

# Finance News

 **Norfolk** County Council

News and views for  
everyone interested  
in finance

Issue 55

February 2006

## *New year, new editor!*

Finance News has seen some significant changes since the last issue, with Phil Ballard standing down as editor and being replaced by John Holland from the Strategy and Finance Team.

After three years in the hot seat Phil felt that it was time to hand over the reins.

The Editorial Team would like to give Phil a big thank you for his efforts, especially for the support that he has given in the handover.

As the new editor, John says that he is keen to maintain the progress that Finance News has made and would like your help in achieving this. In this issue you will see a survey where your ideas and comments would be appreciated.

If you wish to help in a greater capacity there are vacancies on the Editorial Board, with volunteers from outside the Department of Finance especially welcome. If you are interested please contact John on 01603 222807 or Angie Yeomans 01603 223488.

Finally, if you have any ideas for features or articles at any time these will be most welcome. The survey will not be your only opportunity for feedback.



**John Holland**

### *Featured inside:*

- NCC pool bike scheme
- European funding
- NCC Car Lease Scheme
- True grit
- Staff Call success
- RBO guide
- FIMS news
- iProcurement Hints and Tips
- Bank Notes
- Survey form

# Norfolk County Council's Bicycle Loan Scheme

With the roads of Norwich becoming ever more congested, the frustrations of sitting in queues of traffic are not going to go away. If your journey is a bit too far to walk but within the Norwich area, why not cycle?

Norfolk County Council's Bicycle Loan Scheme has been in operation for some time and provides the opportunity to borrow a cycle and equipment for those local journeys. Matt Hodder of Adult Social Services is a regular user of the scheme.

"I had been trying to work out how to get a cycle to work and keep it there. Then the Bicycle Loan Scheme was introduced. This was great timing, now I could use a cycle at work without having to worry about where it went at night.

The biggest surprise was the cycles themselves, not cheap and nasty but good quality, lightweight, town and country (hybrid) cycles. My main worry was that they would be too big as I'm a compact rider, they aren't too big or too small.



Booking a cycle could not be more simple, a 'phone call is all it takes. Pop down to room B11, fill in the paperwork (non-complex) and collect a key. Then you are off. John, Emma and the team are always willing to help out. There are helmets, lights and reflective belts available too, all this at no cost to you the rider.

Crossing the city by cycle is so much easier than driving. There are quite a number of cycle lanes, paths and off-road routes. Using these routes you can travel from County Hall to Bowthorpe as quick as a car at peak times. Leave the car in the car park and give it a try."

There are numerous secure cycle parking facilities around the city, so why not benefit your health, your diary and the environment by trying out a more efficient and cheaper way of travelling.

To book a cycle call John or Emma on 22(4318).

## European Funding

### Bitesize training session

On the morning of **8th February** in the Colman Room, there will be a bite-size training session on European Funding. Karen Gibson (European Funding Manager) will be the lead presenter.

Other presenters will come from Finance, Audit and Project Managers who have previously obtained European Grants.

Anyone wishing to attend should contact Karl Murphy-Barnes on 01603 (22)8841.

## Taxing times . . . ?

Bob Batterham, previously dealing with all tax matters, has now moved on. He has ventured to pastures new and taken on the role of 'Order to Income Manager'.

Bob and his new team will be based here in county hall. Watch out for more information to be published in a future issue of this newsletter.

So what about tax matters now? Well . . . Sue Catton has taken over and is doing a very fine job, dealing with any tax issues as they arise. Sue can be contacted on (22)3177

As for car loans, these are now in the very capable hands of Doris Piper, who can be contacted on 01603 (63)8133.

# Car Lease Scheme more popular than ever

The County Council Car Lease Scheme is more popular than ever. For the first time since it was introduced in 1996, the number of users have passed the 800 mark. Now, in double cause for celebration, the fleet is more environmentally friendly than ever with CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reducing for the fourth year running.

A carefully monitored price structure and government tax incentives are encouraging more users to opt for mid-range family cars as opposed to high performance models. As a result, the Ford Focus now accounts for 60% of the entire fleet.

