



## Cabinet Member Report for Finance

### Northampton Borough Council

21<sup>st</sup> September, 2015

#### **Finance**

The Council's draft Accounts for the 2014/15 financial year are being audited by the External Auditor, KPMG, and their report to the Audit Committee on 7th September is expected to provide a positive opinion on the Accounts and confirm the Council is providing value for money. The Audit Committee will consider this report and sign off the Accounts before they are expected to be formally approved by the External Auditor by 30th September.

The Council is on course to deliver its Budget for 2015/16 with an underspend reported to Cabinet in September.

As previously advised the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) approved in February 2015 places the Council in a good financial position for the next two years. However, over the medium term as Government funding is expected to reduce further a deficit of £7m is anticipated by 2019/20. The Council is in the process of refreshing its assumptions and forecasts for its MTFP, and these will be reported to Cabinet as part of draft Budget proposals in December 2015. A key driver for the updated forecasts will be information from Government arising from the Spending Review 2015 which is expected to report in late November 2015.

#### **Revenues and Benefits**

The service continues to perform well against its key performance indicators despite some ongoing resource challenges. Turnover of staff within the team continues to be high and to support maintaining levels of performance the service are continually recruiting to vacant posts. LGSS have an award winning training and development team and therefore the service remains highly capable in terms of continually training both new and existing members of the team.

Improvements to the now separate Revenues and Benefits telephony service continue to be implemented and the service will be investing resource in this area to ensure we can deliver to service users' levels of expectation.

In addition to the services established posts, a resilience team will be in place for the service and operational by December 2015. This team will start to manage peaks removing excess work, improving performance and also creating an income stream to the partnership during off – peak periods. This is an important part of the future service offering for the partnership and ensures it capable of supporting a number of future scenarios faced as a result of reforms to welfare.

LGSS continues to attract interest from prospective partners and are currently engaged with a number of other Council's interested in either joining the partnership or using our services. Growth of the partnership remains very important in order to manage the challenges faced over the coming years in terms of performance, alongside supporting the need for cost savings for the Council.

An important consultation will be commenced shortly to start to engage with local partners and recipients of Council Tax Reductions. This consultation will start to consider options for the 2016-17 schemes and will support any proposed changes to the existing scheme in operation in 2015-16.

Councillor Mike Hallam  
Cabinet Member for Finance