

Finance News

 **Norfolk** County Council

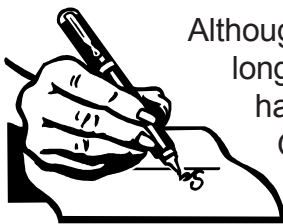
Issue 45

June 2004

News and views for
everyone interested
in finance

IHRIS Project Update

Contract Signed



Although it has taken a little longer than we planned we have signed a contract with Oracle for the new HR and Payroll system, IHRIS. When I think back to

when we first started on this journey two years ago, it doesn't seem possible that we have actually placed an order, but we have, and all of the planned for changes to how we deliver the HR and Payroll services can now be put into place.

Getting here has meant a huge contribution from the evaluation team and many thanks go to them for their commitment and contribution. But now we have a signed contract the hard work really starts!

We begin the project immediately and will be spending time in the first few months developing approaches to issues such as data migration and cleansing, interfaces, mapping processes etc etc. A project team is being formed and we have temporarily taken over the Jenny Lind room at the Annexe. The high level Project plan that we have agreed with Oracle breaks down into the following key areas:

- A preparation phase where we determine our strategies and structures
- Specification of the system build requirements

- Conference room pilots where Oracle show us what they have built for us to check
- User Acceptance testing where we make sure that the built solution meets our requirements in full
- Parallel running where we use the new system to calculate pay and compare it with the current system
- User training

The project plan gives us a go live date of April 2005. Although I hesitate to say so, I am quietly confident that all the work put in with Oracle prior to the contract being signed means that this is a realistic date which we have a good chance of achieving.

If anyone has any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Debbie Beck
IHRIS Project Manager

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In this issue

- **Spotlight on Cultural Services**
- **Bank Notes**
- **BVR - Income and Charging**
- **FIMS News**
- **CHAPS Payments**



Spotlight on

Cultural Services

Museums

Norfolk Museums and Heritage Partnership's bid

By working together, eleven Norfolk heritage attractions – ranging from the Norfolk Rural Life Museum ('Roots') at Gressenhall to the North Norfolk Railway – have been able to secure nearly £3 million funding from Europe.

The eleven joined together as the Norfolk Museums and Heritage Partnership and put in a single bid for funding to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

This allowed them to maximise the amount available from the Fund, with £3.8 m already secured for individual projects eligible for matched funding from Europe. NCC provided a further £650,000 and the ERDF then came up with £2.88M.

Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service undertook a lead role and four of its museums – Roots of Norfolk, Cromer Museum, Ancient House Museum in Thetford, and Great Yarmouth Museums – take a share of the funding. Not all heritage attractions were able to join the bid as the funding was only available to designated areas.



CROMER MUSEUM

At Roots of Norfolk a number of projects will be funded by the ERDF, including improvements to the adventure play area,

redisplay work, the opening up of the laundry block and exercise yard, and access improvements across the site.

Other partners now in the early stages of projects include the British Trust for Ornithology, the North Norfolk Railway, Sheringham Fishing Heritage Centre, and those working on restoration of Great Yarmouth's Nelson Monument.



THETFORD MUSEUM

The project will fund capital improvements, create new jobs, improve access and resources, and overall will contribute to a countywide regeneration of Norfolk's tourism.

One of the most important requirements over the first few months has been to ensure that all partners are working to record their spending in a unified manner, to facilitate the submission of a single claim every quarter.

Co-ordinating so large a project will surely have its challenges, but in the long term the investment will benefit the region as a whole.

Catherine Littlejohns **01362 860563**
Norfolk Rural Life Museum, Gressenhall

Bank Notes

Customer credit card and debit card payments

Earlier this year the Finance Management Group agreed a policy that NCC should consolidate all of its credit and debit card processing with the Co-operative Bank and its partners HSBC Bank.

Departments which previously used other card processors have now either completed the transfer to Co-op Bank/HSBC or aim to have done so by the end of May 2004. As a result of moving all card payment processing to one supplier, we have successfully negotiated reduced service charges which became effective from 01 April 2004.

In a further development of services, the Chief Executive's Department recently approved a business case to enable Norfolk Registrars' Offices to accept credit and debit card payments from customers.

The installation of electronic card payment terminals is planned to be up and running for the majority of Offices by the end of May 2004, with the remainder completed shortly thereafter.

Forecast annual sales via credit card and debit card, including the new Registrars' facility, are now in the order of £1.5 million.

In line with the Council's vision of offering maximum choice and flexibility for customers, new channels for payment by credit and debit card are under active consideration. These are:

- a pilot on-line booking and payments service via NCC website which should go-live by the end of September 2004, and
- enabling customers to pay in person or by phone at Council establishments.

More news on these facilities will follow in future edition of Finance News.

John Newsome

01603 228987

e-mail: john.newsome@norfolk.gov.uk

Banking admin procedures on NCC Intranet and EsiNet

The Banking Team continues to work hard to provide support to its customers. An improvement that we have recently introduced is to document formally a number of procedures which we believe will help users of banking services in the performance of their day to day roles. These procedures can now be found on NCC Intranet and EsiNet or can be e-mailed to users by the Banking Team upon request.

