



Causeway
Coast & Glens
Borough Council

FINANCE

BUSINESS PLAN 2020/21

SECTION 1

Purpose of this plan

- Give a clear sense of what the service is for and the challenges it faces.
- Show how it is supporting Council's priorities.
- Show how it is contributing to the efficiency drive and transformation of service delivery.
- Show how it is aligning its resources to meet the challenges ahead.
- Help us to hold ourselves to account and ensure we deliver for Council and its residents.
- Bring key information together in one place about the service, which Members, staff and stakeholders can understand.

The Vision for the service area

The creation of a high value added, skilled, innovative and efficient Finance department providing accurate, relevant, timely financial information and ensuring the timely and accurate payment of staff, councillors and creditors enabling effective management.

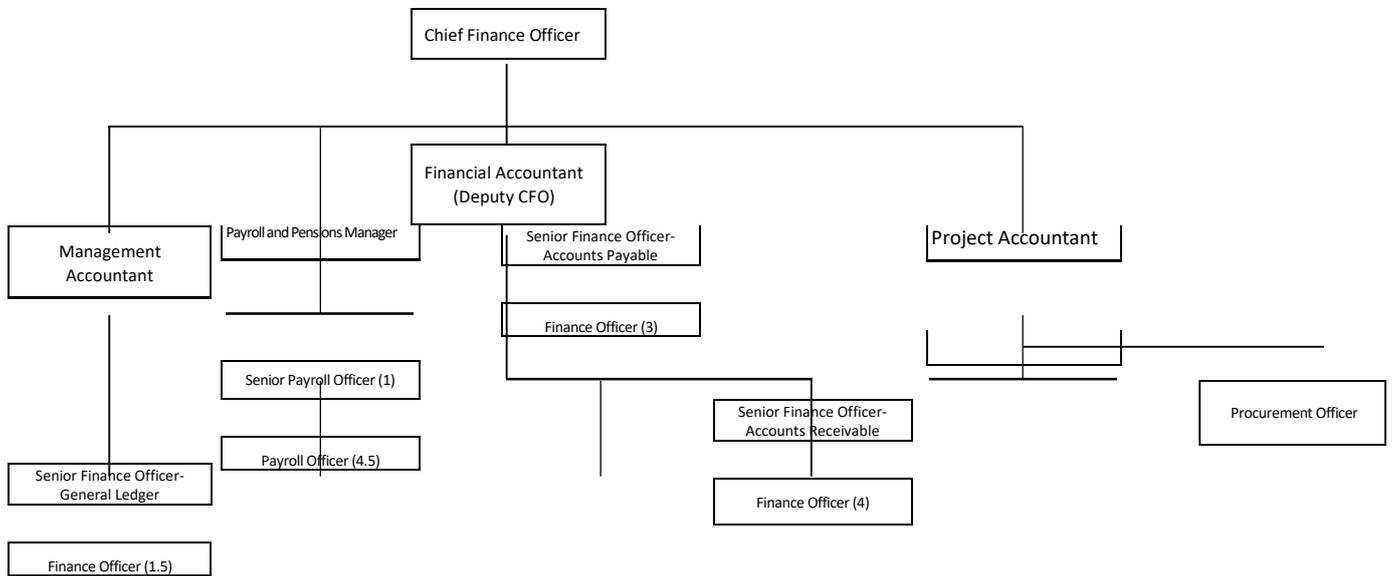
Strategic Themes / Functions

1. Development of strong financial governance and budgetary control. (***Finance/Accounting***)
2. Development of efficient processes to enable the payment of Council's suppliers within agreed terms. (***Accounts Payable***)
3. Manage and coordinate Council's debt maximizing the cash flow available to Council at all times. (***Accounts Receivable***)
4. Ensuring the accurate, timely payment of Council's staff through efficient processes. (***Payroll***)
5. Development of efficient procurement systems enabling Council to achieve maximum value for money on expenditure whilst maintaining a strong governance framework. (***Procurement***)

Strategic Aims of the Service

1. Support the decision making process across Council by way of providing accurate, timely relevant financial information
2. Full review of business processes maximising efficiency.
3. Ensure that the financial system is fit for purpose providing a strong framework of governance.
4. Maximise digital capability of Council ICT systems allowing for efficient financial workflow across the Borough.

