

**Valuable Lessons Recommendations for Councils:**

<b>Audit Commission Recommendation</b>	<b>What we have done/are doing</b>	<b>What else can we do?</b>
<p><b><i>Improve the quality and availability of financial support</i></b>                      Offer resource management and VFM training as part of the council's financial package - target those with limited capacity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The provision of a portfolio of courses available to support financial management in schools.</li> <li>• A financial advice and consultancy service via regular on-site visits.</li> <li>• Access to a financial support helpdesk.</li> <li>• The provision of bespoke budget planning software including the facility to incorporate SDP priority costs.</li> <li>• Piloting the SEN/AEN VFM Resource pack in conjunction with members of the SEN team.</li> <li>• Investigating Sustainable Schools initiatives, including Carbon Trading.</li> <li>• Encourage schools to use the national benchmarking web site via the provision of workshops and the development of a summary tool to facilitate the analysis of the results for presentation to governors.</li> <li>• Promoted the DCSFs free one day consultancy offer &amp; the DCSF's Strategic Planning Guide.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilot the Workforce Tool for Secondary Schools and the Managing School Resources online self assessment tool.</li> <li>• Consider how to target those with limited capacity.</li> <li>• Offer briefing sessions specifically focussing on VFM and resource management.</li> <li>• Raise schools awareness of what tools are readily available.</li> </ul>
<p>Align and share knowledge between finance and service improvements teams</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share financial compliance indicators with service improvement colleagues.</li> <li>• Demonstrated budget planning software to SIPs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify how these links can be strengthened.</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>Support better purchasing in schools</i></b>                      Raise schools awareness of high quality alternative providers of traded services, including them in traded services portfolios.</p>	<p>Information is available on OPEN and Schoolquote</p>	
<p>Identify schools spending more than others on items of procurement and support them to find savings.</p>	<p>Free VfM consultancy visits</p>	

Ensure that schools use electronic procurement systems to minimise purchasing costs.	Promotion and support of Wiltshire Schoolquote and OPEN services	
Encourage schools to collaborate on purchasing to benefit from economies of scale.	Promotion of Schoolquote/IBC Storm events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Facilitate collaborative approaches around the extended services clusters</li> <li>▪ Develop integrated funding mechanism to enable schools to benefit from council contracts</li> <li>▪ Identify real case studies from Wiltshire schools as exemplars of good practice in achieving VFM and share with other schools</li> <li>▪ Develop approaches to facilitate the sharing of resources and staff between schools</li> <li>▪ Offer LA wide access to national Schools Recruitment Service</li> </ul>
<b>Strengthen accountability for value for money</b> Ensure that internal audit provides assurance to governing bodies and councils on questions of resource management and recommends vfm improvements as a matter of course.	FMSiS assessment programme provides assurance (or otherwise) in several areas including leadership/governance, policy/strategy, people management and resources	Internal Audit plan 2010/11 to include a schools' value for money review
Ensure that SIPs consider resource deployment as part of their role. Council's may need to provide training to SIPs to support them		Revise SIPs briefing and provide related training to them
Ensure that accessible financial training is available for all governing bodies. Training should cover VFM and the links between finance and school performance	One day course on financial management offered to governing bodies via Governor Services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Include VFM specific training.</li> <li>▪ Governors' conference 2010 to focus upon Vfm and sustainable schools</li> </ul>