CAPITAL STRATEGY 2024/25

1 Introduction

- 1.1. The CIPFA Prudential Code (revised 2021) requires that the Council produces an annual Capital Strategy. The Strategy provides a long term context in which capital decisions are made, the approach for governance for those decisions, and also information on the Council's approach towards treasury management and other investments.
- 1.2. The Capital Strategy is the Council's framework for the allocation and management of capital resources within the authority, which takes account of the Council's key priorities in the Corporate Plan. It forms a key part of the Council's integrated revenue, capital, and balance sheet planning with a view towards deliverability, affordability, sustainability and risk.
- 1.3. The Capital Strategy identifies the current capital programme and the processes that are carried out to maintain an ongoing investment plan together with the links between its objectives and that of the Corporate Plan. It also gives an insight into how the strategy might develop in terms of achieving the priority outcomes in the next 5-10 years and beyond.

2 Capital Strategy Objectives

- 2.1. The main objectives of the Council's Capital Strategy are as follows:
 - Maintain and effectively monitor the capital programme.
 - Provide a clear process with which to evaluate proposals for new capital expenditure in line with the Council's priorities.
 - Maximise capital resources available to the Council and spend these in accordance with corporate objectives as outlined in the Corporate Plan.
 - Ensure the affordability of the approved capital programme.
 - Identify and bid for external resources of capital finance on a co-ordinated basis.
 - Determine transparent schemes of option appraisal to assess new internal bids and post contract evaluation.
 - Explore alternative procurement and financing options.
 - Maximise the efficient use of assets via the Asset Management Plan.
 - Identify and monitor benchmarking and performance measures for all aspects of the capital investment process.
 - Ensure that Prudential Guidelines are identified in determining the capital programme and these are kept under continuous review.
 - Utilise opportunities under the Prudential Guidelines regime to maximise capital development opportunities.
 - Ensure that the developments in capital processes keep pace with securing an unqualified value for money conclusion in the annual audit letter.
- 2.2. These objectives are kept under regular review and progress monitored by the Strategic Planning and Capital Monitoring Panel.

3 Council Key Objectives

3.1. The Council's Corporate Plan, "Our People, Our Place, Our Plan," represents a long term vision for the borough and is based around the three themes of Starting Well, Living Well, and Ageing Well.

3.2. These themes are identified below along with the key priorities used to evaluate the Council's performance against them and some examples of projects within the current Capital Programme which support them.

3.3. Starting Well

The Council wants the give residents the very best start in life by focusing resources on the following priorities:

- Ensuring children are ready to learn and encouraged to thrive and develop
- Creating aspiration and hope through learning
- Maintaining resilient families and support networks to protect and grow young people

Within this areas, some of the recently completed and current key capital projects include:

- Hawthorns Primary
- Longdendale Academy
- Rayner Stephens
- All Saints Academy

3.4. Living Well

The Council believes Tameside is a great place to live and work and we will strive to make it even better by focusing resources on the following priorities:

- Generating opportunities for people to fulfil their potential through work, skills and enterprise
- Providing modern infrastructure and a sustainable environment that works for all current and future generations
- Nurturing our communities and having pride in our people, our place, and our shared heritage

Within these areas, some of the recently completed and current key capital projects include:

- Ashton Levelling Up Funding
- Stalybridge Levelling Up Funding
- Stalybridge Heritage Action Zone
- Godley Garden Village
- Highways and Town Capital

3.5. Ageing Well

The Council aims to provide the best quality of life for older generations through the following priorities:

- Longer and healthier lives with good mental health through better choices and reduced inequalities
- Independence and activity in older age, and dignity and choice at end of life

Within this area, some of the recently completed and current key capital projects and proposals include:

- Disabled Facilities Grants allowing people to live independently for longer
- Disability Assessment Centre
- Extra Care Assistive Technology
- 3.6. In order to ensure that these priorities are met, the capital programme is co-ordinated by the corporate section within the Financial Management team. The team work closely with representatives from within the service areas of the Council, Project Managers and Sponsors, the Strategic Planning and Capital Monitoring Panel (SPCMP) and senior officers to ensure the planned capital programme is achieved through a programme of effective planning and monitoring. Responsibility for the achievement of the programme lies with Portfolio Holders and Directors together with Project Sponsors and Managers.

- 3.7. The Council has in place a solid platform for collating information on both the financial and physical progress of capital schemes. Detailed capital updates are submitted to Strategic Planning and Capital Monitoring Panel (SPCMP) by each Directorate and the minutes of these meetings are sent to Executive Cabinet for ratification. The updates include details of the progress of schemes, notification of new external funding allocations and requests for changes to the funding of capital schemes.
- 3.8. Monitoring of the Capital Programme, both in financial and physical terms, is reported 3 times a year in July, September and January, and also at year end when actual outturn figures are reported. The monitoring report goes through several stages of review and approval; firstly to Senior Leadership Team (SLT), then on to Executive Cabinet and Strategic Planning and Capital Monitoring Panel. The reports show details of actual expenditure against planned spend, a forecast of outturn figures and in the case of schemes with a projected variation above £100,000, more detailed information on progress and the scheme's current status. All changes to the Capital Programme and any necessary changes to the Prudential Indicator limits are approved through the Capital Monitoring reports.
- 3.9. Monitoring is supported by regular meetings between financial management staff, Executive Directors and Project Sponsors/Managers. Details of major variations are determined and reported on, as a minimum, at the corporate monitoring points. Individual Council officers will sometimes attend the SPCMP to help give Members an enhanced understanding of the progress of specific schemes and any related issues, as well as providing an opportunity for Members to ask questions about more complex projects.

4 Capital Programme and Resources

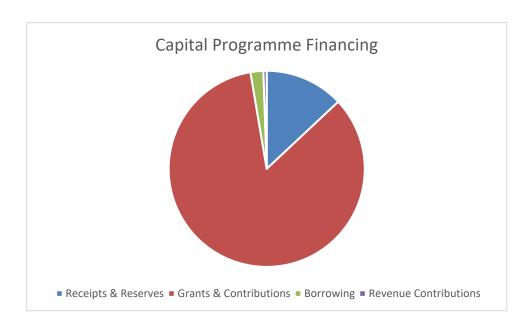
- 4.1. The Council maintains a three year Capital Programme, which currently covers the period 2023/24 to 2025/26. This is updated annually during the budget process in February and quarterly during the year.
- 4.2. As of December 2023 the Programme has a total value of £116m including both fully approved and earmarked schemes. A summary of the Programme is included in this report as **Appendix 1A**.
- 4.3. A major source of capital funding available to the Council is via grants from Central Government. Such grants are often obtained alongside conditions that they are allocated to specific schemes or programmes.
- 4.4. The Council also actively seeks further investment to fund the capital programme, such as capital receipts from the sale of assets or joint funding opportunities on a wide range of projects.
- 4.5. The strategy is intended to consider all potential funding options available to the Council and maximise the available resources for capital investment in line with the priorities set out within.
- 4.6. The main areas of funding available are set out below:
- 4.6.1. **Borrowing** Under the Prudential Guidelines the Council is able to determine its own level of unsupported borrowing provided it is affordable, prudent and sustainable. The majority of borrowing taken up is from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) which is, in effect, the government.

The additional cost of any prudential borrowing undertaken must be met through the Council's revenue budget, and therefore has a direct link to the local taxpayer. The impact of this must be considered when seeking approval for any schemes funded through borrowing. The Council can only normally borrow to fund capital expenditure.

The Council took up £30m of long term borrowing from the PWLB in August 2019 when rates were at favourable levels. The average interest rate across these two loans is 1.81%. In the intervening period the PWLB increased their margin over gilts (the basis for their interest rates) by 1%, but lowered this back to the previous margin in November 2020. Interest rates have since risen substantially and as of January 2024 the interest rate on loans of similar terms to those taken up in August 2019 is around 5%.

The Council continues to monitor the borrowing requirement on a regular basis, alongside the movement in interest rates. In the short term, borrowing would only be taken up if interest rates were at a favourable level, which is unlikely given the current economic forecast.