“Passing the 800 milestone is real testament to the popularity of the scheme” said car leasing manager Cheryl Hewett.

“CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have reduced year-on-year. In 2002 average emissions were up around the 165g/km mark but today they have reduced to 150g/km per vehicle and are still falling.”

Not only is the scheme popular with users but the County Council and departments are enjoying the benefits too. Figures presented to the Car Scheme Board confirm that the scheme is generating savings of £124,000 per annum against comparable essential user rates.

If you would like to know more about the scheme, please contact Cheryl Hewett on 01603 223229 or visit the intranet web site.



The NCC Car Lease Scheme team, from left to right : Ann Graver, Cheryl Hewett, Kate Glover and Wendy Stocker.

## Lease car fleet and reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions

The following figures are based on average published figures for the whole lease car fleet, assessed towards the end of each financial year from 31 March 2002 onwards:

31.3.02 - average of 165g/km per vehicle

17.3.03 - average of 160g/km per vehicle

20.2.04 - average of 154g/km per vehicle

31.3.05 - average of 150g/km per vehicle

The average figure is still reducing, and on 30.9.05 it stood at 148g/km per vehicle.

## True Grit.....

So it's early on a winter's morning, New Year's Day for instance, the weather forecast says freezing and in highways depots across the County the salt barns are a hive of activity. Trucks back in over the weighbridge, are loaded from the dry salt store and weighed on the way out so that we can be charged for what we have used.

The drivers go on their pre-allocated runs so that we can get the salt down before the roads freeze and the County can go about its business in conditions that are as safe as we can make them. The salt lowers the temperature at which ice will form and is best used as a preventative measure.

Routes are planned on a hierarchy basis so that main routes get treated first and we work down our priority listing as we are satisfied that the major routes will be kept moving. Runs usually take place early morning, or late afternoon but can be required throughout the day or night when weather conditions are bad enough.



One of the best bits of being in finance is learning what makes the business tick. I hadn't thought much about the gritting business before I joined P&T. Now I know that the size of the salt particles is critical. Too small and they don't work, and if the particles are too big they bounce off. We have to check samples to ensure consistent quality. Drivers hour regulations also impact on what we can do following a gritting run, requiring us to replan our scheduled work at short notice. Somehow my colleagues manage this.

Before the salt PFI we loaded salt from open stores. Inevitably such stores leached salt into the environment. Trying to keep accurate records when loading in the dark, cold and frequently windy conditions was next to impossible. Accounting for this was definitely more art than science.

Changes to weather patterns with temperatures fluctuating above and below freezing on a daily basis means that we cannot build up a protective layer on roads and require more frequent runs as the salt dissolves and runs off the road. This has a cost impact that has to be managed within the overall P&T budget.

Weather forecasting is an imprecise science even though the forecasts can draw on information from weather stations at five county, and five trunk road sites. Sometimes we grit and the temperature doesn't fall as expected. Less frequently we get a sudden drop that we were not expecting. We can only grit some roads and drivers need to adapt their behaviour to the conditions, and in extreme conditions only travel when absolutely necessary.

**Phil Ballard    01603 223144**

Principal Finance and Procurement Officer P&T

# Staff Call to provide our temporary finance staff

For the past three years Staff Call has been the sole company supplying the Council with temporary white-collar staff.

As the level of reliability, efficiency and ability Staff Call has provided meets our needs, financial managers have now agreed that it should be the only external contractor to supply our temporary finance staff.

Departments will be advised on how to deal with approaches from other agency providers but if you are approached by other agencies in the meantime, please contact Colin Bottjer on 01603 222025 for further advice.

Annette Dixon, operations manager for Staff Call commented: "This is a real opportunity for Staff Call to build on the success already achieved in the past few years. It really shows that a small to medium enterprise company can meet the needs of the largest employer in the county."

For further details of this arrangement please contact your departmental HR officer.



