Belfast informed

Departmental Plan 2011/12

Finance and Resources Department

Internal document

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1.0 Introduction

The Finance and Resources Department is responsible for all financial services and information systems functions of the council along with Audit Governance and Risk and Health and Safety. The department is also responsible for performance management and efficiency and has aligned these along with finance in order to improve the Council support services to reduce costs. The department is continually working to ensure that Belfast City Council provides value for money services which clearly deliver council and ratepayer priorities.

2.0 The Corporate Planning Process and the Finance and Resources Departmental Plan

1.1 The Corporate Planning Process

The Corporate Plan sets out what Belfast City Council intends to achieve. It outlines Members' ambitions for the city and their commitment to improving quality of life for everyone who lives in, works in, and visits the city. It is based upon an assessment of need in the city, the views of residents on what the Council's priorities should be, and a commitment to strong political and executive leadership.

Whilst the Corporate Plan focuses on issues which cut across Council departments it also reflects the importance of the quality of the vital services that are provided on a daily basis.

The Corporate Value Creation Map (VCM) is used to manage the corporate planning process which promotes the need to work together to improve quality of life and develop the different elements that contribute to this aim.

Figure 1: The Council's Corporate VCM

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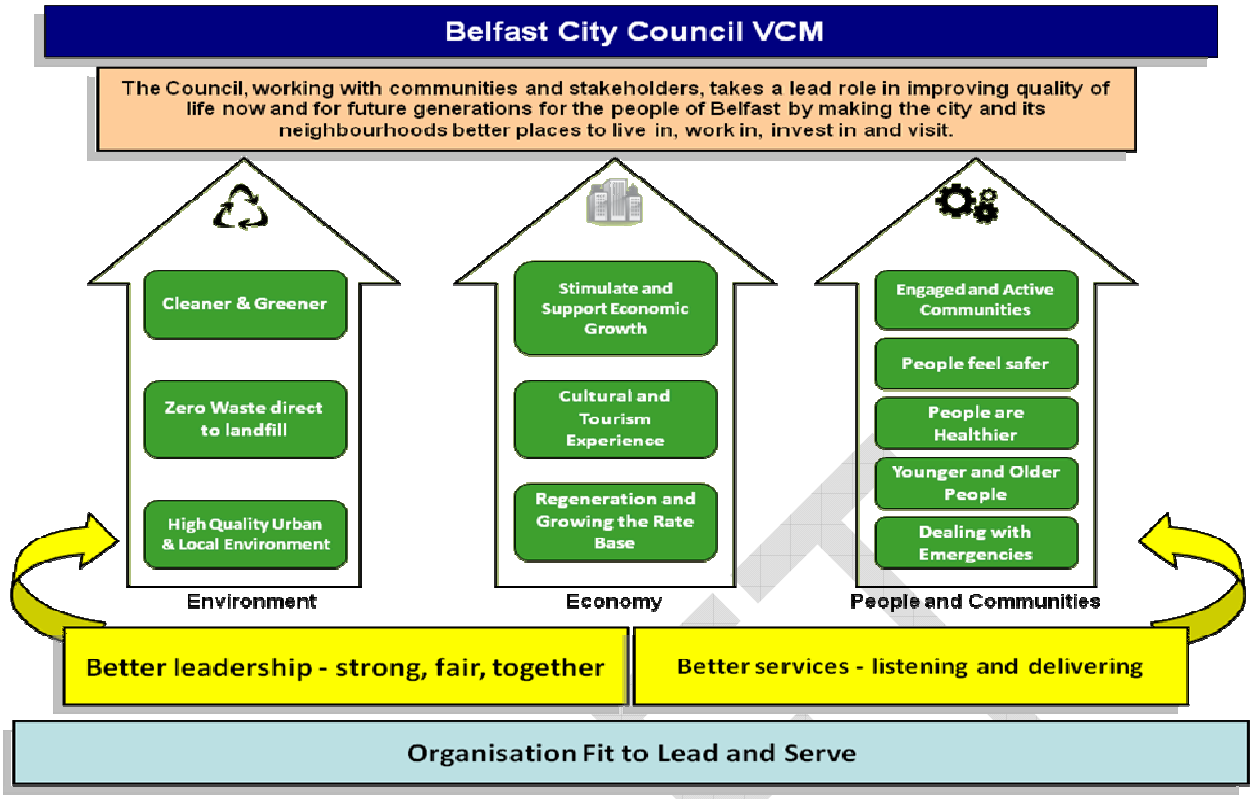
Belfast City Council VCM
The Council, working with communities and stakeholders, takes a lead role in improving quality of life now and for future generations for the people of Belfast by making the city and its neighbourhoods better places to live in, work in, invest in and visit.
Cleaner & Greener
Zero Waste direct to landfill
High Quality Urban & Local Environment
Environment
Stimulate and Support Economic Growth
Cultural and Tourism Experience
Regeneration and Growing the Rate Base
Economy
Engaged and Active Communities
People feel safer
People are Healthier
Younger and Older People
Dealing with Emergencies
People and Communities
Better leadership - strong, fair, together
Better services - listening and delivering
Organisation Fit to Lead and Serve

