

News and views for everyone interested in finance

- * The mileage claimed should be reasonable and reflect the actual journey. The distance can be checked by using websites such as the AA or RAC if you are uncertain
- * Receipts should always be attached but if they are lost the manager should note why that is the case
- * The reason for allowing any amounts above the standard rates should be noted on the claim and approved in advance
- * The claim should be submitted promptly.

Financial Training



Peter Roe, Financial Training manager says.....

"Its all happening on the Financial training front!"

In addition to successful sessions of the standard Financial Management for RBOs and Finance for Non Financial Managers we have had some exciting new developments.

Active Budget Management Workshops

These are half day workshops provided in response to the new Appraisal requirement

"to identify and achieve budget reductions wherever possible and practicable throughout the year"

In today's financial climate it is more than ever essential for all managers (whether or not they are RBOs) to have an understanding of their budgets, and seek to identify areas of improvement that will contribute to achieving budget reductions, whilst not reducing service levels or quality.

So far we have provided five of these workshops: two for Planning & Transportation, two for Cultural Services, and one for Chief Executive's department, with input and assistance of CTD trainer Rebecca Buss, and departmental Finance team members Sue Bancroft, Graham Jermy, Jill Penn, and Julie Berry.



These workshops were well received by the delegates and produced much food for thought re budget monitoring and possible savings ideas.

Feedback quotes:

"The exercises got you thinking and elements of the exercises were good discussion points"

"It was a useful introduction to budget management within a limited time".

We hope to provide a workshop for the Fire Service in the near future. Let me know if you would like me to run one for your service.

Fees & Charges Workshops



In response to the COG/Cabinet request to.....

"Review fees and charges to ensure we are maximising income"

We have provided, with the support from the above departmental Finance Team members, and Sarah Girling from S F & T, lunch-time workshops for Cultural Services and Planning & Transportation aimed at helping service managers (not just finance staff) to be engaged in this process.

This involved using four "creative thinking" techniques to look at this problem/challenge in new ways. This included:

- Brainstorming
- Analogies & Metaphors
- Reversal
- Visual methods including Mindmapping and Lotus technique

These sessions have produced a whole range of ideas to be considered by the relevant departmental management teams, some of which may then be input into the budget preparation process. They have also given those attending an opportunity to try out the techniques which they can maybe use back in their "day job".

One key point that came out of this was the need to speed up implementation of online e-payments, and to simplify (if possible) systems for income collection.

Feedback quotes.....

"Thanks very much – the session really helped us to think more freely"

"I valued the time to concentrate and think without interruption!"

It would be great to get some more departments involved in these workshops. If you would like me to run a workshop for your service then please give me, Peter Roe, a call on 2813.

Excel for Managers

Our CTD colleague Kailesh Devlukia has set up this new course for managers who, we felt, could benefit from learning the basics of Excel.

The first two of these were run in July to a very positive response from those attending.

Two further beginners courses have been arranged for 9th November, with an additional Intermediate course on 2nd December.

This course looks at some of the most useful and basic Excel functions and gives you plenty of practical 'hands on' exercises including easy ways to:

calculate percentages, averages, maximum/minimum, totals; set up simple formulae, present figures clearly and attractively by creating tables, graphs and charts; extract useful management information using trends and patterns of data, unit costs, amount per head, data sorting; use other tips and tools to benefit from Excel in your role as a manager



The feedback Kailesh received for the courses run so far was excellent:

"Very knowledgeable, very adaptable to people whose skills and knowledge isn't that advanced, an excellent trainer".

*"Far more interesting and useful than I thought it would be!
Opened my eyes to the potential of Excel".*

For further details on the course content, contact Kailesh Devlukia, kailesh.devlukia@norfolk.gov.uk Learning and Development Consultant CTD via email or on 01603 223315.

So that's the range of new initiatives so far. In the meantime the Finance for Non Financial Managers courses continue on 10th November 2009, and 14th January 2010; and the next Financial Management for RBOs course is on 3rd December 2009.

If you wish to book a place please contact CTD on Extension 3414

Regards,

Peter Roe

"Watch this spacea new workshop on Coding - details to follow soon"

Bank Notes



Hi, it has been a very long time since the Banking Team had a presence in the Finance News, far too long! There have been many changes over the last 2 years but we are still here and thought this would be a good place to bring you up to date with some of the changes.

The team now consists of three people, myself (Tina Henderson), and my colleagues Marlene King and Donna Rush. I have worked within the team for almost 11 years, Marlene is fast approaching 3 years with us and Donna joined us on a part time basis last November.

What is our role within Corporate Finance?

