increase of £100,000 to the revenue contribution, until an annual contribution of £700,000 is reached in 2025/26. All revenue contributions are subject to annual approval as part of the Council's budget setting process, and are intended to limit the use of diminishing capital reserves to ensure the capital programme becomes sustainable in future years.

The anticipated level of funding available for the capital programme is shown in the following table.

	CIL & S106	Capital Grants	Capital Receipts	Residential Property Fund	Revenue*	Borrowing	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
2020/21							
Estimated resource at 1/4/2020	5.93	0.41	4.54	1.16	0.36	49.57	61.97
Anticipated Receipts	1.20	0.69	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.00	2.09
Receipts earmarked for Horton Chapel	0.00	0.00	-0.58	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.58
Receipts earmarked for Residential Property Fund	0.00	0.00	-0.19	0.19	0.00	0.00	0.00
Funding Capital Programme	-2.75	-1.10	-1.20	0.00	-0.23	0.00	-5.28
Estimated resources at 31/03/2021	4.38	0.00	2.57	1.35	0.33	49.57	58.20
2021/22							
Anticipated Receipts	1.04	0.62	0.00	0.00	0.30	0.00	1.96
Funding Capital Programme	-0.61	-0.62	0.00	-1.37	-0.26	-49.57	-52.42
Estimated resources at 31/3/2022	4.81	0.00	2.57	0.00	0.37	0.00	7.75
2022/23							
Anticipated Receipts	1.04	0.60	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.00	2.04
Proposed New Bids	-0.01	-0.60	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.61
Estimated resources at 31/3/2023	5.84	0.00	2.57	0.00	0.77	0.00	9.18
2023/24							
Anticipated Receipts	1.04	0.60	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.00	2.14
Proposed New Bids	0.00	-0.60	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.60
Estimated resources at 31/3/2024	6.88	0.00	2.57	0.00	1.27	0.00	10.72

*This includes repairs and renewals reserve and planned revenue contributions. All revenue contributions are subject to annual approval as part of the Council's budget setting process.

The Council seeks to maximise partnership funding in the delivery of its key priorities and will commit capital reserves to: -

- finance prioritised capital investment where funding is not available from other sources
- attract partnership funding and/or to achieve partnership objectives
- finance investment that is 'self-funding', for example investment that improves performance and reduces running costs or investment in the maintenance of service assets

The Council will seek to maximise effective investment from all potential funding sources. External sources of financing may include LEP funding, Section 106 agreements, CIL, government grants for Disabled Facilities, partnership funding from other Local Authorities or Public and Voluntary organisations.

7. Criteria for Assessing Capital Programme Priorities

The following criteria have been used for appraising future capital investment options and reviewing the on-going capital programme. As a minimum all investment proposals must meet one of the following baseline criteria: -

- investment where there is a guarantee of the scheme being fully externally funded and is classed as a high priority
- investment required to meet Health and Safety or other new legislative requirements
- investment required to continue to deliver the services of the Council (e.g. minimum level of building maintenance)

- investment in 'Spend to Save' schemes that will generate cost savings or additional income generation, providing;
 - there is payback of the capital invested within 5 years (up to 10 years for energy reduction initiatives);
 - there is a low risk of not achieving return on investment
 - there is a clear definition of the cost/benefits of the scheme
- investment where the scheme is consistent with the Council's Climate Change Action Plan, subject to affordability, supported by a robust business case and value for money can be demonstrated through a maximum payback period of 10 years.

Prior to schemes being assessed for approval by Full Council, a detailed project appraisal must be completed and recommended by the appropriate policy committee. A standard capital appraisal form has been developed which requires details of the scheme (cost estimates, revenue impact, project management resources and expected timescales). It also requires an explanation of how the scheme fits within the baseline criteria. In recommending investment proposals policy committees must ensure they can fund any additional operational costs from within their revenue budget targets.

Where schemes are prioritised for inclusion in the capital programme prior to a detailed evaluation of revenue costs, commitments will not be made until estimates of operational costs have been evaluated and financing in the revenue budget identified. The Council will continue to follow a whole life costing approach to project appraisal.

Capital schemes funded wholly or in part from external sources e.g. Government Grants, Section 106 monies, CIL or other contributions are also subject to the same requirements in respect of meeting the baseline criteria and the completion of project appraisals recommended by the policy committee.

Schemes can be included within the proposed capital programme subject to a detailed business case being submitted to the relevant service committee. These schemes can only progress once approval is granted for the project by the policy committee.