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Finance and Resources Departmental Plan 2011-12

As a department we aim to align our key work to the Corporate Plan. This document sets out the department's key achievements during the past year and the proposed actions and priorities for 2011-12. The key contribution of the department lies in underpinning and supporting the overall work of the Council by providing an efficient and effective framework in the following areas:

- Financial Planning and Management
- Information Management
- Performance Management
- Governance and Risk
- Health and Safety

These foundational aspects of the Corporate VCM are vital to the work of the Council in optimising the possibility of achieving our corporate aims and objectives.

The following sections of this document will provide:

- An outline of our corporate values
- Strategic Themes
- Context of the current internal and external environment
- Departmental Structure
- Key Achievements for 2010-11
- Key Actions for 2011-12
- Key Performance Indicators 2011-12
- Financial estimates for 2011-12

1.2 Delegated Authority

Under the Council's Scheme of Delegation, the Director of Finance and Resources has been given the delegated authority to undertake the activities as outlined in section 7. Progress update reports will be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee quarterly.

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3.0 Corporate Values

The Department adheres to the Council's corporate values which state:

Focus on the needs of customers, foster a 'can do' attitude and be problem solvers

Provide first class services which are responsive to citizens needs and continuing to ensure that the Council is a place where things happen.

Provide value for money and improve services

Deliver high quality, value for money services at all times and continually improving our services.

Work Together

Work with our partners across Belfast to ensure that our combined efforts contribute to the continued success of our city.

Respect each other, be fair, promote equality and good relations

Improve access to our services: valuing diversity, ensuring that everyone shares in the city's success and tackling discrimination in all its forms by treating all communities and people equally.

Act Sustainably

Use our resources effectively and efficiently and promote the principle of sustainability in all our activities.

Ensure the highest standards of health and safety

Maintain the highest possible standards of health and safety at all times to ensure we protect our employees and all those who use our services.

Value our employees

Continue to support all our employees to help them fulfil their potential.

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4.0 Strategic Themes

The Corporate VCM defines six strategic themes. These themes were chosen as priorities for the Council in the context of a wider analysis of need in the city, the views of the public, and the statutory and strategic challenges and opportunities that are likely to impact on the Council over the next three years. The themes are as follows:

- City Leadership
- Environment
- Economy
- People and Communities
- Better services
- Organisation Fit to Lead & Serve

The last of these themes underpins all the Council's work and is further defined by the following strategic elements:

- Corporate Human Resource Management
- Corporate Financial Planning
- Corporate Information Management
- Corporate Planning and Performance
- Corporate Communication and Engagement
- Corporate Assets
- Corporate Governance and Risk

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5.0 Changes in the internal and external environment

Some 74% of the income received by Belfast City Council is received from the district rates. Externally the recession continues to impact on the collection of this rates income, particularly in relation to the non domestic sector, which represents a significant element of the Belfast City Council rates base. There are increased concerns about the levels of vacant properties and the potential for bad debts which limit the funds available to the council to fund services and make investments in the city. We are therefore working with Land and Property Services (an agency of DFP who collect the rate income on behalf of local and central government) to try and maximise the amounts collected through the rates and we are also working internally within the council to ensure our local economic development work programme is helping to support the rates base in the city.

