



# Finance News



**Norfolk** County Council

News and views for  
everyone interested  
in finance

**Issue 41**  
**December 2003**

## Happy Christmas

As we approach another Christmas and New Year, I welcome this opportunity through *Finance News* to offer my thanks to you all for the commitment and support you have given me over the past twelve months

2003 has been a very eventful year . . . but what's new! We have all worked extremely hard to maintain the quality of financial support which Norfolk expects. That we have achieved that goal is a great credit to everybody who works in a financial capacity right across the Council and that achievement should not be taken for granted. As always, each year brings with it some special challenges and in this respect, three key events stand out for me as worthy of particular comment.

Firstly, the FIMS project encountered further challenges during the year. As you know, this project was to have been delivered in partnership with Capita. The termination of the partnership on 31 December has required us to assume full responsibility for delivery of our new system and I am pleased to say that, thanks to the goodwill and sheer hard work of so many in all departments, we have been able to position the project for delivery in 2004.

The second development is production of the Norfolk's first Medium Term Plan. Now a requirement of the Council, its production has been a truly corporate effort and a demonstration of the way we can all work so effectively together for the benefit of the Council and the people we serve. For the first time, the Council will have an integrated service and financial plan which looks beyond the next year.

Thirdly, as mentioned earlier, it has been necessary to terminate our partnership with Capita with effect from 31 December. Rather than looking back, I would simply wish to say how much I look forward to working together with all Charles House colleagues who are transferring across to Norfolk at the end of December. Your support in securing a smooth transfer over what is a difficult period for you personally is very much appreciated.

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# RBO Training

## Need to know more about finance and budgeting?

If the answer is YES then why not attend a finance course aimed at Responsible Budget Officers (RBOs) and non-financial managers. There are three dates to choose from early in 2004 – all scheduled for before the start of the new financial year:

- ◆ Wednesday **14 January**,
- ◆ Wednesday **11 February** and
- ◆ Monday **1 March**

The content of the training course includes:

Financial Management & its Key Elements

Medium Term Planning

Annual Budget Cycle

Budget Planning

Financial Reporting & Budget Monitoring

Financial Systems

Budgetary Control

The courses are all 1 day and all will be held at County Hall, Norwich.

If you or a member of your staff would benefit from this course or need to discuss other financial training requirements, then please contact either

**Susanne Baldwin** ext 8987 or  
**Chris Upton** ext 4373.

*Please note that places are limited.*

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Finally, it is always pleasing to receive recognition for the work that we do. Both the Pensions Team and the Corporate Procurement Unit have recently received national awards, presented in London, in recognition of the quality of their work. Whilst this is very pleasing for those teams, I see it very much as a team celebration and a reflection of the work we all do right across the finance community.

2004 promises further challenge, but with your ongoing support, professionalism and commitment, I am confident that we will once again, have a successful year. My thanks again and my best wishes to you all for a VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR.

**Bob Summers**  
Director of Finance

## FIMS lingo

### Abbreviations

<b>BT</b>	Business Transformation
<b>CRP</b>	Conference Room Pilot
<b>DMT</b>	Departmental Management Team
<b>IICD</b>	Invoicing, Income and Debt Collection
<b>PAPG</b>	Purchasing, Accounts Payable and Grants
<b>PTT</b>	Process Transformation Teams
<b>SOR</b>	Statement of Requirements
<b>UAT</b>	User Acceptance Testing
<b>NOML</b>	Nominal Ledger
<b>FIMS</b>	Financial Information Management System
<b>FOG</b>	Finance Officers Group
<b>FMG</b>	Financial Management Group
<b>GL</b>	General Ledger

## Medium Term Planning (MTP)



As we enter December, we are now well into the Budget season and difficult decisions are being made to equate service pressures with an acceptable budget for the County Council.

This year we are also considering service requirements and financial resources for the following two years (2005/6 and 2006/7).

Service planning is nothing new. All departments consider the way their services need to develop to deliver the right services, meet targets and work towards key aims of the organisation. Likewise we have always developed a medium term financial plan, to include known financial pressures, national funding and committed costs.

What we have not done before right across NCC, is to explore fully the cost of our plans, by bringing financial and service planning together. By doing so we can be assured that our high level plans are affordable and achievable and where they are not likely to be affordable take timely action to ensure that future years plans are deliverable.

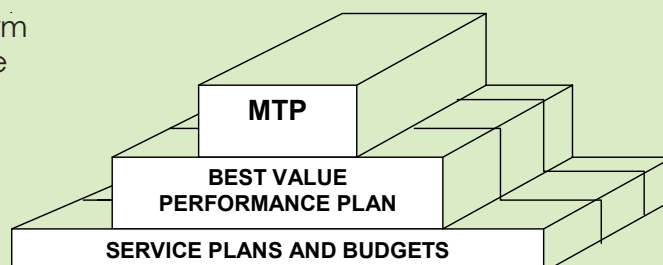
NCC is developing a process for medium term planning which is service led. Throughout the summer months departments focused on the service policy priorities needed to meet the goals of the Community Strategy, which NCC is committed to work towards along with all key organisations in Norfolk. The key actions to work towards delivering policy priorities have been identified along with the revenue and capital resources, where required.

The high level service and resource plans are being developed and then reviewed to assess the overall achievability of the plans and the need to ensure that resources are allocated correctly, to meet the top priorities of the organisation. In setting priorities, Members and the Chief Officers Group (COG) have responded to known concerns and feedback from public consultation.

