

# Finance News

Norfolk

County Council

News and views for  
those interested in  
finance

Issue 32  
January 2003

## Happy New Year!

## TOP AWARD FOR NORFOLK PENSION FUND

### Corporate Governance - Norfolk hailed as leading fund in UK

The Norfolk Pension Fund recently won the **Public Treasurer Investment Award** for our work in developing our approach to Corporate Governance and Socially Responsible Investment (SRI). This prestigious National award was presented to Bob Summers at a high-profile ceremony held at the Dorchester Hotel in London.

The competition is open to all local authority funds in the UK. The Lancashire County Fund was also praised for its rigorous approach and impressive voting record but the judges decided to make the award to the Norfolk Fund. They judged that our clear and informative presentation gave Norfolk the edge.

We have put a lot of work into this area, so it is very encouraging to see our efforts recognised in this way.

#### **What is Corporate Governance ?**

Corporate Governance is the process where Pension Funds use their investments to influence the way in which companies are run, and how they act.

The Norfolk Fund use our right to vote at the Annual General Meetings of companies to support or oppose resolutions in line with our Statement of Investment Principles.

Our Pension Fund managers also meet regularly with companies to engage in discussions about their policies on environmental issues and other areas of social concern, which may impact on the share price. In most large companies an enormous proportion of the stock is owned by public institutions such as pension funds.

#### **Bob Summers**



*Bob Summers (far right) celebrates with his Pension Team, John Briscoe, Nicola Mark & John Allison.*

#### **In this issue**

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## Spotlight on

# Department of Transport & Planning and NPS Property Consultants Ltd

## Rethinking the Construction Agenda

Rethinking Construction is a national initiative aimed at driving up quality in the construction industry and the Council is a leading player – we've just made a bid under the Beacon Council Scheme.

As well as our active participation in the national Local Government Construction Task Force (chaired by Chief Executive Tim Byles) and involvement in Movement for Innovation (M4I) demonstration projects, we helped create the Norfolk Construction Best Practice Club.

The Rethinking Construction principles are:

- Committed leadership
- Focus on the customer
- Product team integration
- Quality-driven agenda
- Commitment to people

These are being driven forward in particular by Planning and Transportation and NPS Property Consultants Ltd., which both manage large construction projects.

When Norfolk received one of the largest UK increases in government funding for transport investment in 2001/02, the Rethinking Construction approach helped us to achieve a 150% increase in spending, to around an average £1million a week, without recruiting additional staff.

NPS have used partnering on a series of schools projects to develop new ways of managing construction projects and deliver improvements to key performance indicators.

Rethinking Construction is not a magic wand and there are lessons to be learnt as its principles are applied more widely, but there is tangible evidence that the initiative is driving up standards in an industry worth billions.

Importantly, the initiative is also helping to reduce the effects of the national skills shortage.

**Alison Smith**  
Communications Officer

01603 224222

### Mystified?

*"Very informative, actually made it quite interesting!!"*

*"Much more interesting than I thought it would be!"*

*"Time well spent"*

*"Good course, well balanced"*

What could have caused this excitement?

**Answer on  
Page 5**

# New faces in Department of Finance . . .

## Welcome to . . .

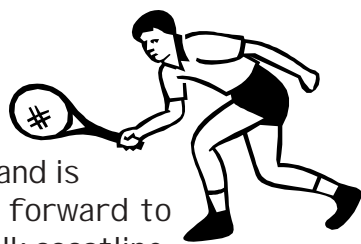
**Paul Brittain** joined us in the New Year and is the new Head of Financial Management.



In addition to line management responsibilities within the Department of Finance, Paul will be responsible for taking forward the work of FIMS including the business process change required to make best use of the Council's investment in new technology. Paul will also lead on the Finance Best Value Review work.

Paul has worked in local government since 1976 and has been in Lincolnshire since 1986 working in various capacities for the County Council. Since April 2000 he has worked for HBS Business Services Ltd with whom Lincolnshire entered into partnership for the delivery of the full range of support services, including finance.