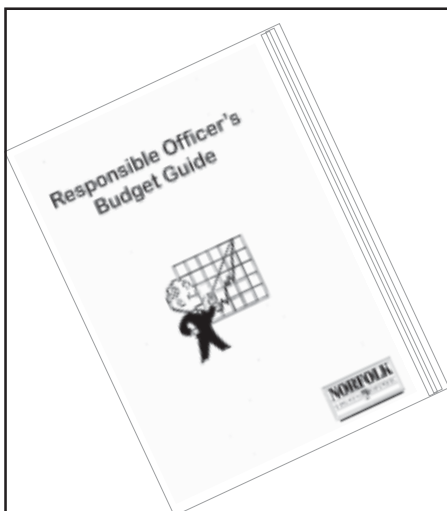
## FIMS - the way ahead - update

In the last edition of Finance News we outlined the new structure we are putting in place to support FIMS into the future.

Work is progressing well on developing in more detail the roles and staffing structures for each of the new teams. We are consulting with staff about these during January and will be implementing during February.

In the meantime we have introduced interim management arrangements with staff reporting through to their new service heads.

**Peter Shackley**  
**01603 (22)2916**



## Responsible Budget Officer Guide

The Responsible Budget Officer (RBO) Guide, which outlines the responsibilities of those officers managing budgets, has recently been updated.

This guide also includes details of useful information sources and who to contact in specialist finance teams.

If you, or one of your colleagues, would like a copy please contact Angie Yeomans on 01603 223488, email:

[angie.yeomans@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:angie.yeomans@norfolk.gov.uk)



# Accounts Receivable

## Coding Corrections

When invoices are raised each line item has to be coded to the correct revenue or capital code.

**If a line item is not coded it will default to code 10-000000-00000 (for NCC).**

The revenue will not appear against your budget code as income. The correct way to change any revenue line code is in the AR sub ledger. Then any drill down from GL takes you to the correctly coded source document in the sub ledger.

### How do I know if I have any income in code 10-000000-00000?

If you cannot see expected income amounts against your codes this would mean either:-

- the invoice has been miscoded
- the invoice has not been raised
- the invoice has not been coded and the income will have defaulted to 10-000000-00000

### How do I find out where the income is?

You can find this information by:-  
Querying the invoice

Querying by salesperson and a date range to narrow the search  
Running a “Sales Journal by GL Account Report” in Accounts Receivable.

Unfortunately you cannot narrow the search to look for certain transaction types only. The list will have all activity on this code (AR activity only) by transaction type which will allow you to find your departments invoices.

**Note:** the account low and high fields can be a range of departmental codes or one specific code.

### How do I correct the coding?

#### AR>Transactions>transactions

Use the torch to enter the invoice number <find>

Click on the distributions tab

Click in the revenue line to be

recoded (ie 10-000000-00000)

Change the code to the correct code  
<SAVE>

If you close and requery the invoice you will see two lines of coding - a reversal of the miscoding and the correctly coded line. You will notice the GL date for the new lines is the current period