- 4.6.2. **Grants and Contributions** Capital grants mainly come from a variety of government funded departments or agencies. Grants currently make up 84% (£97m) of the capital programme. Grants can be either ringfenced to particular areas or schemes, or non-ringfenced and therefore available for use on any project. The majority of Government grants are now non-ringfenced, although there is usually a bidding process to go through to obtain approval for capital grants and therefore an implicit ringfencing.
- 4.6.3. **Revenue Financing** Revenue financing, paying for capital expenditure from the revenue budget, is not a major element of capital financing and due to ever increasing pressures on revenue budgets this has been reduced over time. In the current financial environment this is unlikely to increase.
- 4.6.4. Capital Reserves Use of the Council's reserves will be determined by the Reserves Strategy. In 2017, an earmarked reserve of just under £70m was created to fund Capital Investment in the borough. Further use of reserves to fund Capital Investment will require approval in accordance with the reserves strategy. As of 2023/24, £0.022m of this reserve remains.
- 4.6.5. **Leasing** Under the Prudential Guidelines the amount of leasing will depend on the cost compared to borrowing. In recent years it has often been more attractive to finance schemes using prudential borrowing rather than leasing. Where appropriate, appraisals will be undertaken in order to ensure the most appropriate funding source is used.
- 4.6.6. **Capital receipts** Capital receipts are actively being pursued as the Council seeks to rationalise its asset base and encourage development in the borough. Receipts are earmarked as a corporate resource unless a case is made to reinvest them towards a specific project. Capital receipts can only be used to fund capital expenditure, or the repayment of borrowing.
- 4.7. Schemes within the Capital Programme can be categories in 3 ways:
 - **Approved** Schemes which have been fully approved and are in the delivery phase
 - **Earmarked** Schemes for which funding has been identified and set aside but require further information before they are fully approved
 - Funding Streams Funding allocated to the Council for which schemes have not yet been identified and approved. Funding streams most commonly relate to annual grants from Central Government
- 4.8. The below graphs demonstrate the current three year programme split by funding source and also by approved and earmarked schemes:





4.9. A financing exercise is completed at the end of every year to determine the final allocation of funding. Generally grants and external contributions will be used first, before then considering the allocation of capital receipts, reserves, and prudential borrowing. This is, however, at the discretion of the Section 151 Officer.

5 Bidding Process for New Projects

- 5.1. The Council has limited resources available to fund Capital Expenditure and therefore has in place a thorough bidding process for the allocation of capital investment. In September 2021, Executive Cabinet approved the allocation of the remaining capital reserves to immediate priorities. No further capital projects will be approved in the short term unless the schemes are fully funded from external sources. However, it is expected the process outlined below will be reinstated when further capital investment is available in future years.
- 5.2. The stages of the current process in place to bid for capital investment are as follows:
 - **Application for Investment** This is the first step and should be a brief outline of the project and its financing.

- Business Case Brief This should be a two page outline of the required project with a summary business case
- **Scoping, Design, and Costing** This stage will involve seeking external support and carrying out feasibility work.
- **Full Business Case** This is a full case for the project including the strategic, economic, commercial, financial, and management cases for proceeding. Once approved this will be presented to SPCMP.
- Project Delivery and Monitoring Following approval of the business case, key
 milestones should be identified and monitored.
- **Project Evaluation** Following completion, a post implementation evaluation should be completed in order to assess the success of the project.
- 5.3. A flow chart illustrating this process can be seen in **Appendix 2.**

6 Prioritisation of Allocation of Resources

- 6.1 A prioritisation process has been developed in order to aid the decision making process when new investment is required. For proposed schemes, officers will undertake an assessment against a number of criteria including
 - **Strategic Context** What is the purpose of the scheme and how does it fit with the Council's priorities, the Budget Strategy and the local and national context.
 - Mandatory or discretionary investment Is the scheme intended to address Health and Safety, Legal or Statutory obligations? Is it a cost-avoidance or invest to save scheme? Is the planned scheme to address regeneration, improvement and development or transformation of services?
 - **Objectives and benefits of the scheme** What is the scheme expected to deliver for the Council, service users and residents?
 - **Financial implications and options for delivery** to consider whether alternative options can be considered, what financial investment is required and whether any external funding is available.
- 6.1 This prioritisation methodology is used to support future capital investment decisions and ensure that scarce capital resources are allocated in the most efficient, effective and sustainable way and thus ensuing value for money.