Outside of work, Paul enjoys playing tennis and walking, and is particularly looking forward to exploring the Norfolk coastline. He is also looking forward to a permanent move to Norwich later this year.



Paul wishes to thank everybody for the very warm welcome they have given him since his arrival and is looking forward very much to working with colleagues across the Council to assist in delivering what is a very challenging agenda for finance.

**Andrew Skiggs**, known as Drew, has joined the Capital Team.



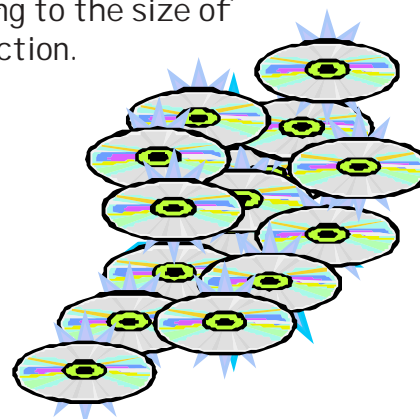
He has returned to NCC after 2 years working at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Kings Lynn.

His main tasks will be:

- Monthly Monitoring of the NCC capital programme.
- Over seeing the monitoring of Capital Receipts.
- Assisting with the collation of capital bids to produce the capital programme.

Outside of work Drew likes to keep himself fit and enjoys running, going to the gym etc. His main interest is hockey and he plays regularly for Dereham Hockey Club.

With a keen interest in music, Drew attends gigs whenever possible and is always adding to the size of his CD collection.



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



# How to be a better buyer – use approved suppliers!

Using approved suppliers ensures that the Council

- gets the best value for money
- saves thousands of pounds each year
- keeps to a minimum the number of new suppliers that have to be set up on the system to allow payments to be made (it has been estimated that it can cost up to £50 to create and maintain a new supplier record!)
- can manage it's contracts more efficiently
- complies with EC Regulations and Contract Standing Orders

Before using a new supplier ask yourself the following questions

- Can I get the goods from the ESPO General Catalogue?
- Can I get the goods/service using a supplier in the ESPO Dealing Direct Catalogue?

If the answer to either of these questions is yes, then you should buy via these contracts. If the answer is no, ask yourself

- Can I get the goods/service from a Corporate or Departmental contract?
- Does another department have a contract already set up that I could use?

Again if the answer is yes, you should buy via these contracts.

If the answer to all of these questions is no you should start searching for a new supplier (and follow the requirements of Contract Standing Orders).

Information on approved suppliers and contracts is available on the Intranet under "Procurement" and "A-Z of Goods and Services". If you can't see what you want, talk to your departmental purchasing officer.

If ESPO don't currently provide what you want, they may be able to find it for you and provide it in the future – remember to talk to ESPO!

For further information please contact the Corporate Procurement Unit on 01603 222820.

**Anton Bull**  
Purchasing Process Manager

## Raising Invoices

**When you raise an invoice you have to think carefully about the VAT liability.**

**You also have to make sure, when raising manual invoices, that the blue copy is sent to Capita on the same day as the invoice is raised.**

Something to consider is why we supply the service or goods first and then raise an invoice for payment?

If we have not dealt with the debtor before or the debtor has a history of poor payment, why not ask for payment in advance?

This approach would be particularly beneficial for amounts under £200 where the cost of potential legal action is often greater than the amount of income being invoiced.

Another point to consider in some departments is why we send out more than one invoice to a debtor on the same day. If three individuals from one organisation attend a training course then send one invoice to the organisation for three places not three separate invoices charging for one place on each.

**Bob Batterham**                      01603 222840  
Tax Manager

# Invoice payments

## Improvements all round

The latest set of payment performance figures have proven to be the best yet!

For the month of December we achieved our highest performance figure, with over 96% of the Authority's payments being made on time.

Even more encouraging than the 'headline' figure has been the improved performance in particular departments, most notably Cultural Services and the Finance Department. For the first time all departments have achieved over 90% performance.