# Accounts Receivable

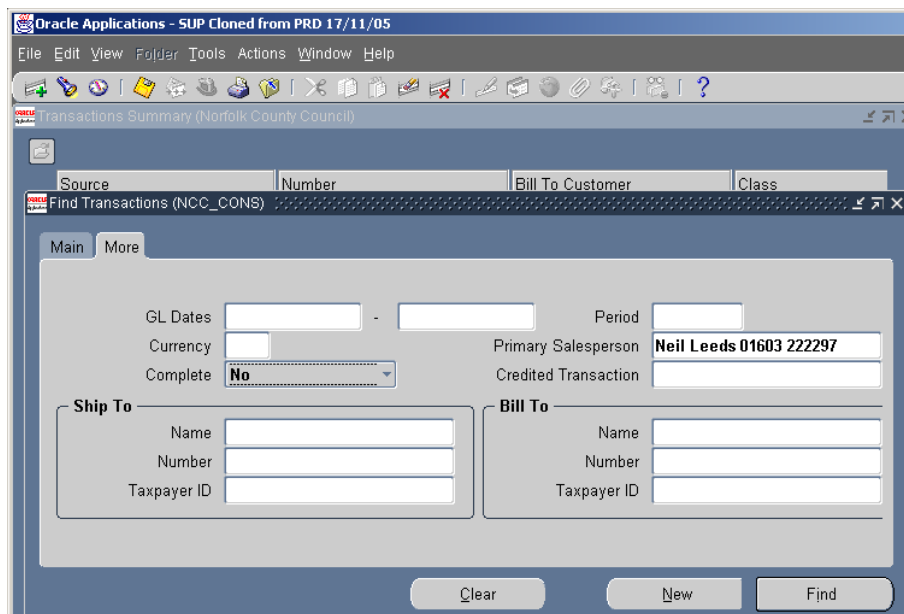
## Checking for Incomplete Invoices

Each department should monitor their invoices for invoices left as incomplete. If an invoice is on the system as incomplete, it has not been sent to the customer and will not be transferred to the general ledger.

### How do you check for incomplete invoices?

#### AR>Transactions>Transaction Summary

Click on the torch (toolbar)  
Click on the More Tab  
Change complete to "No"  
Choose a salesperson you use when creating invoices  
Click on Find



You will then be given a list of incomplete invoices on Oracle.

### What do I do then?

Open each invoice and check if all the information is complete.  
Make any changes necessary if the information is not complete. <Save><Complete>

**Note:** There is a process to void an invoice if you need to cancel the invoice. A tutorial for this process is available on the intranet. <http://nccondemand.norfolk.gov.uk/ods/Live/toc.html>  
Accounts receivable>AR02 Invoice processing>Void transactions

### What is the invoice date?

If the invoice date is NOT in the current calendar month, it needs to be changed to the current date. <save><complete>. The invoice printing parameters pick up the current month only.

If you need this newsletter in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language, please contact the Department of Finance on 01603 223488 (minicom 223833) and we will do our best to help.



# Bank notes

## Renewal of banking contract with Co-operative Bank plc.

The Council appointed the Co-operative Bank plc (the Bank) as its corporate bankers in 2001 for a period of 3 years. During 2003, we undertook a major review of the banking services provided by the Bank and its partners and the detailed recommendations of this review were actioned during the first half of 2004. The existing contract was extended for a further two years till 31 March 2006.

A further review of the service has recently been carried out to support the decision on whether to seek an alternative provider or to renew the contract with the Bank.

Opinions were sought from all service departments within the Council and from other associated bodies which use the Bank and for whom the Council provides treasury management services such as NCS Limited, NPS Limited and Norfolk Police Authority.

The response from users was that the overall service from the Bank was good. Most replies expressed satisfaction with the banking service and there were no significant or recurring service failures identified. A few users mentioned problems with queues when paying funds into some Post Office sites. Occasional delays were noted in the receipt of statements from the Bank. These points will be dealt with as part of the actions from the review.

An independent external consultancy service was used to benchmark the banking tariff and it confirmed that the current tariffs and fees charged by the Bank are competitive.

This review confirmed that areas for service development include:

- Improvements in the referencing of electronic data from the Bank to help with the automatic matching of bank statement lines within the Oracle system.
- Advice on the implementation of the non-return of bank statement vouchers.
- Investigation of new, cost effective payment channels for customers such as the PayPoint bill payment service which uses a local network of retail agents.

Other considerations included the costs of moving from one supplier to another; the benefits of maintaining continuity of the existing banking relationship and the impact of any change on our business processes. For example, the reconciliation of our principal bank accounts depends on the daily upload of data from the Bank.

Taking all the above into account, it has been decided that it would be appropriate to renew the current contract with Bank, subject to the negotiation of a revised schedule of tariffs and fees, for a further 3 years till 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009.