7 Future Years

- 7.1 In September 2021, Executive Cabinet approved the allocation of the remaining capital reserves to immediate priorities and agreed that no new capital investment would be agreed until the Council has a sustainable medium-term financial plan. Currently, no further capital projects will be approved in the short-term unless the schemes are fully funded from external sources.
- 7.2 Any additional priority schemes that are put forward for consideration and that are not fully funded from external sources will need to be evaluated and costed using the process outlined in Section 5 and will be subject to separate Member approval.

8 Asset Management

8.1. The Council maintains a fairly typical local authority property portfolio. As at 31 March 2023, and subject to audit, this consisted of:

Asset Class	£m
Land and Buildings	351
Vehicles, Plant and Equipment	15
Infrastructure	134

Total	577
Investment Properties	38
Assets Under Construction	4
Surplus Assets	20
Community Assets	15

- 8.2. The Council's land and property estate is its largest resource after its staff. Therefore it is crucial that this resource is managed, maintained, and used effectively and efficiently in order to obtain the greatest possible benefit in terms of meeting its aims and priorities for the borough. Due to the continued pressure on local authority finances there is more importance than ever placed on ensuring that there is a robust strategic approach and the correct decisions are made regarding the effective use and management of the Council's asset base.
- 8.3. It is vital that the Council's assets are fit for purpose, provide value for money, and help meet the needs of the borough and its residents. Decisions to invest in (or dispose of) assets should be based upon these factors and follow a robust and transparent process driven by the Council's statutory duties and corporate objectives.
- 8.4. The Council uses a corporate landlord approach and will endeavour, through its programme of capital investment to maintain its assets to such a standard that they remain fit for purpose and enable service delivery towards meeting Council priorities. Regular surveys of buildings and structures should be ongoing in order to determine their state of repair and inform decisions over what level of remedial works are required. Any service reviews across the organisation should also be taken into consideration, with the service driving its asset needs. For example, new ways of working or service restructures could result in some assets becoming surplus to requirements.
- 8.5. It is therefore important that the Council's capital strategy considers the other corporate plans and strategies to ensure that its capital resources are appropriately deployed to enable the delivery of services.
- 8.6. As is outlined in section 4 of this report, capital receipts form a significant part of the Council's available funding for capital investments. Therefore opportunities for disposals should be investigated wherever possible. Assets should only be retained when they;
 - Support the objectives of the Corporate Plan
 - Contribute towards service delivery
 - Provide value for money (in terms of the above for operational properties, or in terms
 of income generation or growth of capital value for investment properties)
- 8.7. In addition to the above, the responsibilities of the estates and corporate landlord functions include:
 - Considering alternative property solutions for service delivery
 - Negotiating agreements for the occupation or purchase of property
 - Advising on proposals relating to property
 - Carrying out scheduled repairs and maintenance and also making business cases where appropriate for additional repairs and maintenance
 - Assisting with the rationalisation of the asset base
 - Appraising options for the portfolio
 - Managing the safety and security of the portfolio
 - Arranging and administer facilities management
 - Managing property related budgets
- 8.8 A key priority for 2023/24 is the implementation of the Strategic Asset Management Plan and associated estates strategy, which supports the delivery of investment. Through a more effective asset management plan the Council aims to deliver One Public Estate, generate

income, realise recyclable capital receipts and provide a strategic approach to our capital programme and major projects, realising opportunities for economic growth, new housing and local jobs for local people.

9 Procurement Strategy

- 9.1. Procurement is a critical mechanism for delivering value for money and achieving sustainable outcomes for local communities. The Council recognises that effective procurement will assist in achieving its ambitions by realising value for money from the way it procures and delivers its services and uses its resources in an effective way. This allows savings to be redirected into front line services. It is essential that innovative methods to improve procurement practices and to deliver savings are adopted where appropriate.
- 9.2. The Council entered into a strategic partnering arrangement as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme in 2009. This partnering arrangement was delivered through a Local Education Partnership (LEP) which is a limited company. The original LEP arrangement ran for ten years with an option to extend by a further five years, up to February 2024. The majority of the Council's capital expenditure has been delivered by the LEP.
- 9.3. In September 2018, the Council formally joined the STAR procurement shared service, a partnership arrangement between Stockport, Trafford and Rochdale. This arrangement provides the Council with capacity and procurement expertise. The STAR Business Plan and STAR Procurement Strategy sets out five objectives that help to deliver a successful procurement service. These objectives are commercial, communities, collaboration, compliance and champions. Further detail can be found at www.star-procurement.gov.uk

