
Finance Advisory Network

Full Service Plan 2008

Introduction to the CIPFA Finance Advisory Network

The CIPFA Finance Advisory Network (FAN) celebrated its fifth birthday in December 2007, and since its inception, it has gone from strength to strength. The network now has an impressive membership of over 300 public sector bodies including local authorities, police (which have a dedicated associate membership network), fire and transport authorities. It has practically a one hundred percent subscriber retention rate which amply demonstrates how highly its help and support is valued by its subscribers.

The CIPFA FAN is built upon a clear vision and objective. It is designed to assist finance professionals, local authority Members and other local authority officers who wish to work together to enhance the effectiveness of their financial management in supporting improved service delivery during a period of unprecedented public sector reform.

The network achieves this objective through effectively briefing and advising its members on legislative, professional and other guidance that is issued and, in particular, on the practical issues and implications arising from such guidance. Timely and practical advice is offered to support action planning for reform as it impacts upon a wide range of financial management issues, processes, strategies and procedures. In addition, through its team of regional advisors, the CIPFA FAN provides expertly facilitated peer networking and support across its membership.

A look at 2007

During 2007 the network supported its members in a number of crucial areas, covering new regulatory demands from government departments; proper practice from CIPFA and other financial improvement initiatives as part of a broad financial management agenda. The FAN has delivered this support by working in partnership with a number of organisations including Communities and Local Government (CLG), the Home Office, HMT and the Audit Commission. The strength of the network comes from its members and we are very grateful to those practitioners who have supported the CIPFA FAN over many years.

The themes covered during 2007 matched the FAN's plans and included some very popular areas, especially work on the Annual Governance Statement, the SORP 2007 Guidance Notes, the SORP 2008 (Invitation to Comment) and Good Practices in Financial Management. All these events were very well attended and provided our subscribers with powerful insights into the local authority financial management change agenda.

In addition to a substantial programme of events, FAN provides subscribers with relevant web-based documentation and other practitioner support. It produced guidance on the Annual Governance Statement and Good Practice in Financial management, discussion documents on the SORP, advice on the capital change agenda, Use of Resources, Whole of Government Accounts, Local Area Agreements and Partnerships, and meeting the efficiency agenda in the light of CSR 2007.

The FAN will continue to address the extensive local authority financial management change agenda in 2008/9. These agendas will require all local authority finance and performance professionals to work together to ensure they are in a position to meet the significant challenges they will undoubtedly have to face.

Themes for 2008

The CIPFA FAN is aiming for the individual elements of its themed annual financial management and reporting programme to cover the following key strands:

1. Technical and Regulatory developments
2. Transformation of Financial Services
3. Performance Assessment frameworks

Technical and Regulatory developments

The technical and regulatory strand will consider the technical accounting, financial reporting and legislative areas that form the backbone of financial management in local government.

Under this strand it is intended to cover:

- SORP 2009 ITC
- IFRS and SORP Governance
- SORP 2008 guidance notes
- Local Authority Financial Management Briefings

Transformation of Financial Services

The transformation strand focuses on how the delivery of financial services can be transformed to serve the needs of our stakeholders in a more efficient and effective manner.

Under this strand it is intended to cover:

- Balance Sheet Management
- Transforming the Delivery of Financial Services

Performance Assessment frameworks

The performance assessment strand examines how authorities can best utilise the performance assessment criteria for financial management developed by external bodies like the Audit Commission, CIPFA and others.

Under this strand it is intended to cover:

- Use of Resources under CAA
- Using the CIPFA FM Model
- Local Authority Capital Accounting Training for Accountants

Programme caveat

All the programmes highlighted by the CIPFA FAN in this service plan, are subject to change. Where new topics emerge that are considered as either more important or more urgent than those within the existing programme, the CIPFA FAN will attempt to add them to the programme as outlined above. However there may be occasions when a new programme has to replace an existing programme already highlighted at short notice

Service themes for 2008 – English CIPFA FAN programme

Examining the new Use of Resources in the revised CAA Regime - May/June 2008

Events will be held in: Birmingham / Manchester / Bristol / London / York / London

This series will examine the evolving Use of Resources element of the new CAA regime, how it differs from what went before, what authorities will need to do to get an improved assessment and the methods that good practice authorities have utilised to improve their financial management performance. This series will draw upon relevant practical examples and the CIPFA FAN's experience of good practice in financial management.