Internally, there have been a range of structural improvements in 2010/11 in the Finance and Resources Department, namely:

- the realignment of finance with performance management and efficiency;
- to place Corporate Health and Safety within the Audit, Governance and Risk Service; and
- to review the business support function

These changes have been made to improve our support services within the Council and to reduce costs and have been worked through in liaison with staff and trade unions. We will continue to consolidate and refine this new structure in 2011/12.

In July 2011, the Human Resources Section will be moving from the Finance & Resource s Department to the Chief Executives Department. The actions and budget associated with Human Resources will be reflected in the Chief Executives Departmental Plan for 2011/ 12.

With the current budgetary constraints in all sectors of the economy, it is essential that Belfast City Council provides value for money services which clearly deliver council and ratepayer priorities. There are continuous pressures to reduce costs and improve services for the ratepayer which impact significantly on the business plan of the Finance and Resources Department. For example, some of the key work in 2011/12 is being focussed on:

- developing a resourcing strategy to meet the council's expenditure, including maximising our rate income, reviewing our fees and charges and financing the capital programme;
- improving financial planning, budgetary control and the management of information;
- ensuring the implementation of the efficiency programme for 2011/12 and leading on developing the efficiency programme for 2012/13;
- developing a value for money and performance framework to improve the costs and quality of service provision across the council;
- increasing our accountability through effective performance management;
- leading on the implementation of a print management strategy to reduce the costs and volume of printers across the council; and
- improving our assurances around risk management and health and safety.

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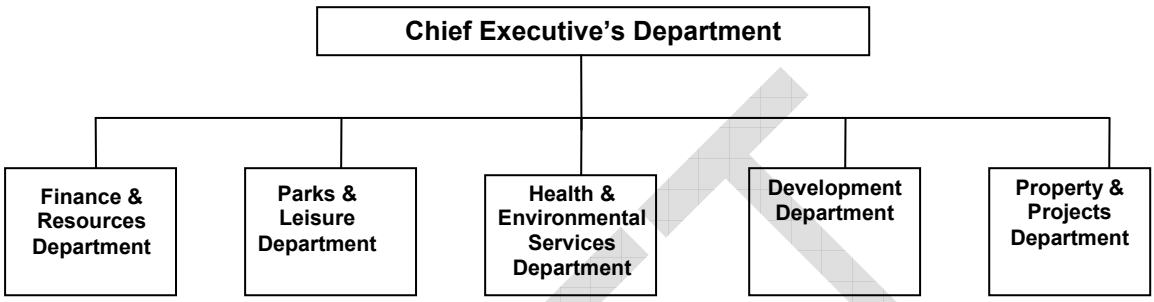
5.0 Departmental Structure

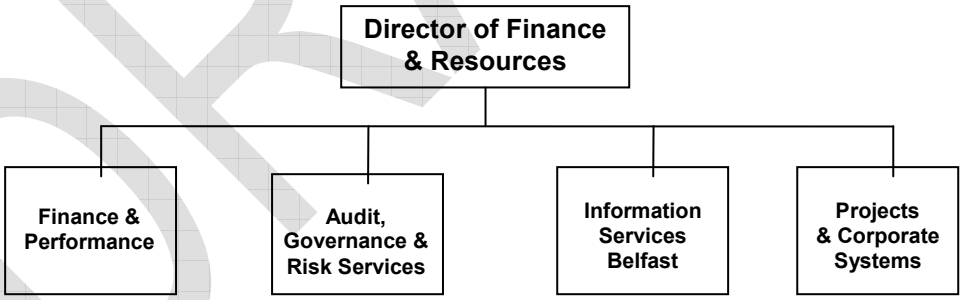
5.1 The Finance and Resources Department is one of five service Departments which, together with the Chief Executive's Department, make up the officer structure of the Council. The various departments are shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Council Departments



