

Local Government Finance

Local government is big. In England there are 443 principal councils spending well over £100 billion a year. There are about 2 million local government employees in a wide range of services including teachers, police officers, fire fighters, social workers, librarians, planners, engineers and many more.

Many more people work in organisations that supply goods and services to local government. This is a course that helps you understand how all of the work done by local government is financed from taxes and other sources of income; and how that money is spent in a controlled and accountable way.

The course will use a mixture of theory and real-life stories to make what can be overly-technical material more accessible and understandable.

Key Features

The course is structured in four parts: funding, budgeting, accounting and controlling. The contents of each part is outlined below:

Funding

- Sources of funding for local authorities
- The implications of recent changes in the balance of funding
- Problems and alternatives

Budgeting

- Why does budgeting matter so much?
- