

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REVIEW

Frequently Asked Questions

	Comment(s) / Question(s)	Response
1	What is the consultations process? How do I raise questions and/or provide feedback?	All financial management staff have a voice in the consultation. You can ask questions and/or comment on the structure proposals via your Trade Union representative, line manager or via your Head of Finance . All comments/questions will be recorded and then subsequently shared and discussed with Trade Unions as part of the consultation process. Responses will then be publicised on the share-point site. If you would prefer to remain anonymous, please specify this when you raise your question/comment. Further meetings with staff most at risk and the Trade Unions have been scheduled in October.
2	Are Directors and Chief Officers aware of the changes and, given the need to fund savings, are they supportive?	We shared our initial proposals for delivering the savings target with directorates as part of the Financial Challenge Silver Group meetings in early August this year. More recently, we shared our more detailed proposals with all Chief Officers and Directors and requested that they feedback their comments during the consultation period (and if possible by 16th October). We do not intend to share our structure proposals with schools during the formal consultation period. There will be opportunities to work in different ways and to become more efficient in our delivery of the traded service offer to schools and we will engage fully with stakeholders as the changes are mapped out in more detail. Feedback received to date has been supportive.
3	Is it known how each grade will be affected after ELI and Voluntary severance has been accounted for? Where some grades are over will this bring the numbers into line?	We know that 17 staff within the scope of the review have re-affirmed their interest in ELI; there are also a small number of requests for flexible retirement. These will potentially create opportunities and/or reduce the number of people at risk. The numbers indicate that staff currently at SO2/PO2, C1/C3 and B1/B3 are at most risk. A number of people that have re-affirmed their interest in ELI may be affected by the impending implementation of a cap on public sector exit payments and, if this is the case, they will be given the opportunity to re-consider their application for ELI. At this stage, the overall impact of ELI on staffing levels is therefore still uncertain.
4	When will ELI numbers at each grade be available, so that we know how many non-ELI job losses will happen at each grade	A breakdown of the number of ELI requests by grade has been shared with the Trade Unions, however, for the reasons stated at 3) above, the overall impact of ELI's on staffing levels is still uncertain.
5	Is it possible to ask for ELI now if hadn't before?	Yes, although the Council deadline has now passed, we will continue to consider further ELI requests from staff within the scope of this review.
6	If someone is displaced following implementation, can they pursue the ELI route at that point rather than redundancy?	We would consider all the voluntary options before progressing compulsory redundancies in line with the Managing Staff Reduction policy.
7	There is a useful table in the report that shows current people and proposed posts. Can this be produced and circulated with details of the likely position after ELI leavers are known?	At the point that we have more certainty in relation to the number of people who are able to take ELI we will share this with the Trade Unions.
8	Victoria said that she couldn't release all individuals until ERP is in place, part of the second saving later on – have later leavers been considered. Is there a list of later people for ELI?	A new ERP solution will release further staffing resources but this will not be until the solution is implemented (unlikely to be before 2023/24). In the context of imminent/future legislative changes, it is not possible for the Council to commit to a future ELI scheme at the current time

