

IMPLEMENTATION EXECUTIVE
29 OCTOBER 2008

TOWARDS ONE COUNCIL – FINANCIAL UPDATE

Executive Summary

This report identifies progress along the schedule of key finance activity taking place between now and January 2009. It includes support for services, technical accounting issues and the further development of a finance community utilising the skills, knowledge and leadership within the existing functions of the County and District Councils.

15 specific tasks have been completed since the last Financial Update report; this report details 22 current tasks.

Proposal

There are no specific proposals in the report, which is provided for information and to inform debate. Members are invited to comment on any of the activities identified, and their comments will be considered and acted upon by the finance community.

Reasons for Proposals

See above.

Author

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(Items in grey have been completed since the IE meeting of 15 July 2008; for clarity, they will be removed from the next report)

Work Plan for Next Stages of the Towards One Council 2009-10 Finance Issues and Budget Plans

	Task	Timescale	Purpose	Objective / comments
1.	Formal budget review meetings with Service Directors/Portfolio holders to be put in the diary.	Ongoing.	To ensure relevant people have the slots reserved in their diaries.	Meetings arranged for 22 Sept – 7 Nov. Provisional dates are being set for 2010-11 budget review meetings to allow forward planning.
2.	Further analysis of baseline 2008-09 'budget data' as revised to reflect new council structure.	Completed.	Ensure (as far as currently practicable) consistent treatment of all cost centres.	Baseline now established with consistent and workable accounting treatments.
2.1.	Continuing analysis of baseline 2008-09 'budget data' as revised to reflect new council structure.	Ongoing as part of QA of the budget preparation process	Reflect considerations from Detailed Budget Review Workshops	We now have a workable baseline, but as service design is still dynamic, we are monitoring the changes to ensure that the baseline remains accurate.
3.	'Budget data' reworked to pull out indirect budget lines and distribute to service accountants.	Completed.	Second version, with overheads identified separately circulated to accountants.	Service accountants have direct expenditure information to work with SDs.
4.	Service list pro-forma showing ADs and finance leads to be fully completed.	Completed.	For each SD area to identify and allocate named financial support.	Named finance leads are now supporting every service area.
5.	Obtain HR staffing lists information.	Completed.	To enable SDs to understand the staffing position they are working with.	HR staffing lists are being cross-checked to existing budget preparation working papers, and returns co-ordinated with HR to ensure accurate costed data on staffing structures is provided to SDs and to SAP.

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	Task	Timescale	Purpose	Objective / comments
6.	Programme office to realign 1C4W work stream in line with service analysis.	Completed.	To realign work stream data into new structures.	To ensure that all work streams are working on activity and finance data reflecting new structures.
7.	Write paper on role and scope of Member budget sub-committee to JIT	Completed.	To consider options for role of Member sub-committee.	Terms of reference for Member sub-committee were considered by Budget Working group and by IE in July.
8.	Draft financial plan to Cabinet.	Completed.	To provide a Cabinet-approved financial plan for 2009-10.	Approved financial plan is now being used as a control total for the 2009-10 budget preparation exercise
9.	Arrange training sessions for Members.	Completed.	To provide Members with information on budget setting process.	Considered at Budget Scrutiny Task group 14 July 2008.
10.	Arrange further training sessions for Members.	Ongoing. Session held 30 Sep, further sessions to be held as Members require.	To provide Members with information on budget setting process.	To support Members in their role as observers at Budget Review Workshops and work with Cabinet and Executive during budget preparation.
11.	Issue formal budget-proposal preparation guidance notes and pro-forma.	Completed.	To set a standard framework for service data and budget preparation (resources, priorities, performance standards).	Guidance notes have been issued for both revenue and capital budgets, with training sessions held to ensure that the wider finance community is fully aware of the process.
12.	Finance teams working with service leads to develop service proposals and budget options to deliver cash freeze/savings targets.	Completed.	Service design and preparation for budget workshops. Linking to the corporate performance/ priority work.	Weekly workshops are being held for finance leads, to ensure that the wider finance community is providing consistent advice and support to services.

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	Task	Timescale	Purpose	Objective / comments
13.	Corporate Finance working with Programme Office to develop a 'benefits realised' framework.	Completed.	To provide a robust scrutiny and evidence framework.	To demonstrate that expected 1C4W and BMP savings have been identified for 07-08 and 08-09.
13.1.	Corporate Finance working with Programme Office to operate a 'benefits realised' framework.	Ongoing	To track, identify and evidence savings in a dynamic environment.	Demonstrating that benefits are delivered to Wiltshire's communities in accordance with the unitary bid and BMP programme.
14.	Officer meetings re budget proposals.	Completed.	To support work on service design, priorities, service standards etc.	These meetings were arranged to meet the requirements of service directors.
15.	Workshops to review structures.	Completed.	To allow JIT to consider the proposed structures. This needs to be completed by 1.10.08 to meet BMP timetable.	Proposed structures were evaluated for consistency and fitness for purpose; then posted to extranet on Friday 26/9/08. 1 st Organisational Design Workshop was held on 5 September 2008.
16.	Write range of technical policies.	September - November.	For use by the BMP team during the Realisation Phase of the project.	Topics agreed with MP cover Assets, Banking, Debt Management, Pricing Structure, Accounts Payable, Budgeting.
17.	Consolidate and cleanse asset data from County and Districts.	August – December	Ensure an asset register is available for year-end.	Significant progress has already been made in putting together 5 asset registers of varying comprehensiveness, and meet corporate data-quality standards. Further work is being planned to identify continuous improvement opportunities from SAP.
18.	Draft budget pro-forma submissions to Corporate Finance.	September - October	To provide services' first cut data.	Submissions now being reviewed and quality-assured.

