Welsh Government

GUIDANCE ON FLEXIBLE USE OF CAPITAL RECEIPTS

April 2018

PART 1 of this document provides an informal commentary on Part 2.

PART 2 contains the statutory guidance to which local authorities must have regard.

[PART 1]

INFORMAL COMMENTARY ON THE GUIDANCE ON FLEXIBLE USE OF CAPITAL RECEIPTS

[References to the paragraphs in the formal guidance are in square brackets]

POWER UNDER WHICH THE GUIDANCE IS ISSUED [1.1]

1. The **Local Government Act 2003 ("the Act")**, section 15(1) requires a local authority "…to have regard (a) to such guidance as the Secretary of State may issue, and (b) to such other guidance as the Secretary of State may by regulations specify…". and section 24 of the Act states "In its application to Wales, …for any reference to the Secretary of State there were substituted a reference to the Welsh Ministers."

2. The guidance on the flexible use of capital receipts in Part 2 of this document is issued under section 15(1) of the Act and authorities are therefore required to have regard to it.

3. Two codes of practice issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) contain guidance on capital receipts and local authority accounting that complements the Welsh Government guidance. These publications are:
   - *The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities*
   - *The Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting.*

4. Local authorities are required to have regard to the current edition of *Treasury Management in Public Services: Code of Practice and Sectoral Guidance Notes* by Regulation 19 of the *Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (Wales) Regulations 2003 (SI 2003/3239 (W319))* and to the *Local Authority Accounting Code* as proper practices for preparing accounts under section 21(2) of the Act.

APPLICATION [3.1- 3.2]

5. This guidance should be read alongside the relevant direction issued by Welsh Ministers.

6. This guidance applies with effect from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2022 – i.e. for the financial year 2016-17 and for each subsequent financial year to which the flexible use of capital receipts direction applies.

7. The direction makes it clear that local authorities cannot borrow to finance the revenue costs of service reform. Local authorities can only use capital receipts from the disposal of property plant and equipment assets received in the years in which this flexibility is offered. Local Authorities may not use their existing stock of capital receipts to finance the revenue costs of qualifying projects..

QUALIFYING EXPENDITURE [4.1 - 4.3]

8. Welsh Ministers believe that individual authorities and groups of authorities are best placed to decide which projects will be most effective for their areas. The key criterion to use when deciding whether expenditure can be funded by the capital receipts flexibility is that it is forecast to generate ongoing savings or reduce revenue costs or pressures over the longer term to an authority, or several authorities, and/or to another public body.

9. A list of types of project that would qualify for the flexible use of capital receipts is included in the guidance. This list is not meant to be prescriptive or exhaustive and individual authorities with projects that will generate ongoing savings or reduce revenue costs or pressures over the longer term which are not included in the list can apply the flexibility to fund those projects.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY [5.1 - 5.6]

10. Welsh Ministers believe it is important that individual authorities demonstrate the highest standards of accountability and transparency. The guidance recommends that each authority should prepare a separate disclosure note of the individual projects that have been funded or part funded through capital receipts flexibility. The disclosure note should be approved by the Responsible Financial

Officer at the same time the statutory accounts are certified and can be included as part of the year-end accounts documentation. The disclosure note should be considered and approved by the person presiding at the committee or meeting at which approval of the statement of accounts was given.

[PART 2]

Welsh Government
GUIDANCE ON FLEXIBLE USE OF CAPITAL RECEIPTS

Issued under section 15(1)(a) of the *Local Government Act 2003*
and effective from 1 April 2016

(1) POWER UNDER WHICH THE GUIDANCE IS ISSUED

1.1 The following guidance is issued by Welsh Ministers under section 15(1)(a) of the *Local Government Act 2003.*

(2) DEFINITION OF TERMS

2.1 In this guidance, **the Act** means the *Local Government Act 2003.*

2.2 **Local authority** has the meaning given in section 23 of the Act (and in regulations made under that section).

2.3 **Capital receipt** has the meaning given in section 9 of the Act (and in regulations made under that section).

2.4 **Qualifying expenditure** means expenditure on a project where incurring up-front costs will generate ongoing savings; reduce revenue costs or pressures over the longer term. The main part of this guidance details the types of project that will generate qualifying expenditure.

2.5 The **direction** means a direction made under section 16(2)(b) of the Act, to allow named local authorities to treat qualifying expenditure as being capital expenditure.

2.6 **Prudential indicators** has the meaning given in the CIPFA code of practice, *The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities*.

(3) APPLICATION

Effective date

3.1 This guidance applies with effect from 1 April 2016, for the period for which flexible use of capital receipts will apply. This will be set out in the direction.

Local authorities

3.2 This guidance applies to all local authorities in Wales named in the directions issued by Welsh Ministers.

(4) QUALIFYING EXPENDITURE

Types of qualifying expenditure

4.1 Qualifying expenditure is expenditure on any project that is designed to generate ongoing revenue savings in the delivery of public services and/or transform service delivery in a way that reduces costs or demand for services in future years for the Authority or any of the delivery partners. This includes investment which supports economic growth projects which are also designed to reduce revenue costs or pressures over the longer term. Within this definition, it is for individual local authorities to decide whether or not a project qualifies for the flexibility.

4.2 The set up and implementation costs of any new processes or arrangements can be classified as qualifying expenditure. The ongoing revenue costs of the new processes or arrangements cannot be classified as qualifying expenditure.

Examples of qualifying expenditure

4.3 There are a wide range of projects that could generate qualifying expenditure and the list below is not prescriptive. Examples of projects include:

- Preparatory work necessary to support local authority mergers as part of the programme to reform local government in Wales;
- Sharing back-office and administrative services with one or more other council or public sector body;
- Investment in service reform feasibility work, eg. setting up pilot schemes;
- Collaboration between local authorities and central government to free up land for economic use;

- Funding the cost of service reconfiguration, restructuring or rationalisation (staff or non-staff), where this leads to ongoing efficiency savings or service transformation;
- Sharing Chief Executives, management teams or staffing structures;
- Driving a digital approach to the delivery of more efficient public services and how the public interacts with constituent authorities where possible;
- Aggregating procurement on common goods and services where possible, either as part of local arrangements or using the National Procurement Service, Crown Commercial Services or other central purchasing bodies which operate in accordance with the Wales Procurement Policy Statement;
- Improving systems and processes to tackle fraud and corruption in line with the Local Government Fraud and Corruption Strategy – this could include an element of staff training;
- Setting up alternative delivery models to deliver services more efficiently and bring in revenue (for example, through selling services to others); and
- Integrating public facing services across two or more public sector bodies (for example children's social care, trading standards) to generate savings or to transform service delivery.
- Investment which supports economic growth projects which are also designed to reduce revenue costs or pressures over the longer term, across one or more local authorities and/or other public sector bodies.

(5) ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Preparation

5.1 Following the end of each financial year, as part of the preparation of its annual accounts, a local authority should ensure it prepares a disclosure note in accordance with the timetable in paragraph 5.5

Content

5.2 As a minimum, the disclosure note should list each project that made use of the capital receipts flexibility, ensuring that it details the split of up-front funding for each project between capital receipts and other sources, and that on a project-by-project basis, setting out the expected savings and/or benefits of investment.

5.3 The disclosure note may also include any other matters considered to be relevant.

Approval

5.4 The disclosure note should be considered and approved by resolution of the committee or of the members meeting as a whole.

Timing

5.5 For any financial year, a disclosure note should be prepared and approved no later than approval of the statement of accounts.

Publication

5.6 Welsh Ministers expect the disclosure note once approved, to be made available to the public free of charge, in print or online.