Finance Organisational Structure



SECTION 2 - SWOT Analysis

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long serving highly skilled dedicated staff • Good relationships with other departments, staff, councilors and external stakeholders • Well established governance principles • Clear defined roles and specialisms within finance department allowing staff to concentrate on areas of specified responsibility • Finance department position within council structure allows uninterrupted focus on all financial matters. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varied processes inherited from legacy bodies • Some paper based processes still exist, delay in moving all to digital • Finance software package nearing end of life • Finance staff not centralized • Need to manage stakeholders expectations more effectively
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New finance software package will allow finance to specify needs of the council in the modern world • Specification will allow review of current processed and maximize efficiency • Collaborative working with other departments/councils/public bodies • Rationalisation of processing utilising best practice • Specialist roles within finance department allowing focus on key areas. • Greater opportunity for interdepartmental working through business partner relationships 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of key staff • Finance software package not supported after March 2022 • Increased pressure to reduce budgets could lead to under resourcing in advance of new finance system being implemented • Inability to meet increasing demands of other directorates with the current resources available. • Increased legislation/reporting requirements puts greater demands on finite resource

Summary Narrative

The finance department has a core group of highly skilled and experienced staff, however the implementation of a new finance software package while continuing to provide “normal service” will impact on already stretched resources.

PESTEL Analysis

Political	Council's current and continuing policy to drive efficiencies and desire for further cost cutting and savings.
Economic	Economic activity in the Borough will be affected by Covid 19 although Councils Penny Product at this stage still remains positive, thereby helping to reduce the pressure on budgets.
Social	Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council covers a large geographic area with services demands spread across the entire Borough, cost control is vitally important to assist key decision makers to continue to deliver service to the areas it is most needed.
Technological	Council has robust ICT systems however from a finance perspective these are being underutilized resulting in a huge potential efficiency in financial processes to be gained.
Environmental	Constantly changing and increasing environmental demands place even greater pressure on limited budgets therefore finance has a pivotal role in ensuring budget holders are fully informed with regards the associated financial pressures these demand bring.
Legal	Additional/constantly changing legislative or regulatory requirements continue to place increasing demands upon the service.

Summary Narrative

With ever increasing budgetary pressures and an expectation to drive efficiencies, the role of finance within Council is vital to ensure decision makers and budget holders are kept fully informed on a timely basis with accurate financial information to allow good decision making.

SECTION 3

Strategic Aims and Objectives

Aligned with Council's Strategic Aims and Objectives

1. Leader and Champion.
2. Accelerating our Economy and Contributing to Prosperity.
3. Innovation and Transformation.
4. Resilient, Healthy and Engaged Communities.
5. Protecting and Enhancing our Environments and Assets.

Strategic Objective				
1. Support the decision making process across Council by way of providing accurate, timely relevant financial information				
Link to Corporate Aims and Objectives				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation and Transformation 				
Work Streams/ Operational Actions / Outcomes	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Performance Indicators	Progress
Production and review of a medium term financial plan	Chief Finance Officer	March 2020 – implementation of financial plan, ongoing review thereafter	<p>Presentation of medium term financial plan to SMT and Council</p> <p>Quarterly review of financial plan incorporating changing policies or new initiatives</p> <p>Projection of impact of changing priorities over the life of the financial plan</p>	Draft medium term financial plan progressed and presented to the finance committee on 27 th February 2020. This should now be reviewed and updated on a quarterly basis.
Management accounts further developed re audit recommendations	Chief Finance Officer	December 2020	Production of management accounts and presentation to management and Council to include capital expenditure and the Council's balance sheet position.	Management accounts being produced monthly on a timely basis. Work ongoing to incorporate capital expenditure and balance sheet position in a user friendly format.

Strategic Objective				
2. Support the decision making process across Council by way of providing accurate, timely relevant financial information				
Link to Corporate Aims and Objectives				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation and Transformation 				
Work Streams/ Operational Actions / Outcomes	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Performance Indicators	Progress
Capital strategy to be developed in conjunction with the CPWG	Accountants	Nov/Dec 2020	Produce capital strategy to include capital expenditure, investments, liabilities and treasury management	Audit recommendation from audit committee on 9 th September 2020 to be progressed as soon as possible
Implementation of Key Performance Indicators (KPI's)	Chief Finance Officer	February 2021	KPI's to be integrated into the monthly management accounts and reported on a monthly basis including tracking against previous financial periods.	Development of new KPI's in conjunction with performance management and APSE

Strategic Objective				
2. Full review of business processes maximising efficiency.				
Link to Corporate Aims				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation and Transformation 				
Work Streams / Operational Actions / Outcomes	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Performance Indicators	Progress
Harmonisation and development of financial systems and procedures across the entire organization.	Chief Finance Officer	Ongoing	Production of a complete financial procedure manual for all directorates and services Reduction in duplication of effort Business partnering with Directorates Training non-finance staff in basic financial transaction procedures.	Finance policy manual was presented to the finance committee on 30 th June 2020. This should continue to be reviewed and updated as audit recommendations are received.