This unique series of events will offer a valuable insight into the approach that good

practice authorities take to improve their financial management delivery in the light of performance assessment requirements.

SORP 2009 ITC AND IFRS - July 2008

Events will be held in: Leeds / Chester / Durham / Birmingham / London / Cambridge / Exeter / London / Southampton

The SORP 2009 ITC should be published in July of 2008 covering many of the proposals to tackle the key accounting changes for 2009-10 stemming from the IFRS agenda. The Treasury's long awaited guidance on PFI should be part of this SORP ITC as should other IFRS and WGA related accounting and reporting changes. This series will assess the potential impacts of these IFRS driven proposals on local Authority accounting and reporting. It is imperative that authorities acquaint themselves with these new accounting and reporting agendas.

Local Authority Financial Management Briefings - September 2008

Events will be held in: Manchester / Bristol / London / York

The pace of change and new legislative requirements expected of authorities today can be overwhelming and certainly difficult to keep pace with. How can you be sure that you haven't missed a vital piece of legislation affecting your authority? Or ignored some crucial guidance that could help with the challenges you face?

Following on from our very successful series in 2007, this equivalent series of briefings will focus on the critical issues of the day. This series is always a very valuable post summer high level update of what financial and policy planners will need to address in the coming months.

Balance Sheet Management – Improving Authority Financial Efficiencies - October 2008

Events will be held in: Manchester / Bristol / London / York

Effective Balance Sheet Management can contribute to delivering better financial management and increased cashable efficiencies for authorities by focusing on certain parts of the balance sheet and addressing what drives those particular values and how those values can be better controlled, monitored and managed.

This series will help clarify these issues further for authorities and will introduce delegates to the ideas and processes of authorities that have benefited in revenue terms from successful Balance Sheet Management.

Capital Accounting Training for Local Authorities – October\November 2008

Events will be held in: Manchester/ Bristol / London / York

In response to many requests from practitioners, the FAN is delighted to present an introductory series aimed at delivering the basics of local authority capital accounting to officers who are new to local government and/or those who have not worked in capital accounting for several years

The definitive introduction to IFRS in Local Government***November\December 2008***

Events will be held in: Leeds / Chester / Durham / Birmingham / London / Cambridge / Exeter / London / Southampton

The moves towards IFRS will involve possible moves away from the traditional Local Government SORP process and towards other form of financial management governance based more on international financial reporting standards (IFRS). CIPFA will have introduced plans for local government to move to IFRS for 2010-11. This series will examine all the pertinent issues as they will relate to the local authority accounting and reporting agenda

SORP 2008 and the Associated Guidance Notes - January\February 2009

Events will be held in: Leeds/ Chester / Durham / Birmingham / London / Cambridge / Exeter / London / Southampton

Following on from our hugely successful series in 2007, this event will review the changes to financial reporting in local government from CIPFA for 2008/9. Specifically we will help practitioners understand the issues more fully in order for them to amend their 2008-09 financial reporting and accounting responsibilities and review the significant implications for the structure and delivery of 2008-09 final accounts.

Transforming the Delivery of Financial Services – February\March 2009

Events will be held in: Manchester / Bristol / London / York

There are increasing expectations for excellent financial services to be delivered to stakeholders. But what are excellent financial services and how can they be delivered? This series will consider examples and approaches which certain authorities have followed in improving the delivery of their own financial services and what lessons these approaches can give for the rest of us.

CIPFA FAN Bite-size (Specialist Events) for the 2008/9 Subscription year

Subject to resources and subscriber demand, the CIPFA FAN will aim to supplement its main core programme with short and regionally limited series of specialist events.

Using the CIPFA Financial Management Model - the Improvement Programme

The CIPFA Financial Management Model, "Improving Financial Management and Effectiveness in the Public Service", continues to be a timely development for public sector organisations wishing to assess the strength of their financial management arrangements and their ability to support service improvements.