5.2 Finance and Resources Department comprises:

- Finance, Performance Management & Efficiency
- Audit, Governance and Risk Services
- Information Services
- PaCS



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6.0 Key achievements 2010-11

6.1 Better Leadership

Key achievements

- An additional £2.8m financing has been secured for the Capital Programme.
- A capacity building plan for elected Members, senior managers, managers and officers was developed.
- A Member Development Steering Group was established to ensure the development and implementation of the Member Development Strategy.
- Training sessions were delivered to Members on the role of the Council and elected Members, strategic planning, performance management, finance and rate setting.

6.2 Better care for Belfast's environment

Key achievements

- Servers numbers have been reduced which has already led to a reduction in energy costs of £20000 in ISB.
- A print management strategy has been developed with targets to reduce the number of printers and the volume of colour printing.
- Colour printing has been reduced from 67% to 33%.

6.3 Better opportunities for success across the city

Key achievements

- We have continued to work with Land and Property Service to implement the Memorandum of Understanding. A suite of performance measures has been developed and a performance reporting framework put in place including benchmarking arrangements.

6.4 Better services - listening and delivering

Key achievements

- 27 online forms have been added to the website to help improve access to our services for our customers. These include;
    - A range of forms for Belfast Castle and Malone House
    - Applications for various licences (e.g. Entertainment, Street Trading)
    - Bin ordering Form
    - Online burials records search
- Timeframe for creditor payments has improved from 28 days in April 2010 to an average of 22 days during 2010/11.

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6.5 Better value for money - an organisation fit to lead and serve

Key achievements

Corporate Human Resource Management

- A new attendance policy has been implemented with compliance reports reviewed on an ongoing basis by HR and the Council departments. The Council is on track to meet its sickness absence target.
- The corporate approach to personal development planning was agreed with roll-out planned from April 2011.
- The corporate IIP mock assessment was undertaken in October 2010 and a number of next steps were agreed around developing a People Improvement Framework and Plan. It is intended that the Council will work towards seeking corporate accreditation by April 2012.
- Monitoring and reporting on staff numbers, overtime and agency costs have taken place throughout the year. A new reporting framework is currently being developed with implementation planned from quarter one 2011/12.
- All outstanding single status issues have been completed including: Basic Grade Split Scale 2/3 removal, review of essential car users, a revised local arrangement for Tramp and Travel.

Corporate Financial Planning

- Cash savings of £2.9m have been identified and captured for 2011/12 against an original target of £1.7m.
- The council agreed a 2.95% district rate increase despite the late notification from LPS of a £3.5m claw back in 2010/11 and a £2.5m fall in the EPP for 2011/12.
- A review of internal trading was completed resulting in new governance arrangements for a number of key services including Facilities Management and ISB.
- A new suite of budget reports have been developed and are reported quarterly to all Committees. The reports include year to date and forecast information on the revenue budget, and up to date figures on the capital programme, reserves, debtors and creditors.
- Financial training for Members was carried out.
- Improvements were made to help further integrate financial and corporate planning with draft revenue estimates presented to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee together with a summary of the priority actions from the Corporate and Departmental Plans for 2011/12.

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Corporate Information Management

- New IT governance arrangements have been put in place with a centralised ICT budget created. A first draft of the Information asset register has also been created to be made accessible by end of March 2011.
- Council telephony services have been improved and rationalised with the implementation of single bills for all major telephony suppliers.
- Implementation of mobile technology. Parks inspectors are using mobile devices to carry out risk assessments on a daily.
- Increased use of geo-spatial (GIS) information. H&ES are playing a key role in an Inter Agency project (Buchanan project) building up GIS information to provide analysis on hotspot areas of anti-social behaviour around the city.
- A VFM review of ISB services has been undertaken.

