

# Finance Advisory Network Introduction to Financial Planning

## Webinar

22 May 2025 and 18 September 2025 | 9:30 – 16:15

## Purpose

This course will provide delegates with an insight into the current issues and the cost pressures that are causing concern for those involved in trying to set a balanced budget. It will examine how strategic planning together with a strong MTFP can help to strengthen the budget setting process as well as looking at the question of who is responsible for setting a balanced budget and what are the consequences for those authorities who are at risk of being unable to do so.

## Learning Outcomes

Attendees will benefit from:

- A better understanding of the external and political issues currently placing a strain on local authority budgets
- An awareness of those statutory service areas which are causing cost pressures for local authorities and why managing these areas is key to financial sustainability
- A look at how effective strategic planning can help provide the framework behind your medium-term financial plan and how this plan should be used to inform and support the organisations financial decision-making process
- An understanding of the roles and responsibilities behind setting a balanced budget and the steps that authorities must take if they are unable to do so

## Who Will Benefit

The programme is aimed primarily at local authority corporate finance staff who have an involvement in the setting of the budget for their authority, however it would also be useful to those who just want to gain a broader knowledge and awareness of the issues impacting on local authority budgets and how better financial planning can help to inform the decision making process.

## Programme

9:30 – 09:45

09:45 – 10:45

### Introductions and Housekeeping

### Local Government Finance – The big picture

This session will look at how local government finance works in practice and will examine some of the current external and political factors that are influencing council budgets. Amid an increasingly uncertain period of funding, we will also look at the

sources of revenue finance and the impact of recent major changes to local government finance and probable future trends.

10:45 – 11:55

### **The corporate budget setting process**

This session covers an overview of a typical council budget setting process, including a look at the characteristics of a good budget, various budget methodologies and the common steps that feed into the budget setting process.

This session will include a short break.

11:55 – 12:20

### **Demand and cost pressures**

Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide certain services, and it is an authority's ability to deliver these statutory services which defines its financial sustainability. For many authorities, wide ranging cuts are proving insufficient to meet growing demand and this session looks at where the main cost pressures are within those service areas where authorities are under a growing threat of being unable to meet their statutory duties.

12:20 – 12:30

### **Strategic planning, service sustainability and best value**

Setting the scene for the afternoon sessions, this brief overview looks at the characteristics of different planning horizons and transparency and accountability as you move from strategic planning to outcomes focus.

12:30 – 13:15

### **Lunch**

13:15 – 14:15

### **Medium and Long-term financial planning and strategy**

The development of medium and longer-term plans and strategies is key in identifying how your authority plans to align its existing and future resources to the Councils agreed aims and objectives. This session looks at how your MTFP should be developed to support decision making, drive financial strategy and provide stakeholders with information about your authority's revenue and capital resource availability and its spending plans over the medium to longer term.

14:15 – 15:15

### **Roles and responsibilities and setting a balanced budget**

The impact of spending reviews and budget cuts have made the task of meeting growing service demand from a shrinking pot of resources increasingly difficult. This session looks at all those involved in the budget setting process and asks, 'who is responsible for achieving a balanced budget?'. The session will also explore what happens when an authority cannot fund its budget and issues a s114 report.

This session will include a short break.

15:15 – 16:00

### **Financial resilience and use of reserves**

The final session of the day looks at financial resilience, the warning signs of financial stress and what options are available to authorities. It explores the role and use of local authority reserves and key responsibilities for officers and auditors.

16:00 – 16:15      **Summary, Q&A and close**

*We reserve the right to alter the timing or content of sessions where circumstances require.*



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