The medium term plan will be reflected in the three-year budget and capital programme that is approved by County Council in February. But it will not stop there. The plan is just that – a plan. Linked to the overall planning process within NCC, it will need to be monitored, referred to when making decisions during the year, and changed and refined to reflect new pressures, requirements and information.

In an ever changing world medium term planning is essential to help us maximise the opportunities and minimise the surprises.

**Susanne Baldwin** 01603 228987  
Management Accountant



If you would like this newsletter in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language, please contact the helpline, 01603 222820.



# FIMS latest....latest....latest....latest...

## Change Agents

**Have you seen a human dynamo chasing about your department in the last few weeks? If so, he or she could be a FIMS change agent!**

The change agents have been appointed to help departments through the FIMS implementation process.

They are out and about, one per department, talking to people, finding out about who does what, why and how in the existing system, and looking at how best to ensure that the new standard processes—designed by staff from all parts of the Council - and Oracle system can be rolled out smoothly into that department.

Between now and go live in April they will be:

- **Looking at** any difficulties the implementation might cause and finding ways of resolving them.
- **Assessing** the impact of the new processes to make sure that the right people are in the right places when the system goes live.
- **Finding out** who needs what training and supporting colleagues through it. A massive training programme is planned for the new year, involving at least 600 people.

The change agents will be a key point of contact for finance staff, helping them to understand what FIMS is all about and ready to listen to concerns, answer questions, or take up feedback.



**Marina Simmonds**  
Fire

**John Child**  
NPS



**Graham Tennant**  
P&T

### Contacts

The change agents are based in the FIMS Business Transformation mobile next to the Annexe at County Hall.

They can be contacted on any of the following County Hall extensions:

3420, 3442, 3484, 3824, 3963

or by email—all are in the Outlook address book. They will be pleased to meet you, answer your questions, tell you more about FIMS or find out about your concerns.

You are also welcome to contact Jo Quarterman, FIMS Business Transformation Manager, on ext 3950.



**Bev Woods**  
Social Services



**Howard Collins**  
CEX (including Trading  
Standards, Legal Services,  
YOT and Registrars)



**Gerry Baker**  
Finance, Probation and  
Magistrates' Courts



**Tony Howard**  
Education



**Janice Dane**  
The corporate change  
agent with responsibility  
for looking at the needs of  
NCC as a whole



**Jenny Browne**  
Capita



**Robert Testro**  
Cultural Services

## Fact or fiction?



**Finance is only for boring accountants**

**Fiction!** The **fact** is that finance is everyone's responsibility—it isn't just about managing a budget but includes things like trying not to waste resources.

**FIMS is just about replacing one lot of software with another.**

**Fiction!** The **fact** is that FIMS is a lot more than this—it is a combination of a new system, new ways of working and new organisation.

**i-Procurement (internet based buying) will only affect a few people.**

**Fiction!** In **fact** we expect about 1200 people to use the i-Procurement system! If you need to order teas and coffees for meetings, rent a car or order a new desk, i-Procurement will be the way you do it.

**All this effort won't make a lot of difference—things never really change.**

**Fiction!** They do and they will! The **fact** is that FIMS will give us new, efficient ways of working and provide us with much more reliable financial information. It will help everyone involved in finance, from the finance officer to members of the Cabinet, to make much more informed decisions and provide a sound basis for the delivery of County Council services.

## NCC Pension Fund Award

Finance Department scooped the Corporate Governance Award for its Pension Fund for the second year running, at the Public Treasurer Awards, held in London in November.



L-R: JOHN BRISCOE, BOB SUMMERS, DOREEN METCALF, NICOLA MARK, MARK ALEXANDER AND JOHN ALLISON

The Public Treasurer Awards are now in their 10th year and recognise the best performing pension funds in Local Government. The competition is open to all 99 funds representing the interests of over three million local government workers nationwide.

The Corporate Governance award is given to the pension fund, which in the opinion of the judges, has done the most to promote good governance over the preceding 12 months. Evidence of achievement has to include examples of affecting behavioural change in companies or fund managers, share-voting records, investment principles, and a review of governance policy.

The Local Government Pension scheme in Norfolk has more than 21,500 members who work for the County Council, the seven district councils in the county and 83 other organisations. The Fund is one of the best performing local authority funds in the country - between 1992 and 2003 it was the top performing Fund amongst all shire counties - and has assets of over £1 billion.

Alison King, Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Investment Committee, said: "Our Fund has had a long-term interest in Corporate Governance and Social Responsibility in our investments. We recognise that, as a large investor, we have a responsibility to use our votes at company AGMs and engage with companies on factors which we think will ultimately affect the share price. We firmly believe that this type of engagement is a key factor in enhancing the performance of the fund. We are delighted to have won this prestigious award for the second year running".

## CPU win SOPO Awards



At this year's Society of Procurement Officers conference in London, Government minister Phil Hope MP cited Norfolk County Council as a best practice authority in controlling its off contract spending.

After travelling to London to collect an award as *finalists* in this year's Society of Procurement Officers in local government awards, Norfolk's CPU came out on top as the overall winners.



They won the County Council class for Outstanding Achievement in Procurement, despite very strong competition from Suffolk and Warwickshire.



CPU SOPO AWARD WINNERS L-R: TIM HOWARD, COLIN BOTTJER, WENDY BAKER, MICHAEL WOOD, AND ANTON BULL

## Finance News

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