10 Links to Partners

- 10.1. Tameside Council works with a wide range of partners to deliver the vision and priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan. Some of the ways we work together are listed below, along with links to the relevant web pages:
 - Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership
 Home | Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership (gmintegratedcare.org.uk)
 - Greater Manchester Combined Authority https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/
 - Tameside Health and Wellbeing Board http://www.tameside.gov.uk/healthwellbeingboard
 - Tameside Safeguarding Children's Board -https://www.tamesidesafeguardingchildren.org.uk/
 - Tameside Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board -http://www.tameside.gov.uk/AdultServices/Tameside-Adults-Safeguarding-Partnership-Board
- 10.2. Other partners that the Council works with include; Job Centre Plus, Stockport Foundation Trust, Pennine Care, Tameside College, Jigsaw Homes Tameside, to name but a few.

11 Investments and Liabilities

11.1. The Council's capital programme and balance sheet consists of investments made by the Council to support its strategic aims. A key part of the capital process is monitoring and reviewing such investments once they are made. Traditionally, the Council has focused the Capital Strategy on the delivery of capital schemes; however, with the increasing national focus on broader investment activities undertaken by local authorities, the Capital Strategy has been expanded in order to take a wider overview of other relevant investments and liabilities.

11.2. As at 31 March 2023, the Council had the following long term investments on its balance sheet:

	£m
Investment Properties	38.130
Long Term Debtors	43.520
Long Term Investments	33.501
Total	115.151

- 11.3. The long term debtors figure includes loan stock held by the Council in Inspiredspaces Tameside (Holdings 1) Ltd (£1.6m), loan stock held in Inspiredspaces Tameside (Holdings 2) Ltd (£3.0m), the Council's share of loan debt to Manchester Airport (£29.6m), and some other minor amounts.
- 11.4. The long term investments held by the Council include investments in Manchester Airport Group (£24.4m) and Inspiredspaces (£9.1m).
- 11.5. The Council has an investment property portfolio of around 150 assets. These are revalued annually. The largest of these assets are Manchester Airport Land (£11.3m), Ashton Market Hall (£1.3m) and a car park# based at the Tameside Hospital (£1.9m).

12 Treasury Management

- 12.1 Treasury Management is a key component of the Council's capital planning, largely as the Council has the ability to borrow in order to finance capital projects. A separate Treasury Management Strategy is produced annually, but what follows are some of the key issues.
- 12.2 At 31 December 2023 the Council had £121m of investments which need to be safeguarded, and £139m of long term debt, which has been accrued over the years to help to fund the Council's capital investment programmes.
- 12.3 The Council's treasury activities are strictly regulated by statutory requirements and a professional code of practice (the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management revised 2021) and the Prudential Code. The Council has adopted the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management. Part of this code is for the Council to set out Treasury Management Practices (TMPs). These are in place and are being adhered to.
- 12.4 The key objectives of the Prudential Code are to ensure, within a clear framework, that the capital plans of local authorities are affordable, prudent and sustainable and to ensure that treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice and in a manner that supports these objectives.
- 12.5 The Council's long term borrowing requirement in any year depends on the following factors:-
 - (a) Existing loans which are due to mature during the year. These will include external loans, and any reduction of internal resources that are temporarily being used to finance capital expenditure.
 - (b) The amount of capital expenditure that the Council has determined should be financed by borrowing. Under the Prudential Code on Borrowing the Council may determine its own levels of borrowing and is set by the Council as part of the main budget process. The Council is able to borrow in advance of its requirements, when it is considered beneficial to do so.

- (c) The amount of outstanding debt required to be repaid during the year, including the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) and additional voluntary MRP to repay prudential borrowing.
- 12.6 The primary objectives of the Council's investment strategy are safeguarding the re-payment of the principal and interest of its investments on time, ensuring adequate liquidity, with the investment rate of return being the final consideration. The current investment climate continues to have one over-riding risk, counterparty risk; the risk that a borrower may default on a loan.
- 12.7 Normally when the Council has surplus cash, this is invested to try to ensure that interest earned is optimised with minimal risk of capital loss. Higher interest rates are earned by investing any large amounts on the London money markets, rather than by leaving such sums with the Council's own bank. The Treasury Management Strategy sets out the type of institutions with which the Council may deposit funds for this purpose. The list has been compiled to reflect the creditworthiness of these banks and building societies, rather than the rates of interest payable, as the safety of the asset is the most important consideration. Nonetheless, the interest received from these institutions is competitive.