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19.	Corporate Finance build draft consolidated budget position for 2009-10.	1 September – 15 November	Achievable, sustainable budget supporting 1C4W priorities.	Initial budget envelope now constructed, for QA and review continuing throughout autumn.
20.	“Interim” staffing structure as at 1.4.09 costed and detailed. (Developed from list at item 5.)	Completed.	Requirement of BMP/SAP – to ensure staff employed on 1/4/09 are paid in April and can operate SAP self-service.	HR and BMP needed by 16 Sept a list of posts requiring SAP authority to authorise procurement or self-service. This came from the staffing list required for the draft budget submissions and was validated against the baseline 08-09 budget.
21.	“Preferred” staffing structure as at 31.3.10 costed and detailed. (Cross-checked against lists at items 5 and 20.)	31 October 2008.	Requirement of BMP/SAP. Maintained within SAP by HR.	Can only be finalised and signed-off when service redesigns have been completed.
22.	Detailed Budget Review meetings.	22 Sept – 7 Nov	To review first cut proposals. (See 18 & 19 above.)	Service Directors are now discussing proposals, priorities, performance and service standards and options for the 2009-10 budget with WCC Chief Finance Officer and Head of Financial Planning.
23.	Develop the wider finance community, sharing current knowledge and experience throughout County and District staff.	Ongoing	Strengthen and standardise finance advice and support for new services.	Already proving successful in raising knowledge-base and skills levels, building on the achievements from BMP/SAP and the co-ordinated budget-proposal preparation process.
24.	Share and spread the technical knowledge of key accounting requirements such as Collection Fund, HRA, etc.	Ongoing	Enable unitary authority to meet statutory obligations and developing finance staff for their new roles.	Ensuring that areas of specific expertise within Districts and County are brought into a resilient overall finance function. Key leads being identified.

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	Task	Timescale	Purpose	Objective / comments
25.	Develop a co-ordinated and comprehensive closedown plan to produce 08-09 Statements of Accounts for County and Districts.	August - December	Ensure high-quality accounts are produced for approval by IE.	Work has already started on this, and has identified some very significant issues to be managed around audit requirements, harmonisation of accounting policies, resource requirements, and transfers of responsibilities between Members and S.151 Officers of the demising authorities.
26.	Arrange content and organisation of budget consultation meetings.	Completed.	See task 27 below.	See task 27 below.
27.	Hold budget consultation meetings.	2 October – 19 November	Provide opportunity for Wiltshire's communities to comment on what matters to them.	7 public meetings and 2 for the business community (Ch Commerce/SWEP) have been arranged and publicised in Chippenham, Wilton, Trowbridge, Marlborough, Devizes, Malmesbury and Salisbury. Elements of public consultation are being developed to encompass Area Board and November Roadshow events.
28.	Produce a draft consolidated budget proposal.	15 November		First cut 09-10 budget proposal.
29.	Complete budget paperwork for Cabinet.	24 December	Papers for publication and circulation.	Meet circulation deadlines for Cabinet.
30.	Hold review meetings	November to January 2009	To refine first cut budget to reflect resources, priorities and service proposals.	To refine budget proposals for 2009-10.
31.	Draft Financial Regulations / Procedures for Wiltshire Council.	September to December	Legal framework for the new Council's financial environment.	Forms part of the new Constitution for Wiltshire Council, to be adopted by Council on 10 February.

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	Task	Timescale	Purpose	Objective / comments
32.	Review Contract Regulations / Procedures for Wiltshire Council.	September to December	Legal framework for the new Council's procurement environment.	Forms part of the new Constitution for Wiltshire Council, to be adopted by Council on 10 February.
33.	IE to review and approve Council Taxbase for Wiltshire Council.	IE meeting 10 December 2008	Statutory requirement.	Taxbase for 09-10 comes from Sept 08 valuation list after discounts and exemptions have been granted by the Council. Current policies differ across County and Districts.
34.	IE to review and approve Housing rent level for Wiltshire Council.	IE meeting 10 December 2008	Statutory requirement (LSG CLG July 2008).	A requirement 'inherited' from authorities with housing stock.
35.	Council to set budget and Council tax for Wiltshire Council.	17 February 2009	Statutory requirement.	Budget and Council Tax (precept) must be approved and notified to DCLG by 11 March; direct-debit payers must be given at least 14 days' notice of change of amount.

Note – for clarity, items completed prior to 15 July 2008 have been deleted. They are available for review if required.

29/10/2008/IE/SMF