The CIPFA FAN will offer access to regional cluster groupings to support the use of the Model in driving forward service improvement.

CIPFA FAN Documentation

All new and existing subscribers have online access to a library of documentation produced by the CIPFA FAN which is not available to non-subscribers.

National advisory reports, briefings and guides

These reports and briefings avoid theory and concentrate on dealing with practical issues and implications for practitioners. The most popular downloads from the FAN website for December 2007 included:

- Rough Guide to the Use of Resources
- Fanzine issue 16
- Partnership Working - Scorecard
- CSR 2007- Briefing Note
- The Review of the Effectiveness of Internal Audit

Legislative briefings

These offer a timely response to new legislation and guidance coming out of central government. More than concise summaries for use across your organisation, they provide an analysis of practical issues and implications as they impact upon practitioners. Current support in this area includes:

- CSR 2007
- Use of Resources Methodologies and Approaches
- Making the Connections (The CIPFA FM Model and CPA Use of Resources - recently updated)
- New Annual Governance Statement
- Approaches to the WGA agenda

CIPFA FAN – Rough Guides

In addition to our advisory reports and legislative briefings, the FAN will periodically champion separate research and analysis around certain topics or issues affecting local government finance and performance. This will often involve drawing together a dedicated team of local government practitioners and other experts in the field, with a view to compiling a user-friendly publication around the subject being researched.

The resulting *rough guides* normally provide front line officers and other practitioners with a mix of detailed commentary, review, analysis,

insight, suggested approaches and case studies around how to approach and deliver upon these themes and are offered as an additional (unofficial) aid to practitioners.

All of our *rough guides* are available to subscribers of the FAN as part of their subscription service. Current themes on our website include;

- Annual Governance Statement (from April 2007)
- Developing a Financial Strategy in a Local Authority
- Better Practices in Financial Management
- Service Review of Internal Audit Services
- Service Review in Accountancy and Financial Management

Further rough guides covering the new capital asset agenda, summary accounts and member challenge of the accounts are in the pipeline and this area of work will increase in the future.

FANzine

All back issues of our in-house magazine (launched in the summer of 2003) are readily available to all subscribers together with email alerts to key issues. Fanzine has proved to be a popular and invaluable source of local authority financial management information for subscribers and it has frequently provided the basis for articles and briefings for in-house local authority reports and publications. Long may this continue.

Discussion Forums, Volunteering and Networking – New Developments for 2008

Aimed at making best use of our rich client base, The FAN is anxious to create better networking opportunities for its subscribers and has passed on requests from its subscribers for assistance from the whole FAN network on such topics as: charging policy, software developments for the new capital revaluation reserve and assistance with capital policy for debt free authorities.

The response to these requests for help from the FAN community has been tremendous. The CIPFA FAN intends to develop this approach further for 2008 under the heading of "Ask the Network." In 2007 the CIPFA FAN joined forces with the CIPFA TIS to stream the latter's discussion pages through its CIPFA FAN website and this has proved to be extremely successful

For 2008, the CIPFA FAN has plans to utilise the talents and expertise of its subscribers through the medium of volunteer task groups covering certain key issues. It is felt that the development of a vibrant FAN community can only benefit the growth in learning and knowledge of its subscriber members.

Contact details

How to contact the FAN

Rupert Dewhirst
Senior Manager, Financial services

Email: Rupert.Dewhirst@ipf.co.uk

Tel: 01904 675589

Mobile: 07771 547007

Roman Haluszczak
Lead Advisor, English FAN

Email: Roman.Haluszczak@ipf.co.uk

Tel: 01274 533231

Mobile: 07919 018751

Emma Stabler
Regional Advisor, FAN

Email: Emma.Stabler@cipfa.org

Tel: 020 8864 2379

Mobile: 07824816103

Mark Kenyon
Regional Advisor, FAN

Email: Mark.Kenyon@ipf.co.uk

Tel: 020 8864 2379

Mobile: 07824816103

Marc Harris
Business Support Officer, FAN

Email: Marc.Harris@ipf.co.uk

Tel: 020 8667 8192