

CABINET

Capital Programme 2026/27 – 2035/36 & Capital Strategy (Investing in the Future) 10 February 2026

Report of Chief Finance Officer

PURPOSE OF REPORT				
To present Cabinet's final budget proposals in order that the Council can approve a General Fund Capital Programme for 2026/27 to 2035/36, and a Capital Strategy 2026/27 as required by regulation.				
Key Decision	X	Non-Key Decision		Referral from Cabinet Member
Date of notice of forthcoming key decision			12 th December 2025	

RECOMMENDATION OF COUNCILLOR HAMILTON-COX

1. That Cabinet recommends the following for approval to Budget Council:
 - the updated Capital Programme covering financial years 2026/27 to 2035/36
 - the Capital Strategy (Investing in the Future) 2026/27
2. Delegated authority be given to the S151 officer, in consultation with Portfolio Holder for Finance & Property to amend changes in the prudential indicators should Cabinet or Full Council make any revisions to the Capital Programme

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Capital investment, via the Council's reserves or borrowing, plays a key role in strategic projects and initiatives for the success of the Lancaster district, as well as transforming and optimising the Council's services to its residents.
- 1.2 The proposed Capital Programme and supporting Strategy, entitled '*Investing in the Future*' and contained at **Appendix B**, sets out the relevant context and a proposed framework to support the Council's approach to capital investment over the medium term.

2.0 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

- 2.1 The proposed net investment programme for General Fund for the period to 2035/36 is included at **Appendix A** and summarised in the table below.

	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31
	£'M	£'M	£'M	£'M	£'M	£'M
Approved Schemes	16.121	5.561	0.628	3.978	1.163	2.364
Schemes Under Development	0.000	3.311	10.727	0.390	0.230	0.230
TOTAL	16.121	8.872	11.355	4.368	1.393	2.594

	2031/32	2032/33	2033/34	2034/35	2035/36	Grand Total
	£'M	£'M	£'M	£'M	£'M	£'M
Approved Schemes	6.429	4.994	2.181	2.227	0.050	29.575
Schemes Under Development	0.100	0.040	0.200	0.000	0.000	15.228
TOTAL	6.529	5.034	2.381	2.227	0.050	44.803

- 2.2 The current year's net revised programme (2025/26) now stands at £16.121M. During the next 10 years, a further gross investment of £74.990M is currently planned with external funding of £30.187M anticipated to support this investment, giving a total net programme from 2026/27 to 2035/36 of £44.803M.
- 2.3 Schemes classified as Under Development have had strategic outline business cases approved in principle by the Cabinet but **cannot** commence until full business cases have been considered and approved, first by the Capital Assurance Group (CAG), and then by Cabinet. In addition, depending on certain factors such as the complexity of the project, the level of investment required (c.£1.5M) etc the full business cases will be subject to independent 3rd party review, with the results forming part of the CAG and Cabinet submission.
- 2.4 Two schemes included within the Schemes Under Development section of the Capital Programme, Canal Quarter and Redevelopment of the City are anticipated to receive external funding which will at least partially finance the costs of these works. Any shortfall in financing for these schemes plus all other projects currently in this section will need to be funded from borrowing. The business cases will need to demonstrate that income arising from the capital investment can cover all borrowing costs and deliver a positive return to the Council's revenue budget.
- 2.5 Overall the programme is balanced, allowing for a gross increase in the underlying need to borrow (known as the Capital Financing Requirement or CFR), over the five-year period to 2030/31. The Council makes a revenue provision for the repayment of borrowing known as Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) which reduces the CFR.
- 2.6 In setting the capital programme the Council must have regard to affordability and the Treasury Management Strategy sets out through a series of prudential indicators the impact of the Council's Capital Programme on its borrowing to ensure that all borrowing is affordable, prudent and sustainable.

3.0 CAPITAL STRATEGY

3.1 The Council is required to adopt a Capital Strategy, and this is included as **Appendix B**. It is an overarching document which sets the policy framework for the development, management, and monitoring of capital investment. It incorporates the Capital Programme, Asset Management Plan and Treasury Management Strategy.

3.2 The strategy also sets out the proposed approach to risk management as well as the monitoring and evaluation of capital projects. Capital investment decisions will reflect the priorities included within the Council Plan: Strategic Priorities and supporting strategies.

- Schemes to be added to the Capital Programme will be subject to a gateway process following completion of a capital bid which will be scored against criteria set to measure strategic, economic, financial, commercial and management criteria in accordance with the Treasury's 5 case model. These will be reviewed by a corporate Capital Assurance Group comprising key Officers alongside the Finance Portfolio Holder and Chairs of Budget and Performance Panel and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Unless in an emergency, revisions to the Capital Programme will be restricted to October/ November committee cycle to align with the Treasury Management Mid-Year reporting schedule and prevent unnecessary or duplication of work.
- The Capital Assurance Group (CAG) will also oversee capital financing in order to ascertain that all capital expenditure is affordable, prudent, and sustainable as set out in the Treasury Management Strategy. CAG's terms of reference are provided at **Appendix C**.

3.3 The Council recognises that it will play a pivotal role in key projects which will enable the district to thrive and grow. Further development of the Capital Programme may be needed over the next few years in order to properly encapsulate major economic development projects.

4.0 OPTIONS AND OPTIONS ANALYSIS (INCLUDING RISK ASSESSMENT)

4.1 Cabinet may put forward alternative proposals or amendments to the proposed Strategy ahead of consideration by Full Council. For capital, Council may adjust its capital investment and financing proposals taking account of spending commitments and priorities, but its proposals for 2026/27 must balance.

4.2 Depending on the nature of any alternative proposals put forward, Officers may need time to assess the risks and implications. This is to ensure that relevant considerations are taken into account, to support informed and lawful decision-making.

5.0 OFFICER PREFERRED OPTION (AND COMMENTS)

5.1 To consider the Capital Programme and Strategy as attached allowing for any amendments being made under delegated authority prior to referral to Council.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 This report addresses the actions required to complete the budget setting process for its Capital Programme and Capital Strategy.

6.2 If Cabinet, or Budget Council changes its Capital Programme from that which is proposed in this report then this would require a change in the prudential indicators which are part of the Treasury Management Strategy.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Council's revenue and capital budgets should represent, in financial terms what the Council is seeking to achieve through its Policy Framework.

The proposed capital programme and supporting strategy is part of the Council's budget and policy framework, and fits into the Medium Term Financial Strategy

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability etc)

The proposed budget incorporates measures to address the climate emergency and digital improvements as well as activities to address wellbeing, health and community safety.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. However, the proposed levels and areas of capital investments will require borrowing and other associated costs. Financial due diligence and assessment will ensure that all the appropriate costs are considered for each proposal.

S151 OFFICER COMMENTS

The s151 Officer has authored this report and his comments are reflected within

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council has the legal power to acquire, use and dispose of land principally under the Local Government Act 1972 and other Acts which give the Council powers to acquire land for a particular purpose. In accordance with section 120(1), Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the power to acquire any land where it is for the purposes of (a) any of its statutory functions or (b) for the benefit, improvement or development of its area.

If the Council decides to dispose of land, there is a legal requirement to obtain best value (with very limited exceptions).

Depending on the nature of the particular type of property concerned, there may be other statutory requirements or procedures to be undertaken before any acquisition, appropriation or disposal of land.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

Capital and Investment Strategies form part of the Budget Framework and their adoption is a function of Full Council.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix A: Capital Programme 2026-27 to 2035-36
Appendix B: Capital Strategy - Investing in the Future
Appendix C: CAG Terms of Reference

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