13 Risk

- 13.1 The Council faces a broad range of risks. Examples include:
 - Financial risk related to the Council's investments
 - Credit and Counterparty risk related to investments and loans
 - Interest rate risk the risk that interest rates move in a manner that is adverse to the Council's investments or borrowings.
 - Reputational risk that any adverse outcomes could affect the Council's reputation and public perception
 - Environmental risks due to the Council's investments or capital projects
 - Asset condition risk the need to continually invest in condition of property and highway estate
 - Governance risks ensuring that appropriate decision making procedures are adhered to
- 13.2 The Council has a low risk appetite, so as to safeguard taxpayer funds, and this is reflected in the Treasury Management Strategy and outlined above.

14 Skills and Knowledge

- 14.1 The Financial Management team responsible for Treasury Management and Capital contains several professionally qualified accountants with extensive relevant experience. The team regularly attend a variety of training courses in order to keep up to date with the latest developments. The Council also have a contract with Arlingclose, who provide up to date specialist advice and technical services.
- 14.2 Capital investment proposals, the quarterly capital monitoring reports, and capital update papers, and their associated minutes, are submitted to a number of meetings including SLT, Executive Board and Cabinet, and SPCMP. In addition, officers from senior management and financial management meet regularly in order to support the effective prioritisation, management and monitoring of the Capital Programme.
- 14.3 In January 2018 a new treasury management directive, Markets in Financial Instruments Directive II (MiFID II) came into force. This required the Council to pass a number of qualitative and quantitative tests in order to maintain its status as a "professional" investor. Part of this

involved demonstrating that the treasury management team had sufficient skills and experience to be classified in this fashion. Tameside successfully opted up to professional status with all counterparties that required it.

15 Summary

- 15.1 The Council in conjunction with its partners has identified a clear set of priorities. The Capital Strategy gives clear guidance as to where capital resources should be directed in achievement of those priorities over the length of the current capital programme and over the longer term.
- 15.2 The Strategy also demonstrates that the Council does and will continue to work closely with a variety of partners to obtain quality projects and maximise potential resources in the achievement of its aims. The Council also encourages the continued exploration of securing external funding, the examination of different forms of procurement and maintaining current levels of innovation.
- 15.3 The Council has a good framework in place to achieve its strategy and will strive to achieve continual improvement on a number of its processes as set out in its main objectives. This will be monitored and reviewed by the Strategic Planning and Capital Monitoring Panel.
- 15.4 The Capital Strategy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and revised annually.

16 Recommendations

16.1 As set out on the front of the report.

Appendix 1A

TOTAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23 – 2024/25

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Earmarked	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Place: Property, Development and Planning					
Development & Investment	8.718	31.413	8.007	1.542	49.680
Corporate Landlord	0.993	-	-	-	0.993
Vision Tameside	0.073	-	-	-	0.073
Active Tameside	0.102	_		-	0.102
Place: Operations and Neighbourhoods					
Engineers, Highways & Traffic Management	8.046	1.195	-	-	9.241
Operations & Greenspace	1.176	0.200	-	-	1.376
Waste & Fleet Management	-	0.826	-	-	0.826
Estates	0.057	-	-	0.095	0.152
Management & Operations	0.250	0.478	-	-	0.728
Community Safety & Homelessness	0.328	-	-	-	0.328
Children's					
School Related Works	26.567	7.729	-	-	34.296
Children's Social Care Safeguarding & Quality Assurance	1.234	2.612	-	-	3.846
Adults					
Adults Commissioning Service	3.933	6.757	0.020	-	10.710
Governance					
Governance	0.032	-	-	0.440	0.472
Total Approved	51.509	51.210	8.027	2.077	112.823
Contingency	_	-	-	2.800	2.800
Total	51.509	51.210	8.027	4.877	115.623

Business Case Approval Process