The first batch of procedures covers the main processes such as:

- opening a new bank account.
- changing authorised signatories.
- increasing or decreasing an Imprest Account float.
- the use of Post Office facilities.
- escalation procedures in the event of problems and
- ordering controlled stationery.

Others will be added in due course as the need arises.

If you have any queries on these, please contact the Banking Team:

Carol Hale

01603 222312

Tina Henderson

01603 222693

Eddie Kidd

01603 222693

Bank Notes

Cash handling

Your money or your life?

Last year the Department of Finance undertook a major review of banking services. This project involved discussions with colleagues throughout NCC who undertake banking duties as part of their job responsibilities.

During the review a number of people raised concerns about the safety and security of staff involved in banking activities. One of the recommendations of the review was that an updated risk assessment tool and managers guidance should be produced, which would allow all establishments carrying out banking activities to review their practices and procedures.

The risk assessment form and guidance can now be found on the health and safety pages of the HR@Norfolk intranet site. Go to <intranet.Norfolk.gov.uk/hr/content> then to Health and Safety\Handling money at work\Risk Assessment Form. They will also soon be available on NCC EsiNet.

The revised risk assessment form and guidance have been distributed to a target audience identified by departments. If a cash handling risk assessment has not yet been carried out in your area, or you are unsure if one has been carried out, please contact your line manager.

Further information and assistance is available from:

- For health and safety issues:
Your Departmental Safety Adviser.
- For finance and banking matters:
John Newsome 01603 228987

James Royston 01603 222912
Corporate Health and Safety Manager

Best Value Review of Income and Charging

Since our last article in July 2003.....

The database of all the Council's income and charges is complete. The Head of Law has created a second database, containing the powers enabling the Council to raise charges. Departments have checked their content and our entitlement to levy the charges.

These databases helped in the development of a report, showing how successful the Council is in collecting income, which Cabinet approved in January 2004.

Later this year, the Council will be acquiring some software that will enable us to put the databases on to the Intranet and give departments the capability to interactively update their information.

The Best Value Accounting Code of Practice was established to modernise the system of local authority accounting and reporting. We examined our compliance with it for Income. Two areas of inconsistency were identified and reported to the Finance Officers Group, who are currently working on harmonising our policies and practices.

The review identified the need to look at the use of concessions. The existing concessions have been reported to the Service Development Committee and a corporate policy will be established in the autumn.

In conjunction with the concession policy, the Council will develop a policy linking our corporate objectives to charging, to give staff and customers a clear understanding about how the Council charges.

Kim Grewcock 01603 223221
Financial Projects
Department of Finance

Accounting for Grants

Record keeping

If you are responsible for a grant-funded project please read on.....

Some grant funding bodies have strict guidelines about records to be kept to support grant claims. We now know this to be the case for a number of European funded projects (but may equally apply to other grant bodies too).

In some cases, their record retention periods exceed our corporate requirements so whilst you may have kept photocopies of invoices and other payments on your project files, the original documents, should the auditor ask to see them (and the originals are what they will want to see), may already have been destroyed. Retention of original documents is an audit requirement and failure to comply could potentially result in the loss of grant.

So why don't we just increase the corporate standard?

The Council's minimum retention periods are based on statutory requirements prescribed by Government departments. A full list is available on the DF website (Financial Records-Minimum Retention periods under the A-Z index). Please follow the link below:

<http://intranet.norfolk.gov.uk/dfi/Services/NAS/retention.pdf>

To increase corporate minimum retention periods for the Council would result in additional off-site storage costs. This would not be cost effective when only a fraction of the additional records really need to be kept longer.

So what action should you take?

Check the **conditions** set out in your **grant offer letter**. This should specify how long to keep project records.

Be careful, though, as the offer letter may say records must be held for 3 years from the end of the funding programme. This is not necessarily the same as 3 years from the end of your project.

If in any doubt contact the funding body to check. Alternatively, Karen Gibson, the Council's very own European Funding Manager should be able to help for European grants (tel: 01603 222598 or email: karen.gibson@norfolk.gov.uk)

If project requirements do exceed the corporate standard than you will need to ensure original grant-related documents are returned after payment for safe-keeping.

How?

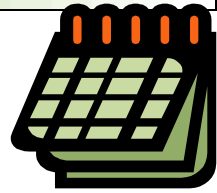
- **If you are a Project Manager** – annotate grant-related payments so your Finance Officer knows how to process these to ensure they are returned to you after payment.
- **If you are a Finance Officer** – separately batch grant-related invoices from other payments and annotate the batch header **“Grant Payment Batch – to be returned after processing”**. (This will ensure only records which need to be kept longer are returned after processing and avoid the need to extract individual invoices from a number of large batches of documents)

*See the June edition of Finance News to find out how you can access training on **Managing grant-funded projects**.*

Karen Betts
Strategic Funding & Technical
Department of Finance

01603 222807

FIMS latest



Project timetable

The FIMS Project is progressing well but there will be no let up for the project team before Go-Live on October 4. The work to be done falls mainly into three major categories:

- ◆ **Business transformation** - transforming the way we work and training staff in the new system and processes;
- ◆ **Functional Implementation** - getting the new system ready for use; and
- ◆ **Technical** - ensuring that we have the right hardware infrastructure and the necessary support in place.