We form part of the Treasury/Banking team and an important part of what we do is supporting the Council's Treasury Management team. Our role is very varied; essentially we reconcile the Council's principle bank accounts. We also maintain the 750+ imprest/petty cash accounts held by Norfolk County Council. This requires daily contact with our Relationship Account Support Team at the Council's bankers, the **Co-operative Bank Plc**.

A large part of our time is spent servicing the **Corporate Purchasing Card**. This started as a pilot scheme of 50 cards in 2003 and we now have 600+ cardholders. This is a shared responsibility with Corporate Procurement who monitor card spend.



We are also responsible for processing all **foreign payments** on behalf of the Council. We are currently road testing a new foreign payment request form in an effort to capture all the correct information and authorisation in one place. This new form will accompany the invoice, coding grid and batch header. If you would like a copy of this form and/or the revised procedure note for requesting a foreign payment, please contact us using the contact details at the foot of this article.

Supporting the payroll and supplier payment functions is also part of our remit. This involves keeping records of all cheques and BACS payment runs processed on behalf of both functions, stopping cheques, recalling incorrect payments from the bank and investigating BACS rejections. We endeavour to turn around all BACS rejections in the shortest possible time to avoid embarrassment/inconvenience on the part of the payee.

HSBC terminals are now situated in many of our libraries, museums, adult education centres, cashiers, customer service centre and several other NCC locations. We maintain a database of these terminals and liaise with HSBC when required. We need to be kept informed of any new installations to enable us to identify payments/receipts when they hit our accounts. Income from these terminals is dealt with by the Order to Income team and not by the Banking Team.

Norfolk Schools Website – Earlier this year I took on the mantle of updating banking information on the Norfolk Schools Website at www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk. This is an excellent website and you will find us by selecting 'finance' on the home page. We have two links under finance, one relating to Imprest Account Banking Admin and the other is the Purchasing Card. We hope you find the updated information useful. There are a couple of useful links on the purchasing card page and an up to date card application pack that can be downloaded. We welcome any feedback from your experience of using our information on this site.

Continued ...

I am also working on updating the **NCC Intranet** with Banking Team information. When this is complete you will be able to obtain up to date banking information and download forms/ application packs for our various areas of responsibility. We will put a note in a future edition of Finance News when this is available.

On a daily basis we deal with all sorts of calls and we are usually able to resolve any issues. We pride ourselves on our **customer service** and if we can't help we will try and find you someone who can. So if you have any kind of query that comes within our remit please do not hesitate to contact us using the contact details at the foot of this article. We are generally, (we all have our off days! ☺), a happy helpful bunch, and will do our very best to help you.

Contact Details

Tina Henderson	01603 222691	tina.henderson@norfolk.gov.uk
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Donna Rush (mornings)	01603 222312	donna.rush@norfolk.gov.uk
Address	4 th Floor County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, NR1 2DW	

Tina Henderson
From the Banking Team, Corporate Finance, 4th Floor, County Hall



A few little known facts about money!

The world's smallest coin weighed only .002 grams and was from Nepal.

The world's heaviest coin was from Sweden and weighed 43 pounds 7 1/4 oz.

The world's smallest banknote, issued in Morocco, was the size of a postage stamp.

The largest bank note was the Chinese 1 Kwan, printed in the 14th century, measuring 9 X 13 inches.



Cabinet Changes Announced

The Leader of the Council, Daniel Cox, has announced changes to his Cabinet designed to further strengthen the focus of the Council in the key areas of finance, performance, efficiency, the economy and customer focus.

Councillor Ian Mackie has been appointed as the Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance. Ian is the Conservative Councillor for Thorpe St Andrew.

I met with Ian on the day of his appointment to brief him for the Cabinet meeting held on the 9th November and will be holding further meetings with him over the coming weeks to provide more general briefings on local government finance; the finance team across the Council; and some of the challenges we face over the next few years.

Ian is very much looking forward to his new role and to working closely with us.

Other Cabinet changes announced are Councillor Bill Borrett (Efficiency and Corporate Affairs) and Councillor Anne Steward (Economic Development).

Paul Brittain
Head of Corporate Finance

01603 222400

Sometimes VAT is good!

Following a civil court case in 2008 there was a limited opportunity for local authorities and other VAT registered traders to make claims for the return of VAT deducted from certain income between 1973 and 1996. In practice this has applied to a very limited number of areas - the most fruitful being where the Revenue's interpretation of VAT law has changed over time.

With the help of the CEX Business Support Unit I spent a couple of days trawling through old Minutes in the basement for evidence - an interesting experience in itself and the hardest part was trying not to get sidetracked.