Corporate Policy, Planning & Performance

- The cascade of our performance management process, known as the VCM, was successfully completed for the 2010-11 period with the development of 20 service or departmental level plans, with actions and indicators, all aligned to the delivery of the corporate objectives.
- Performance reports have been developed for all services and departments to support regular performance management and monitoring of key tasks and indicators.
- Training on the performance management system has been rolled out across the Council

Corporate Governance and Risk

- Quarterly risk reporting has been enhanced and Directors now complete signed assurance statements on a quarterly basis. These are incorporated into a quarterly risk report which is reported to COMT, the Assurance Board and Audit Panel.
- Fraud and Governance Awareness training in 2010/11 has been delivered to a range of services involving approximately 250 officers.
- A new process for monitoring audit recommendations was implemented during 2010/11 with the first report being issued to the Audit Panel in September 2010
- Business Continuity Management policy reviewed and updated and all critical services' plans and strategies were updated. Pandemic plans currently being updated by services.
- Each Council property was assigned a desk top rating by the H&S Unit (high, medium or low) based on occupancy numbers and activities carried out within them. The inspection/audit of high risk/ medium risk properties will be completed in 2010/11.

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7.0 Key actions for 2011-12

7.1 Better services - listening and delivering

Key Actions

- Expand range of e-enabled customer services including on line booking for leisure facilities and purchase of dog licenses and on line live streaming of council meetings
- Commence the implementation of the Customer Focus Strategy including improving customer access and handling of customer information
- Develop and implement the corporate efficiency programme (including the contribution from the Finance and Resources Department) for 2012/13
- Develop and implement a value for money and performance framework including
    - VfM performance indicators for all services
    - Review and revise the Council's approach to business transformation and service delivery

- Assist in the implementation of the following VFM Reviews
    - Building Maintenance
    - Fleet Management
    - Procurement

7.2 Better value for money - an organisation fit to lead and serve

Key Actions

Corporate Financial Planning

- Develop and implement a resourcing strategy
- Enhance the rates base through tackling issues such as vacant office accommodation and business premises
- Manage and report on relevant PIs to ensure the implementation of Belfast Land and Property Services Memorandum of Understanding
- Establish a programme of work around the development of financial management information including improving the financial reporting process
- Develop a medium term financial plan including a Capital Financing Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy in line with the implementation of a Finance Bill
- Implement a financial improvement programme in relation to debtors, creditors, payroll and treasury management

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Corporate Information Management

- Improve information management and governance including creating a catalogue of information held in electronic form
- Deploy Windows 7 and Office 2007 across the council

Corporate Policy, Planning & Performance

- Implement the Performance Management infrastructure including:
    - Reporting and analysis of key corporate performance information and;
    - Supporting departments in monitoring and reporting departmental performance information

Corporate Governance and Risk

- Implement a Council wide Health and Safety Assurance Framework including following up recommendations from inspections and expanding the reporting framework for staff and councillors
- Chief Officers to complete and sign off quarterly assurance statements to support quarterly reporting on the management of key risks to COMT, Assurance Board and Audit Panel

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8.0 Key performance indicators 2011-12

The Department has developed the following set indicators for collection, monitoring and reporting through the 2011-12 financial year. These indicators will be monitored frequently at departmental level and will be included in the departmental reports to committee.