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9	What happens if the 95k cap comes in early and people leave before the structure is implemented?	Early implementation of the cap is a key risk and would requires us to respond quickly to ensure arrangements are in place for dealing with any resultant reduction in capacity.
10	Are there any further details on how posts will be filled – will there be a competitive process for all posts?	We are currently consulting with the Trade Unions on the process and arrangements for filling posts on the new structure and will update the FAQ share-point site when this is complete.
11	Would opportunities for promotion be ringfenced to Financial Management staff and to those staff employed on the grade immediately below the vacancy?	See Q 10 above
12	Will people need to have interviews? Will they be ring fenced/ limited to their grade or can they apply for next for next grade up. Will be considered against people in higher grade if the person in higher grade isn't successful?	See Q 10 above
13	How will vacancies be advertised – top down or bottom up?	A top-down approach to implementing the structure has been agreed with the Trade Unions
14	How will people be slotted into posts?	See Q 10 above
15	Would deployment take account of people's preferences about what team they work in / join or will people be slotted according to the skills needed?	See Q 10 above
16	Will Trainee Professional Accountants be able to apply for any vacant AFM and FM posts which become available?	The Trainee Professional Accountant posts (TPAs) are outside the scope of this review. TPA's would therefore not be able to apply for permanent jobs within the re-structure.
17	How do people acting up factor into the proposed structure? Are their posts at risk, will they be slotted in or have to apply for posts at their acting up grade?	All people acting-up have been included within the figures for staff in post at the grades that those people are acting up to. Where those acting ups were obtained via a competitive selection process, we have provisionally agreed with the Trade Unions that people would be assimilated on the proposed structure at the the grade they are acting up to.
18	Assuming not enough people want to leave voluntarily, will I be made redundant? How will you choose?	Where we are unable to assimilate staff onto the new structure a range of selection criteria, linked to the relevant Job description(s), will be used to determine which people are most suited to the roles on the new structure. We do not propose to interview people who are at risk for posts at their current grade. Draft selection criteria have been produced and have been shared with the Trade Unions for comment. Both the criteria and the associated process are currently being discussed with the Trade Unions as part of the formal consultation process.
19	What will the process be when/if it's known that some people need to be made redundant	See Q 18 above
20	What are the criteria for selection for people who are at risk under the MSR policy?	See Q 18 above
21	What happens if there are more PO2 people than posts after ELI? Are skill sets considered.	See Q 18 above
22	If there aren't enough posts for everyone once ELI has been approved, how will it be decided who stays?	See Q 18 above
23	Will we be advised of the selection criteria beforehand?	See Q 18 above
24	The Job Description for C3 refers specifically to items that my service doesn't have to do, e.g completion of grant claims. Will that be held against me in any selection criteria on the MSR policy?	The proposed selection criteria will focus on a rounded assessment of people's skills, knowledge, experience and behaviours. Experience of individual tasks would not materially affect this assessment. As stated at 18. above, both the criteria and the process are being discussed with the Trade Unions as part of the formal consultation process.
25	There seem to be some grades that are reducing in numbers that weren't highlighted as 'at risk' in the slide show – e.g. PO4?	Staff currently employed on PO4 are unlikely to be at risk for example, because of potential opportunities on the new structure at PO6 and ELI re-affirmations at both PO6 and PO4.
26	Will the operational finance staff at LBS be transferred to the service?	We recognise that currently the work within LBS needs to be done, but where that best sits is still to be decided.
27	Have the Trainee Professional Accountant job descriptions been updated with the rest?	The Trainee Professional Accountant posts are outside the scope of the review, however, we are taking the opportunity to refresh the TPA Job Descriptions.