Strategic Objective				
3. Ensure that the financial system is fit for purpose providing a strong framework of governance				
Link to Corporate Aims				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader and Champion 				
Work Streams / Operational Actions / Outcomes	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Performance Indicators	Progress
Work with external auditor reviewing annual governance statement and recommendations contained therein	Accountants	Annual	Unqualified annual accounts Increased level of assurance in annual governance statement	2018/2019 Accounts submitted on time and unqualified following audit. 2019/20 accounts submitted on time, audit ongoing.
Work with internal auditors reviewing internal processes and control mechanisms	Accountants	Ongoing	Satisfactory internal audit reports Completion/implementation of audit recommendations within agreed timeframes	Implementation of audit recommendations and review and update procedures accordingly.
Work Streams / Operational Actions / Outcomes	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Performance Indicators	Progress

<p>Acquire, implement and develop a new finance software package to meet the needs of the Council and ensure compatability with other council systems to reduce duplication of effort.</p>	<p>Chief Finance Officer</p>	<p>September 2020 to April 2022</p>	<p>Establish working group</p> <p>Write specification required by Council</p> <p>Invite software companies to demo</p> <p>Procure ensuring value for money</p> <p>Train staff and implement new system</p>	<p>Work is at an early stage but it is anticipated that this will progress swiftly.</p>
--	------------------------------	-------------------------------------	--	---

Strategic Objective				
4. Maximise digital capability of Council ICT systems allowing for efficient financial workflow across the Borough				
Link to Corporate Aims				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation and Transformation 				
Work Streams / Operational Actions / Outcomes	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Performance Indicators	Progress
Continued roll-out of electronic payslips	Payroll and Pension Manager	March 2021	Achieve 50% of all staff receiving payslip electronically	Weekly 40% Monthly 70% Members 100%
Implementation of integrated expenses system	Payroll and Pensions Manager	March 2021	100% of expenses claims made via electronic system	New system introduced and 98% claims received electronically
Increased use of email remittance advice	Senior Finance Officer – Accounts payable	March 2021	10% reduction in use of printed remittance advices	No. of email remittances Mar 2019 – 784 Mar 2020 – 653 varies monthly
Increased use of BACS payments system	Senior Finance Officer – Accounts payable	Ongoing	10% reduction in use of printed cheques	%of payments by BACS Mar 2019 – 93.74% Mar 2020 – 93.90%
Completion of roll-out of electronic purchase ordering system	Senior Finance Officer – Accounts payable	Dec 2020	Suppliers prompt payment statistics	Electronic POP's introduced in January 2020 and was working well. Covid 19 has hampered it's progress due to the need to be in Council building or have VPN to access.

Work Streams / Operational Actions / Outcomes	Responsible Officer	Timescale	Performance Indicators	Progress
Implementation of electronic invoice authorization	Senior Finance Officer – Accounts payable	March 2021	Suppliers prompt payments statistics	Covid 19 has delayed this although finance are currently using an email authorization system for non po items
Increased use of electronic invoicing/statements	Senior Finance Officer – accounts receivable	Ongoing	10% reduction in printed invoices	Mar 2019 – 38% email Mar 2020 – 55% email
Promoting the use of Direct Debits	Senior Finance Officer – accounts receivable	Ongoing	Level of debt owed to Council Debtor days	Debt management now reported monthly, Uptake in DD's has increased mainly in the tourism sector.
Reduction in amount of cash handled by Council	Senior Finance Officer – Accounts receivable	Ongoing	Income received via website Income received through card terminals Income via direct debit	2018/19 - £299k, 2019/20 £201k 2018/19 £2.896M, 2019/20 £2.752M 2018/19 £674k, 2019/20 £1.285M

SECTION 4 – Resources

Service Area	Staffing level	Salary Budget	Other Budget
Management and accountants	5		
Payroll	5.5		
Accounts Payable	5		
Accounts Receivable	4		
General Ledger/Management Information	2.5		
Procurement	1		
All Finance	23	£1,046,011	£144,912