By assessing schemes against the above criteria, the Council ensures that capital schemes support the corporate priorities, as set out in the Four Year Corporate Plan. Separate criteria exist to evaluate proposed individual property acquisitions that are funded from the Property Acquisition Funds.

Following Council's adoption of the Climate Change Action Plan in January 2020 and in accordance with the new MTFS, the capital investment criteria were reviewed during 2020/21 and the fifth criteria listed above added, with the aim of further facilitating actions which positively impact the environment.

8. Timetable for Approval of Capital Programme

The timetable and process for approval of the capital programme following annual review is as follows:-

- Update on level of resources / reserves at end of previous year reported to Financial Policy Panel and Strategy and Resources Committee in June and July
- Members nominated onto the Capital Member Group by Strategy & Resources Committee
- A forecast of resources reported to Financial Policy Panel and Strategy and Resources Committee in September
- Budget targets agreed by the Council in September

- Officers, in consultation with Heads of Service, submit new or updated draft summary capital bids to the Capital Member Group to review in September
- Capital Member Group meets in September to agree approach and use the Capital Strategy criteria to decide which of the summary bids should be progressed into full bids for review in November
- Officers submit full capital bids to the Leadership Team to validate and be prioritised in October
- Capital Member Group reviews all bids in November and prepares recommendations on funding to Financial Policy Panel in early December
- Prioritisation of all investment proposals within the available resources advised by Financial Policy Panel in December
- Detailed scheme proposals and project appraisals, including identification of how any revenue funding requirements could be met for each scheme, recommended by policy committees in January
- Capital programme to be recommended by policy committees in January
- Capital programme for the following year and the remaining years of the capital programme agreed by Council in February

For any approved capital scheme where additional capital or revenue costs are identified prior to commencement of the scheme, then subject to the thresholds contained in the Council's Financial regulations, the scheme may need to be referred back to the relevant policy committee and, if additional funding is required, to Strategy and Resources Committee as soon as possible during the year.

Investment proposals funded wholly from external sources or relating to property acquisitions may be submitted for approval at any time during the year. The investment requirements and funding available from CIL and Section 106 monies are reviewed annually in December by Financial Policy Panel.

9. Borrowing Strategy

In February 2017 the Council agreed to extend the borrowing to fund the acquisition of commercial property that provide the Council with a long term rental income from £20 million up to £80 million. The Council will keep the level of borrowing under review.

The Council does not anticipate borrowing for capital projects other than the acquisition of investment properties and the Medium Term Financial Strategy requires that the Council maintains a minimum level of £1 million of capital reserves.

However, should the need to borrow to finance part of the main capital programme arise (which may depend on the levels of new receipts generated, revenue contributions, income generated from CIL and S106 and external grants), the Council will ensure any borrowing is proportionate and sustainable.

10. Approach to Procurement

The Council has developed its Procurement Strategy. As part of this strategy a number of principles and guidelines have been developed to assist all managers including capital scheme budget holders in the purchase of goods and services. The main areas covered include review of procurement options, risk/benefit analysis, risk management, potential for partnership, cost and quality options and assessing the need for specialist skills.

11. Managing and Monitoring the Capital Programme and Risk Management

Managing and Monitoring the Capital Programme

Detailed monitoring and performance review of the capital programme is the responsibility of the Leadership Team on a quarterly review basis and by the Capital Member Group during the annual review. The officer group sets performance and delivery targets for the year, reviews monitoring information and recommends action where appropriate for reporting to Chief Officers, Members, Financial Policy Panel and policy committees.

Financial monitoring reports are submitted to Members on a quarterly basis. This includes expenditure monitoring, uncommitted balances held on s106 and CIL funds and capital receipts balances. Budget monitoring reports show the projected outturn and profiled spend for each scheme, highlighting significant variations and slippage and identifying recommended action. Any recommended changes to the programme are submitted to committees during the year as appropriate.

Risk Management

Detailed information on the delivery of individual schemes, including assessment of financial and delivery risks and profile of works and expenditure during the year, is agreed with budget holders. This will form the basis against which schemes are monitored during the year. For those schemes considered as most significant, a detailed timetable and milestones will be agreed by the relevant committee at the beginning of the financial year.

For major schemes the Council will consider external consultants to assist in project management.

The Council may conduct post implementation reviews on certain capital projects, specifically where the scheme has a high cost or value or there has been a significant variation in cost or time to implement.