8.1 Better services - listening and delivering

	Annual Target
• Actual variance between actual efficiencies versus target for 2011/12	0
• Number of transactional based activities which are e-enabled	TBA
• Average time taken to resolve operational calls reported to the ISB Service Desk	2.25 Days
• Customer Satisfaction with Service Desk response	90%

8.2 Better value for money - an organisation fit to lead and serve

Corporate Human Resources

	Annual Target
• Average number of working days per employee lost due to absence (measured against agreed targets)	7.44
• Variance between actual direct employee costs and budget	0
• Variance between actual Staff Number and agreed establishment	0

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Corporate Financial Planning

	Annual Target
• % Variance between net expenditure and budget	+ 1 / -3%
• % Variance between planned net expenditure and forecasted net expenditure	+ 1 / -3%
• % Variance between planned capital expenditure and planned forecasted expenditure for the current year	+ 1 / -3%
• % Variation between forecast outturn at period 6 and actual outturn at period 12	+ 1 / -1%
• % Debt less than 90 days old	65%
• % Creditors paid within 30 days	75%

Corporate Information Management

	Annual Target
• % Time key systems are available uptime	99%

Corporate Policy, Planning & Performance

	Annual Target
• % PIs with valid data collected and reported upon	85%
• % PIs on target	TBA *

(*Target to be confirmed at year end)

Corporate Governance and Risk

	Annual Target
• % Agreed audit recommendations implemented	80%
• % AGRS plan completed annually	70%
• Reduce the number of workplace accidents	Reduce by 5%
• Reduce the number of RIDDOR accidents	Reduce by 5%
• % Agreed Health and Safety recommendations implemented	80%
• % Health and Safety plan completed annually	70%
• % Critical service business continuity plans tested annually	100%

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9.0 Financial Information

	Net Expenditure 2010/11	Net Estimated Expenditure 2011/12
Human Resources *	2,061,612	--
Finance, Performance Management & Efficiency	2,786,965	2,712,478
ISB	5,181,365	5,040,714
Audit Governance and Risk Services and Health and Safety	1,094,069	1,130,113
Project & Corporate Systems	348,639	294,899
Pensions	1,900,000	1,900,000
Directorate	426,585	289,261
Total	**13,799,235**	**11,367,436**

* Please note that the Human Resources function moves from the Finance & Resources Department to the Chief Executive's Department in July 2011, resulting in a drop in the departmental net expenditure.

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10.0 Monitoring and review arrangements

The Council has introduced an integrated performance management system that enables regular, up to date reporting to be undertaken at corporate, departmental and service levels.

Key performance indicators (PIs) have been identified for all services within the Finance and Resources Department and are contained in sections 7.0 and 8.0 of this document. These actions and PIs will be reviewed by the Departmental Management Team along with progress on key tasks every quarter and a full update on progress will be reported to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee twice yearly.

A number of these PIs and projects have been identified as corporately significant and are contained in the Corporate Plan. They will be reported on a quarterly basis to COMT to ensure ongoing management of the key priorities.

Notes:

The **Strategic Policy and Resources Committee** oversees the decisions taken at the other five committees. These decisions are then ratified at full council each month.

Chief Officers Management Team (COMT) meets on a weekly basis. The Director of Finance and Resources attends COMT to report on the work of the department in key areas such as budget monitoring and rate setting. The Finance and Resources Department underpins the work of the Council and provides a challenge for the organisation on key financial issues.

The **Department Management Team (DMT)** meets on a monthly basis to discuss work planning, performance, key projects, staffing issues, and workload.

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11.0 Strategic Policy and Resources Committee Membership

Chairman	Councillor Deirdre Hargey
Deputy Chairman	Councillor Gareth McKee
Councillors:	Alderman David Browne
	Alderman May Campbell
	Alderman Ian Crozier
	Alderman Robin Newton
	Councillor Tim Attwood
	Councillor Patrick Convery
	Councillor Matt Garrett
	Councillor Tom Haire
	Councillor Claire Hanna
	Councillor Máire Hendron
	Councillor Mervyn Jones
	Councillor Danny Lavery
	Councillor Nichola Mallon
	Councillor Conor Maskey
	Councillor Jim McVeigh
	Councillor Caoimhín Mac Giolla Mhín
	Councillor Máirtín Ó Muilleoir
	Councillor Adam Newton

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