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28	Job Descriptions - not sure experience delivering the job is given the stature it should be - Could the PO6 description not say "Hold a relevant CCAB qualification and/or have 5+ years experience of working at a senior level within a finance setting"?	We think that for a post of this level of seniority, it is appropriate to attach a requirement to possess a CCAB qualification, or an equivalent qualification (for example CIMA). Existing PO6 post-holders will not be affected. We will also consider if there are any other, more vocational qualifications, that would support people in their career development, for example Cipfa's Post-graduate Diploma in Finance Business Partnering.
29	What is a business partner and how is this different to a finance manager role?	We will circulate some guidance on this (and post the guidance on the share-point site).
30	Will job descriptions reflect specific skills or knowledge used when working with schools?	Job descriptions are generic for each grade and the proposal is that they remain generic in order to facilitate flexibility and the service's ability to flex resources to meet service demands.
31	Reputational risk - if service delivery slacks below the norm due loss in skills or gaps in knowledge [Mitigation: Management needs to be proactive and perform a skills audit and plan for hand over processes e.g. work instructions if possible. Make sure service leads are aware.	Noted - we will be looking to adopt a risk-based approach in order to mitigate this.
32	Staff demotivation if separated from original teams, or do not like where they are slotted [Mitigation: Key influencers should explain benefits of the change and why it's necessary. Staff impacted should be engaged with well in advance and given a chance raise their views.]	Noted - we will seek to actively engage with all staff throughout the re-structure exercise and the transformation journey.
33	Risk of focusing on managing change and not the business as usual or service delivery (during early stages of transition)- this may have a knock on effect on performance. [Mitigation - There should be key monitoring procedures of performance and corrective measures in place.]	Noted see 31. above
34	Risk of performance levels suffering as some staff may require more support with their new roles (due more time spend on training) [mitigation-Training should be made available both online and face to face- plan for refresher courses, nomination of champions in teams if necessary.]	Noted see 31. above
35	Risk of focusing on cost efficiency and not long term delivery of service. In short-term -savings will be made but then later faced with difficulty in capacity at different levels to deliver service. [mitigation-There is need to assess service needs in long term before implementation and how does it impact on our other values and key goals as a council.]	Noted - our approach to transformation is intended to secure long term sustainability for the service
36	Benchmarking/VFM - we don't do enough, if best practice is out there we need to embrace it	Noted
37	Finance Business Partner – like to think some people are doing this now, so again I hope the structure as I see it initially is not losing the relationships already built up.	Noted
38	What work will no longer be undertaken by Financial Management?	The transformation programme aims to automate some tasks, for example, the production of in-year budget forecasts and associated dashboards; Further details of the transformation work packages will be posted on the share-point site.
39	What services are we planning to trade? Are we planning to offer financial services externally? Who will do the market research?	There are no plans to trade additional financial services at the moment but we do aim to maintain current levels of income and welcome any comments/ideas in relation to generating additional income.
40	What evidence is there that the Finance Business Partner role works?	The Finance Business Partner Approach is endorsed by Cipfa and their publication 'The Excellent Finance Business Partner' outlines how Councils can enhance their impact using the FBP approach to help ensure financial considerations are placed at the heart of operational and strategic decisions.
41	Traded Service to Schools: Would the schools traded SLA change? e.g. would we keep a dedicated schools service? How would we deliver the same level of service, and if we can't how can we expect them to pay the same amount of money?	There are opportunities to work in different ways and to become more efficient in our delivery of the traded service offer to schools and we will engage fully with stakeholders as the changes are mapped out in more detail.
42	What are the respective roles and responsibilities of the BP and staff on the budgeting and planning team, for e.g. who will directorates contact and what will the communication channels between the different teams be to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of the service?	We will provide more clarity in relation to Finance Business Partner versus Financial Manager roles.
43	Where would the MHCLG covid returns and the fees and charges return be completed under the new structure proposals?	MHCLG Covid returns - realistically it is likely that as now, the MHCLG returns will require a collaborative approach. In the new world we would expect both Corporate Finance and Finance Business Partners to contribute to the production of these returns
44	How will work be allocated in the Corporate Finance Admin Team - will individuals be supporting specific service areas?	We will provide more clarity on this as we develop the proposals, in the first instance people will take most of their existing work into the hub, there will then be a review of work and workloads.
45	Does the structure include trainees ?	The proposed structure of 100 FTE's <u>excludes</u> Trainee Professional Accountants.

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46	How many TPA staff will be on the revised structure and will we be looking to recruit for September 21?	We currently have 6 Trainee Professional Accountants (2 of whom are nearly qualified) and would be looking to recruit a further 2/3 trainees for September 2021.
47	Does this structure allow for the further £0.5M of savings or will there need to be a further reduction?	No - this structure only addresses the £1.0m savings target for 2021/22.
48	Within the technical and strategic teams, what work will each team be doing? i.e. if you currently work in a directorate you can broadly see where your current post is – but where would Business Rates, Council Tax, Local Govt funding sit?	It is proposed that Business Rates, Council Tax and Local Government Funding would sit under Strategic Finance.
49	What are the ‘councils organisational design Principles’?	We have posted guidance on to the share-point site
50	How does the new structure affect our budgeted income of £2.03m?	Our working assumption is that existing sources of income would be unaffected; the 2 Dir 45% posts (Business Change) would be funded through the transformation programme (capital)

Updated 20th October 2020