If you would like more information and have any suggestions for future service developments please contact:

John Newsome: 01603 228987  
e-mail: [john.newsome@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:john.newsome@norfolk.gov.uk)

Other members of the Banking Team are:

Carol Hale	01603 222312
Tina Henderson	01603 222693
Eddie Kidd	01603 222693



# Instructions for Setting up Junk Email rule

1. Make a note of the junk email address(es) you have received.

2. Click on the 'Organise' button on the toolbar.

3. Click on the 'Junk Email' button on the left hand side of the Organise window.

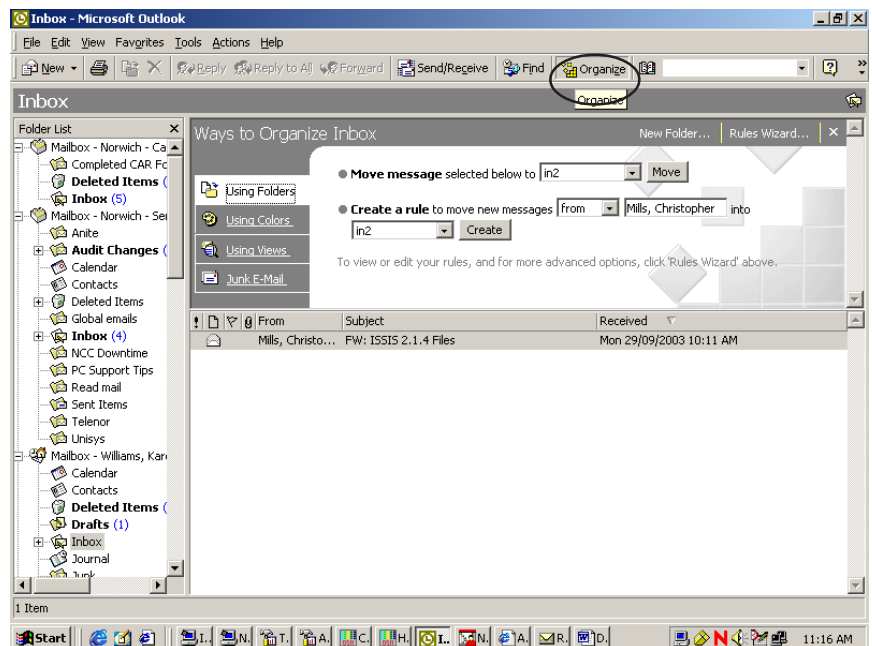
4. Set the top line to 'Automatically **move** Junk message to **Deleted items** as shown in the above screen.

5. Click on the 'Turn on' button on the top line.

6. Now click on the 'click here' button which will display the following screen.

7. Click on 'Edit Junk Senders' and then click on the 'Add' button.

8. Enter the email address that you want to add to the Junk Email senders list.



NB: You will probably want to add the address from the @ sign onwards as the rule will then operate on all emails from that domain (e.g. @aol.com), rather than just one specific address (e.g. john.smith@aol.com). Whether you do this will depend on whether you expect to receive legitimate emails from other addresses on that domain (e.g. you wouldn't add @norfolk.gov.uk as the rule will then send all emails from NCC to the deleted items folder).

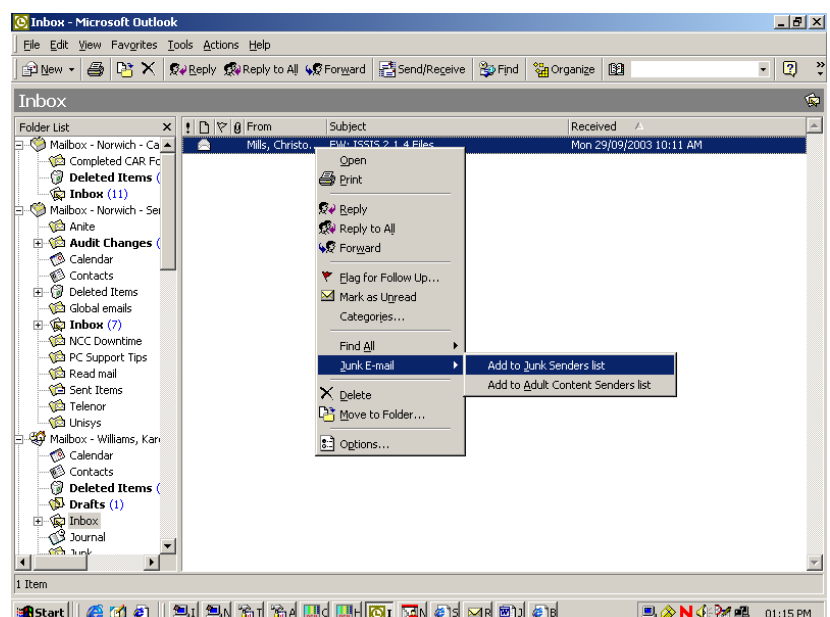
9. Click on the OK button, and the next OK button.