Claims were submitted to HM Revenue and Customs earlier this year before the 31 March deadline. The first of these related to VAT on library fees for items such as gramophone records, CDs and videos and has recently been accepted by HMRC, resulting in a repayment of **£273,000** including interest - given the time that has elapsed the interest amounted to more than half the total!

Although this should be set against the context of the stated need for the Authority to generate savings of £140m over the next three years, every little helps!

Howard Jones, Tax Manager

Prince's Trust Fund Raising



Brian Allerton was successful in being chosen to join the NCC team raising money for Prince's Trust. The Million Makers initiative is part of a national competition being staged by Prince's Trust who are asking 100 organisations to raise £10,000 each. The hope is to raise £1 million, this being the cost of running Prince's Trust for one week.

The NCC Team is made up of 10 people from P&T, and 1 each from Finance, Trading Standards, Customer Service Centre, and, Communications. Brian has taken the role of Treasurer for the team and we asked him what this role has involved since joining the team in July?

“Our target is to raise at least £10,000 by 31 January 2010. We have chosen a number of initiatives to help us get to this target: produce a Recipe Book (£5 each), hold a Staff Party 21st November (tickets £13 each), sell Spree Books (£23 each), organise Dress Down/Up days, sponsor a Sky Dive, sell cakes, shake collection tins at UEA/Waterfront gigs... and we are still looking for new ways to raise more.

My role has been to help the group produce mini business-plans for each initiative, open a bank account with Co-op Bank (to ensure funds are kept separate from NCC funds), ensure all cash and cheques collected are banked as soon as possible to minimise risk of loss and mis-appropriation and set-up the necessary recording schedules to record stock movements and cash/cheques transactions.

So far we have collected over £11,500 of cash & cheques, and we have placed orders for expenditure to the value £7,400 so our net balance due to Prince's Trust at the moment is £4,100. We have created a network of selling 'agents' who each have a supply of Party Tickets, Recipe Books and Spree Books, and each of these agents are collecting cash and cheques. I keep in contact with each agent at least twice a week and visit them to collect their takings, or arrange for them to visit me on the fourth floor.

We have set-up a Cash Book to record daily transactions and have created stock records for recording the sale of Tickets and Books to ensure we keep track of each one. Weekly trips to the Bank to deposit cash and cheques and visits to Football Club to help negotiate details for the Party are examples of some of the non-desk based elements of the role.

Hopefully the fund-raising project will be a success this year and will lead to another team being put forward next year. Look out for the opportunity next summer to get involved.”

Thanks Brian. That's given us a good idea of what you and the Team are getting up to.

For donations, and any suggestions for fund-raising please contact Brian Allerton or Louise Cornell at fusion@norfolk.gov.uk.

Raising funds to support
The Prince's Trust

All net proceeds donated to The Prince's Trust (registered charity no.1079675)

New Girl in the Treasury Team

Hi! My name is Emma and I recently joined NCC within the Treasury team.



I have come from a commercial background having spent the last 7 years working in Norfolk for family businesses doing their accounts. I felt like I needed a change away from the 'clique' feeling. I wanted to be part of a team of more than just one! I wanted to be a piece of the jigsaw.

Was it a shock to the system coming here????? Well, it wasn't as big a shock as I thought it would be. I thought I would feel like a fish out of water, or a small fish in a big pond. I know it has only been 6 weeks so that feeling may come.....but so far so good.

Since being here, I have been involved with the daily Treasury Management process. I am still referring to my idiot notes that I made on day one, however, I am now going it alone.....rather than being shadowed!

I am also involved in reviewing and revising Service Level Agreements between ourselves and other bodies (Police Authority, Norfolk Property Services, Norse, Norfolk Pension Fund and Probation Board).

We have a banking software package called Financial Director. At the minute we log on to the bank using a dial up modem. I am looking to upgrade that to a Virtue Private Network that will increase speed, security and allow more than one person to log in at the same time.

I have also had about 7 one to ones!!! Something that I am not used to.....someone actually wanted to help, guide and listen! I have been made to feel very welcome and my nominated 'buddy' has been great!.....again something that I have never experienced before!!!

My outside interests include; going to the cinema, the gym and eating out (hence the gym!) Also, I am County Tiddlywinks Champion, Norfolk's top tightrope walker and I enjoy the odd custard pie throwing competition. And in my spare time I catch and tame lions!! I have a large family so we get together quite a bit and play games, and scream and shout (yes! you are never too old for a slanging match with your eldest sister!!!!!!!)

So if you ever need a lion tamed or a custard pie thrown at someone.....I'm your gal!!! ;o)

Emma Downs
01603 222826

If you would like 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.



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