Completion dates in each of these areas are expected to be:

Business transformation

- ◆ Corporate and departmental benefits realisation review – by 30/6/04
- ◆ Business transformation vision development – by 30/6/04
- ◆ Training content development – 16/8/04
- ◆ Implementing new standard processes into departments – by 4/10/04
- ◆ Pre and post Go-Live training delivery – 29/10/04

Functional Implementation



- ◆ Production of bespoke and standard Oracle financial reports – by 7/7/04
- ◆ Cleansing, tidying, enhancement and conversion of existing NORBAS data – by 30/7/04
- ◆ FIMS modules - set up and configuration of NOML, AR, AP, PO & CM – by 31/7/04
- ◆ i-Procurement - build, test and implement to 200 initial users – Go-Live in line with FIMS. Subsequent roll out to a further 1000 users.
- ◆ Development of necessary interfaces for business continuity – by 12/8/04
- ◆ User acceptance testing – by 16/8/04

Technical

- ◆ Database administration (DBA) support for FIMS & iProc, providing knowledge transfer to Charles House Services – until 31/12/04
- ◆ Solution/technical architecture support - as for DBA support
- ◆ New production hardware and back up site in place – by end of June 2004

Contact point

If you would like to know more about the project timetable please contact Malcolm Jones, the project manager, on 5809 or by email malcolm.p.jones@norfolk.gov.uk

FIMS latest

New processes, new owners

As many of you will by now know, the implementation of FIMS will see the introduction of new standard ways of working (processes) across NCC, supported by the new Oracle financial system. These encompass:

- ◆ Purchasing, Accounts Payable & Grants (PAPG & i-procurement)
- ◆ Invoicing, Income Collection and Debt Recovery (IICD)
- ◆ Nominal Ledger (NOML) – formerly General ledger
- ◆ Budgeting both Capital and Revenue
- ◆ Cash Management which is primarily bank reconciliation.

As each process is completed, it will be published on the FIMS Intranet site and then passed to the “process owner” who will:

- ◆ Safeguard the process from unapproved changes and
- ◆ Continue the development and evolution of the process and policies to meet future business needs. Changes will be made in consultation with the business and endorsed by the finance community.

The process owners for each area are:

PAPG / I-procurement	Peter Shackley / Anton Bull
IICD	Bob Batterham
NOML	Stephanie Mullarney
Budgeting - Capital	Paul Mason
Budgeting - Revenue	Paul Mason / Steve Aspin
Cash Management	Glenn Cossey

Prior to FIMS Go-live in October, you should continue to direct any queries about the processes to your departmental FIMS Change Agent. (See FIMS Intranet site for details).

Budgeting 2005/06

Because FIMS will now go live in October, several months after we need to start budget preparation, it has been decided not to use Oracle for 2005/06 budgeting.

Instead we will continue to use our existing Norfolk Budgeting System (NBS) for this period, and the systems team have created REFs for all departments.

If you have any queries about this please contact your finance officer.

FIMS Roadshow

Coming to a venue near you! See enclosed invitation for details!

New FIMS website

The FIMS website has been updated and is now up and running. You can find it on:

http://intranet.norfolk.gov.uk/new_fims/

If you have any comments or if you can suggest any improvements please contact Doris Piper on 01603 495815.



CHAPS payments - help us to help you

By the time some of you are arriving for work, **the Treasury Team** (Paul Batterham, Andy Feek, Carol Hale and Chris Upton) in the Department of Finance have already carried out the daily cashflow exercise for the County Council and invested any balance of cash not required that day. With cut-off deadlines to be met and more attractive interest rates available during the early part of the morning, a prompt start is essential.

The majority of payments made by the Council are either settled by BACS (Bankers Automated Clearing Services) or cheque. However, on a few occasions, an extremely urgent payment has to be made. The payment method used for these is called CHAPS (Clearing Houses Automated Payments System). It is essential that all such requests are submitted in an accurate and timely manner.

The Treasury Team must have in their possession by **no later than 2pm** on the **previous** banking day the original completed CHAPS Proforma.

Attached to the request must be all relevant supporting documentation relating to the payment, including written confirmation of the bank settlement details supplied by the payee (ideally on their headed paper). This will help us to help you to pay on time. It will also enable us to more accurately forecast our cash needs.

As the person requesting the payment, you must also make arrangements for the accounting journal entries to be made. Please be aware that if any of the details on the CHAPS request are either incorrect or incomplete, the paperwork will be returned to the originator and the CHAPS payment consequently rescheduled.

So please help us to help you.

Blank CHAPS request forms and further guidance are available from the Treasury Team.

Andy Feek
Senior Treasury Officer

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If you would like this newsletter in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language, please contact the helpline, 01603 223488.



This newsletter is also available on the intranet. If you have any interesting articles or news items that could be included in future issues please let us know.

If you (or a colleague) would like more copies or you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please contact Angie Yeomans 01603 223488 or email: angie.yeomans@norfolk.gov.uk

