

**Report to Hartlepool Schools' Forum 5th February 2014
From Chris Little (Chief Finance Officer)**

Agenda Item 9 – 2014/15 School Budget – Request to change budget submission deadline / School Communication

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides a brief history of the requirement of maintained and Voluntary Aided schools to submit a budget plan to the Local Authority. This does not include Academies.
- 1.2 The report seeks Schools' Forum approval to change the submission deadline for Hartlepool schools.

2. Background

- 2.1 Schools have been required to produce a budget plan by 30th June each year since they started receiving delegated budgets in 2001. This would then be submitted to the Local Authority once it has been approved by the school's Governing Body.
- 2.2 Budget plans need to be received in a format that is acceptable to the Local Authority and, so far as possible, take account of the Consistent Financial Reporting framework.

3. DfE Guidance

- 3.1 It is a requirement that each school submits a plan to the authority by a stipulated date showing its intentions for expenditure in the current financial year and the assumptions underpinning the budget plan. The provision may require the submission of revised plans throughout the year.
- 3.2 The school's formal annual budget plan must be approved by the Governing Body or a committee of the Governing Body.
- 3.3 The initial submission of the plan should not be earlier than 1st May or later than 30th June.

4. Local Authority Position

- 4.1 The Corporate & Schools Finance Team is aiming to issue School Budget allocations by mid-February. As a result, schools will be able to start working on their budgets during March and April. The LA is requesting that the Schools' Forum agree to bring forward the date for submission of an approved budget plan to 31st May.

- 4.2 Should the deadline for receipt of signed budgets be brought forward, it is felt that this will have a positive knock-on effect on other areas, including:-
- improved and more timely budget monitoring information.
 - having an original budget loaded onto SIMS and Integra earlier.
 - being able to update the school's forward planning model earlier.
- 4.3 It is felt that the change of date should still provide schools with sufficient time to set a working and detailed budget.
- 4.4 Following recent guidance received from Corporate ICT, the LA will no longer be issuing salary information via e-mail and will instead be using AnyComms+ to increase security. This is owing to the fact that salary information and other potentially confidential information will be included within the budget pack. Schools will be asked whether they would want this information sending to the Headteacher account or the Office/Bursar account.
- 4.5 It has recently been confirmed that schools and academies can only sign into Local Authorities services using the recently launched Services to Schools website. The deadline for receipt of Service Level Agreements is 31st March 2014.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 The Forum is asked to:-
- **Approve the change in deadline for the approval of a budget plan to become 31st May each year.**
 - **Notify their governing body of this change, and ensure that a governing body meeting is arranged in plenty of time of this date.**
 - **Note that the Finance & General Purposes Committee has the authority to approve the school budget and it does not necessarily need to be a Full Governing Body meeting.**
 - **Note that budget and salary related communication from the Corporate & Schools Finance Team will now be made using AnyComms+ as a secure method of file transfer, rather than by e-mail.**
 - **Note the new deadline for receipt of Service Level Agreements of 31st March 2014.**