10. Now click on the 'Organise' button on the toolbar to close the Organise window.

11. Once the Junk Email rule is turned on, as and when you receive new junk emails you can add them to the Junk Email senders list as follows:-

a) Right click on the new email, select Junk Email and click on 'Add to Junk Senders list'.

b) A confirmation message will then be displayed. Click on the OK button to complete the process.



# Joke corner

Once upon a time there was a shepherd looking after his sheep on the edge of a deserted road. Suddenly a brand new Cherokee Jeep screeches to a halt next to him. The driver, a young man dressed in a Brioni suit, Cerruti shoes, Ray-Ban glasses, and a YSL tie gets out and asks the shepherd: 'If I guess how many sheep you have, you give me one of them?' The shepherd looks at the young man, then looks at the sheep, which graze and says: 'All right.'

The young man parks the car, connects his notebook and the mobile, enters a NASA site, scans the ground using his GPS, opens a database and 60 Excel tables filled with algorithms, then prints a 150-pages report on his high-tech mini printer. He then turns to the shepherd and says: 'You have exactly 1,586 sheep here.' The shepherd answers: 'That's correct, you can have your sheep.'

The young man takes the sheep and puts it in the back of his jeep. The shepherd looks at him and asks: 'If I guess your profession, will you return my sheep to me?'

The young man answers: 'Yes, why not.'

The shepherd says: 'You are a management consultant!'

'How did you know?' asks the young man. 'Very simple', answers the shepherd: 'First, you come here without being called. 'Second, you charge me, to tell me something I already knew. 'Third, you do not understand anything about what I do, because you took my dog!'



## Another corker?

Did you know there are just three types of accountants?

Those who can count and those who can't.

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 on 01603 223488 or email: [angie.yeomans@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:angie.yeomans@norfolk.gov.uk)

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# Finance News *Quick* QUESTIONNAIRE

We ran a survey a few years back to get readers' reactions to Finance News to ensure that what we were doing was useful and relevant to them. The results were generally very encouraging and we were able to cover many of the topics suggested in subsequent editions. But how are we doing now? We would be pleased if you could spare a few moments to fill in this questionnaire to ensure that we continue to be useful to you. Please return completed forms to the address overleaf.

## 1. Generally speaking, do you find the articles

About the right level   Too technical   Too detailed   Too basic   Not relevant

## 2. When you receive Finance News do you

Read it thoroughly   Read particular articles   Glance at it   Bin it without reading it

## 3. Have you any suggestions for future articles?

## 4. How could Finance News be improved?

## 5. Would you be willing to write an article for Finance News?

*If so please supply your name and telephone number*

## 6. What level of financial responsibility do you have?

None   Work involves finance   RBO   Other (*Please specify*)

## 7. Do you have access to the Intranet?

Yes   No

**If so, do you read the electronic version on the Intranet?**

Yes   No

## 8. How would you prefer to receive your copy of Finance News in future?

Intranet   Email   Post

## 9. How many other people read your copy?

Nobody else does   1-3   4-6   7+

## 10 Which department do you work in?

Adult Social Services   CEX   Children's Services   Cultural Services   e-Services  
Finance   Fire   NCS   NPS   P&T

*If you have any other comments please write below:*

**Your name (optional):**

**Tel:**

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