I am sure this reflects the efforts of colleagues across the Authority. Thanks for your help so far and could I urge you to keep up the good work over the final quarter of 2002-03.

**Peter Shackley** 01603 222916  
Exchequer Client support



## Still Mystified?

VAT awareness  
training of course!

So far 60 people have *enjoyed* Bob Batterham's VAT awareness sessions and more are being planned for 2003.

If you want to join in the fun and learn about VAT, please contact us.

### *Coming Soon . . .*

In response to popular demand, CIS Awareness sessions are being planned. Details will follow but do please ring us to reserve your place.

Jo Quarterman or  
Alison Gilbert  
Ext 2995

Exchequer Client Support Team  
Department of Finance

## PRACTICE BEING GOOD . . .

# Delegation do's and don'ts

Managers are accountable for their own area of responsibility. They must ensure that their staff are carrying out all their duties efficiently and effectively. We are all responsible for doing the things written into our job descriptions. Our managers have to check to see that we do.

We are all under pressure to use time more effectively to cope with the pace of change. One option for managers is to delegate some tasks. This involves defining the task and selecting the person who can perform it.

Delegation is a fairly common management tool. It lets managers develop staff by giving them an opportunity to increase their experience while also allowing the manager to free up his or her own time for other work.

However when a task is delegated it is the authority to carry out the task that is delegated, the responsibility for making sure that the task is carried out remains with the manager. There should therefore be proof of checks performed by the manager that the tasks delegated have been carried out properly.

**Phil Ballard** 01603 223445

## BACS Update

For the first 9 months of 2002/3 we have paid 87% of supplier invoices by BACS.

This continues the upward trend for BACS payments.

A BIG BIG thank you to all of you who have contacted suppliers to obtain BACS details. Please keep this up and we should hit the target of 90% by the end of the financial year.

**Anton Bull**  
Purchasing Process Manager  
01603 224429

# FIMS Update

FIMS work continues apace with an overview of the new financial processes proposed for the County Council now presented to senior finance staff.

You will recall that late last year Capita Consulting's Nick Coldicott, Andrew Coulson and Trevor Warrs spoke to a large number of NCC finance staff to find out how we currently do things.

Capita Consulting then used this information and the feedback from the conference room pilots, which showed Oracle processes, to develop a high level model of how we might do things in the future.

The model is being revised following feedback from all departments and will shortly be presented to the Chief Officers Group.

The final version will provide the definitive, high-level design of financial processes in Norfolk and also identify the impact, issues, opportunities and benefits of implementing these.

Once these process designs have been agreed, work will begin on identifying which roles will support these processes in the future and how any changes should be integrated with the implementation of Oracle Financials.

**Suzanne Sowter**  
FIMS Project Manager 01603 224430

## *Managing debt and invoice queries . . .*

Please remember to report all actions relating to debts and invoice queries to Capita. This enables a full picture of the account to be maintained should further action be necessary.

Contact Ruth Onions on (01603) 495803.

**Exchequer Client Support Team**

## *Clear desk + clear screen = clear conscience*

Do you work with confidential, sensitive information or information that has a restricted circulation?

If the answer is YES

- Do you keep your desk tidy?
- Do you lock important confidential documents away in filing cabinets or cupboards when you are not using them?
- Do you log off your computer when you leave your desk or have a password-protected screensaver?

If the answer to these questions is NO then you need to make some changes.

Everyone in the organisation has a personal responsibility to protect information from unauthorised access, loss and damage during and outside of working hours. So please remember the following:

### **When leaving your desk**

You must look after paper records and files that contain confidential (private) information in a responsible manner do not leave files and papers open on your desk or on your computer for anyone to see.

When you are away from your computer you must make sure that you have logged off the system or have a password protected screensaver in place to stop unauthorised use.

If you follow these simple rules you will be helping to keep the Council's information safe.

**John Brock**, e-Service Directorate Ext. 2170  
Data Protection & ICT Security Officer

