
Item: 10.04

Subject: INVESTMENTS - MARCH 2020

Presented by: Corporate Performance, Rebecca Olsen

Alignment with Delivery Program

1.5.1 Manage Council's financial assets and provide accurate, timely and reliable information.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council note the Investment Report for the month of March 2020.

Executive Summary

- Total funds invested as at 31 March equals \$301,970,493.
- Interest for the month of March was \$643,241.
- The year-to-date investment income of \$6,017,900 represents 72% of the total annual investment income budget of \$8,395,000.
- Council's total investment portfolio performance for the financial year to date was 1.69% above the benchmark (2.73% against 1.04%), benchmark being the Bank Bill reference rate as at 31 March 2020.

The following outlines the significant points outlined in the attached Monthly Report (Attachment 1), as provided by Council's investment advisors:

- Council's portfolio has met compliance requirements and outperformed benchmarks during the month.
- Over the past 12 months, the portfolio has returned +2.81% p.a., outperforming bank bills by 1.57% p.a. and around 3 times the official cash rate. This has been very strong given deposit rates reached their all-time lows and margins have generally contracted over the past 3 years.
- Global financial markets continue to be impacted by the widespread effects of COVID-19, with the RBA cutting the official cash rate to a new record low of 0.25%.
- With official interest rates now at the RBA's effective zero bound, the priority should be to lock in any attractive medium-longer dated fixed deposits that may still be available.
- It is recommended to consider increasing the allocation to liquid senior floating rate notes.

Discussion

Council has engaged Imperium Markets to provide both an investment management platform and investment advisory service. This decision was based on the need to provide more rigour and transparency around investment choices and to provide a sound framework to support the need for increased financial sustainability into the future.

The attached investment report and portfolio (Attachment 2) provides detailed information on the performance of Council's investment portfolio.

Overview

Councils (including Port Macquarie-Hastings Council) provide a broad range of services and associated infrastructure to their communities. These services include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Water and Sewer services;
- Waste services;
- Port Macquarie Airport;
- Cemeteries;
- Roads and Bridges;
- Various Recreation and Cultural facilities.

The Port Macquarie-Hastings area is a high growth centre of the North Coast region and is expected to accommodate a significant proportion of regional growth over the next two decades. As a consequence of this growth, Council must not only provide services to the existing community and maintain existing assets, but Council must also plan for future maintenance and capital expenditure on the infrastructure that will be needed to support the community, business and visitors to the area into the future.

An independent analysis was conducted on Council's financial reserves. The review found:

- The Port Macquarie-Hastings local government area has experienced an unprecedented level of development activity. Whilst this has increased the level of reserves held through developer contributions, councils experiencing a high level of development activity require relatively high levels of reserves in order to adequately cope with the required levels of infrastructure spending.
- Council's reserve levels to be broadly appropriate and reasonable in light of Council's circumstances. In particular, that Council has successfully maintained a prudent buffer to prepare against potential financial risks associated with the predicted high development activity.

The full report is available on Council's website:

<http://www.pmhc.nsw.gov.au/About-Us/What-Council-Does/Corporate-Planning-Reporting-Budgets/Financial-Reports?BestBetMatch=financial%20reserves|cdbad291-68a4-4d81-8aee-b3733958e5ca|bd0cff62-3134-4e81-9f7e-de4e65feb428|en-AU>

Current Investments

Council is required to undertake investments in accordance with section 625 of the Local Government Act 1993. This report provides details of Council's investments, and certifies that all funds that Council has invested as at 31 March 2020, comply with this Act.

All investments have been made in accordance with the Act and Regulations, and Council's Investment Policy.

As at 31 March 2020, the investments held by Council totalled \$301,970,493 and were attributed to the following funds:

General Fund	117,152,473
Waste Fund	19,256,657
Water Fund	112,822,216
Sewer Fund	51,150,782
Sanctuary Springs Fund	42,276
Broadwater	1,546,089
	301,970,493

Whilst the current level of investments remains high, these largely relate to funds which have legal restrictions (for example water and sewer), or for funds held for specific purposes.

These funds may be spent in the shorter or longer term depending on the required timing of future works. The totals will fluctuate dependent on the status of individual projects.

It is noted that there is a minor variance between the total investments held as per this report, (\$301,970,493), and total investments held as per Imperium's attached monthly report (\$301,926,042). This is due to the fact that Council's accounting policy treatment means that floating rate notes (FRNs) are held at amortised cost, whereas they are included at fair value in Imperium's report. This variance is not expected to be material.

It is further noted that at the Ordinary Council meeting held on 11th December 2019, Council resolved as follows:

10.06 INVESTMENTS - NOVEMBER 2019

Mr Mick Lyons addressed Council in support of the recommendation and answered questions from Councillors.

RESOLVED: *Intemann/Hawkins*

That Council:

1. *Note the Investment Report for the month of November 2019.*
2. *Write to the parties with which it has investments asking each party to advise its position with respect to investment in fossil fuel projects and enterprises and investment in projects that ensure a low carbon emissions future, with a reply to Council requested by 28 January 2020.*
3. *Refer the investments issues raised in the public address to the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee for its information and comment.*

CARRIED: 5/2

FOR: *Alley, Hawkins, Intemann, Pinson and Turner*

AGAINST: *Griffiths and Levido*

In relation to Resolution 2 above, letters were written as per the Council resolution and forwarded in December 2019 to the following financial institutions:

- a) AMP;
- b) Auswide Bank;
- c) Bendigo Bank;
- d) Bank of Queensland;
- e) ICBC Sydney;
- f) ING;
- g) ME Bank;
- h) NAB;
- i) Newcastle Permanent;
- j) Rabobank;
- k) Westpac.

At the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 19th February 2020 it was reported that responses were received from:

- a) Bendigo Bank;
- b) Bank of Queensland;
- c) ING;
- d) NAB;
- e) Newcastle Permanent.

At the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 18th March 2020 it was reported that further responses had been received from:

- a) Auswide Bank;
- b) Westpac;
- c) ICBC Sydney.

At the time of writing this report, no additional responses had been received.

Options

This is an information report.

Community Engagement and Internal Consultation

Council uses the services of an independent financial advisor, on an ongoing basis with investments. The investments placed this month were term deposits. Council obtains regular updates regarding market activities positions from various institutions.

Planning and Policy Implications

There are no planning and policy implications in relation to this report.

Financial & Economic Implications

Benchmark and budget levels have been met on a year to date basis. On an annual basis, if benchmark levels are not reached, then this may result in budget cuts in other areas to fund the shortfall.

Council's total investment portfolio performance for the financial year to date is 1.69% above the benchmark (2.73% against 1.04%) and year to-date income is 72% of the total annual budget.

It should be noted that investment income is noted as a gross amount. Section 97(5) of the Local Government Act 1993 indicates that any security deposit held with Council must be repaid with interest accrued. These security deposits will only relate to bonds held for security to make good damage done to works.

The overall investment income will be adjusted at financial year end by the total interest refunded on repayment of bonds. As Council constantly receives and refunds bonds, it is difficult to accurately determine the quantum of these refunds.

Certification

I hereby certify that the investments listed within this report were made in accordance with Section 625 of the Local Government Act 1993, clause 212 of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 and Council's Investment Policy.

Nicole Spencer
Responsible Accounting Officer

Attachments

1. Port Macquarie-Hastings Council Monthly Report - March 2020
2. Port Macquarie-Hastings Council Portfolio as at 31 March 2020