

## Investments Held as at 31 December 2019

**File No: X020701**

### Summary

This report provides details of the City's investment portfolio and performance, as at 31 December 2019.

The City's total Investment and Cash position was \$689.9M at the end of December, with investments earning interest of \$1.1M for the month.

The majority of the City's cash and investments portfolio is held as internally restricted (\$363.3M) or externally restricted (\$116.5M) cash reserves, to satisfy the City's legislative responsibilities and to set aside specific funds for Council's funding commitments to the major initiatives within the Sustainable Sydney 2030 Community Strategic Plan.

Key commitments within the City's Long Term Financial Plan include public domain works in the CBD to support the implementation of the CBD and South East light rail project and stormwater, town centre infrastructure and community facilities in the Green Square urban renewal area. The balance of investment funds represent working capital and funding required for the City's operating and capital expenditure commitments.

The City achieved an annualised monthly return of 1.84 per cent for December, above the 30 Day Bank Bill Rate (BBR) of 0.85 per cent, the AusBond Bank Bill Index (published by Bloomberg) of 0.84 per cent and the enhanced benchmark of 1.30 per cent (BBR + 0.45 per cent) as endorsed in October 2019 as part of the Investment Strategy.

The City's annual rolling return of 2.04 per cent also continues to exceed the 12 month average 30 Day Bank Bill Rate of 1.35 per cent, the AusBond Bank Bill Index of 1.50 per cent and the enhanced benchmark of 1.80 per cent (BBR + 0.45 per cent) as endorsed in the Investment Strategy in October 2019.

The structure of the City's investment portfolio continues to reflect the conservative approach outlined in the Investment Policy and Strategy, which remains appropriate for the current global and domestic economic conditions. The policy and strategy also maintain the City's commitment to sustainable investments where returns and risks are equivalent, under the environmentally and socially responsible investment criteria.

**Recommendation**

It is resolved that the Investment Report as at 31 December 2019 be received and noted.

**Attachments**

**Attachment A.** Register of Investments and Cash as at 31 December 2019

**Attachment B.** Investment Performance as at 31 December 2019

## Background

1. In accordance with the principles of financial management, cash that is surplus to the City's immediate requirements is invested within acceptable risk parameters to optimise interest income while ensuring the security of these funds.
2. Surplus cash is only invested in authorised investments that comply with governing legislation and the City's Investment Policy and Strategy.
3. The benchmark performance goal of the City's Investment Policy and Strategy is to surpass the 30 Day Bank Bill Rate (BBR) by 45 basis points while performance also continues to be measured against the Bloomberg AusBond Bank Bill Index.
4. The City's total Investment and Cash position as at 31 December 2019 was \$689.9M, a decrease of \$31.3M from the 30 November closing position of \$721.2M (note that the November Investment Report incorporated a projected closing position of \$700.9M. Actual receipts related to quarterly rates instalment exceeded anticipated levels). The monthly movement reflects capital works expenditure and other operational payments in excess of operating income for the period. A schedule detailing all of the City's investments as at the end of December is provided at Attachment A.
5. The majority of the City's cash and investments portfolio is held as internally restricted (\$363.3M) or externally restricted (\$116.5M) cash reserves, to satisfy the City's legislative responsibilities and to set aside specific funds for Council's funding commitments to the major initiatives within the Sustainable Sydney 2030 Community Strategic Plan.
6. Key commitments within the City's Long Term Financial Plan include public domain works in the CBD to support the implementation of the CBD and South East light rail project and stormwater, town centre infrastructure and community facilities in the Green Square urban renewal area. The balance of investment funds represents working capital and funding required for the City's operating and other capital expenditure commitments.
7. The City achieved an annualised monthly return of 1.84 per cent for December, above the 30 Day Bank Bill Rate (BBR) of 0.85 per cent, the AusBond Bank Bill Index (published by Bloomberg) of 0.84 per cent and the enhanced benchmark of 1.30 per cent (BBR + 0.45 per cent) as endorsed in November 2019 as part of the Investment Strategy.
8. The City's annual rolling return of 2.04 per cent also continues to exceed the 12 month average 30 Day Bank Bill Rate of 1.35 per cent, the AusBond Bank Bill Index of 1.50 per cent and the enhanced benchmark of 1.80 per cent (BBR + 0.45 per cent) as endorsed in the Investment Strategy in November 2019.
9. The RBA last adjusted the official cash rate on 1 October 2019, when it was reduced to 0.75 per cent. The market had anticipated a reduction and responded accordingly, and the resultant lower investment yields have had a sustained adverse impact on the City's portfolio return. These low interest rates are anticipated to continue.
10. The structure of the City's investment portfolio continues to reflect the conservative approach outlined in the Investment Policy and Strategy, which remains appropriate for the current global and domestic economic conditions.

## Key Implications

### Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030

11. The City's investments accord with all legislative and policy requirements, as detailed below, and continue to achieve returns above minimum benchmark rates.

### Financial Implications

12. The City's investments earned interest of \$1.1M for the month of December 2019 against budgeted earnings of \$1.1M. Investment earnings for the full year are forecast to be on budget at \$13.8M.

## Relevant Legislation

13. Council is authorised to invest its surplus cash under Section 625 of the Local Government Act 1993.
14. The Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 (Clause 212) requires the City to provide a written monthly report of all monies invested, under Section 625 of the Act.
15. The Investment Policy and Strategy was revised in October 2019, maintaining Council's commitment to give preference to sustainable investments where returns and risks are equivalent to other investments. The revision also maintained the broadening of the definition of environmentally harmful activities to include specific reference to coal, gas and oil.
16. The City's investments accord with the Minister's Investment Order, the Office of Local Government's Investment Policy Guidelines, and the City's own Investment Policy and Strategy as adopted by Council on 28 October 2019.

## Critical Dates / Time Frames

17. A monthly investment report must be submitted for Council's information and review within the following month.

## Public Consultation

18. Consultation is regularly undertaken with a number of financial institutions and investment advisers to consider options and ensure the City continues to maximise its investment return within appropriate risk parameters.
19. City staff meet regularly with representatives of each of the 'Big 4' banks and NSW TCorp. At these meetings City staff actively advocate for Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) opportunities.
20. To date, feedback from these meetings has been that there is a well-known appetite in the market for these products and they are investigating the development of suitable products, however it has been challenging to match the level of funds to available Socially Responsible Investment opportunities that meet both the credit risk and maturity profile requirements of Council.

21. As noted in previous Investment Reports, Westpac has been able to bring a Green Tailored Deposit product to market, which delivers a comparable return while achieving the City's preferred outcomes. Since November 2018, the City has invested \$85M in thirteen tranches with this Green Tailored deposit.
  
22. The City also invested \$5M in a Sustainable Investment Bond with Bank Australia in December 2019. The issuance of a 'Sustainability Bond' consists of a framework which includes assets that help achieve three of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals of Reduced Inequalities, Sustainable Cities and Communities, and Life on Land. The purpose of the bond is to:
  - (a) Create mutual prosperity in the form of positive economic, social, environmental and cultural impact.
  
  - (b) Lend to charities and not-for-profits to support their work to reduce inequality, and to providers of Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) to help them build quality, appropriate housing for people living with a disability.
  
  - (c) Protect land on its Conservation Reserve to offset the impact of construction loans that it finances.

**BILL CARTER**

Chief Financial Officer