

Efficiency, Improvement & Transformation

Officer Led Task and Finish Review

Review Title

Scope

Scrutiny Chair: Jean O'Donnell	Contact details:
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Lead Officer: Paul Saunders/Garry Cummings	Contact details: 01642 527010/527012
Independent Officer: ?	Contact details:
Finance Officer: Paul Bale	Contact details: 01642 526368
Select Committee: Arts Leisure and Culture	Type of Review: Task and Finish
Timeline Options to select 23 November. Cabinet 16th December	
1. What services are included? The Finance Service Supports the Council's Director of Resources in carrying out the statutory duties as the Council's Chief Finance Office in the stewardship and management of the Councils Resources and ensuring the Council has a robust financial management mechanism and medium term financial plan, The Service is delivered in the following way : Financial Management and Support to Services. Financial support teams linked to each Service Group, provide all financial management support for Services. The Services covered include : <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategic Financial advice to Members, Corporate Directors, Heads of Service• Setting and management of the Budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan (including projections of future funding)• Identification and Assessment of Financial Impact of Policy, legislation and organisational changes• Developing long term financial strategies and plans and aligning these plans to performance and activity within the service• Provision of financial management and support to managers to enable effective budget monitoring to be undertaken• Influencing the Efficiency agenda in Services Group• Maintenance of the Implementation of the Financial Management System.• Closure of Accounts.	

The following are specific to the CESC team :

- Financial monitoring of Schools
- Interpretation of school funding legislation
- Development of funding models for schools
- Management of the School funding formula for schools
- Specialist Financial Advice to Schools Forum
- Management of Financial support to schools (Bursary / Trading area)

Asset & Projects

This team are also responsible for strategic asset management and capital strategy development across the Council. The team was established 2 years ago to increase the focus on Capital management and project support and the role has recently increased to include asset management from within CESC. From a Finance perspective, the following functions are covered :

- to provide strategic financial advice to Corporate Management Team and members to enable them to determine spending priorities in relation to capital
- Provide Financial support and advice to feasibility studies and business case developments on capital and infrastructure developments.
- Develop funding options and assess options for future capital developments.
- Align financial strategy and capital strategies
- Capital Resourcing Strategy / Capital Receipts Planning
- Development, control and maintenance of Capital Programme (Project Briefs / PIDS / etc.)
- Financial support and challenge to projects within the Capital programme.
- Financial Support to Capital Projects
- Development of Capital Programme
- Monitoring and Management of Capital Programme

Corporate Accountancy

Team is responsible for all aspects of Technical accountancy and external reporting :

- Technical Financial Advice
- Adoption of Accounting Codes of Practice, Standards and Principles
- Preparation of Statement of Accounts
- Management of the Closure of Accounts Process
- Financial legislation
- Completion of Returns and statistical information
- Control and Reconciliation of the Accounting Systems
- Maintaining Corporate Medium Term Financial Plans
- Maintain the Councils fasset register / asset management system
- Management and Control of HRA

Financial Planning

Financial Planning undertake the following :

- producing, reviewing and maintaining the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan, consolidating information from Service MTFP's;
- Assessing impact of legislative change
- Modelling, influencing and projecting future allocations of resources from Government and Council Tax
- to provide strategic financial advice to Corporate Management Team and members to

enable them to determine spending priorities es.

Treasury Management-covers the management of the Council's investments, cash flows and borrowing. Since the Credit Crunch, the Icelandic Banking crisis and the consequent publication of the Audit Commission's report "Risk and Return" and the "Local Authority Investments Report" from the Local Government Select Committee, Treasury Management has become a very high profile area of the Council's activities subject to a great deal of scrutiny from both inside and outside of the Council. The activities of the section seek to manage three competing areas of risk, in order of importance

- maximise security of funds;
- ensure sufficient liquidity of funds; and finally
- ensure a rate of return.

VAT -by providing a comprehensive VAT service that service seeks to ensure that

- the Council's VAT liability is minimised;
- all VAT due to the Council is recovered promptly;
- penalties and interest imposed by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise are avoided;
- sound financial advice is provided to officers on all matters relating to VAT;and
- the Council is classified as "low risk" by HMRC with regard to taxation matters.

The Financial Management and Support Sections, Assets and Projects Section and Corporate Accountancy team are managed by the Head of Finance and Assets, who also has responsibility for the Council's Land and Property Function.

The Financial Planning Section is managed by the Head of Finance, Procurement and Performance who also has responsibility for Risk Management and Audit, which is part of this review and also procurement.

2. Task & Finish Teams overall aim / objectives in doing this work is:

To ensure that the Finance Services assists the Chief Financial Officer in discharging the statutory requirements and also provides the Council members, CMT and Heads of Service with the financial infrastructure and advice to maximise the use of the Councils resources and that it does so in the most efficient, effective manner..

3. Please give an initial indication how transformation will enable efficiencies and improvements to be delivered by this EIT review?

The reassessment of current working practices may streamline or remove a number of processes. This could also result in an increased focus on key areas within the Council where financial support is needed

The examination of current functions with a view to realignment or merger.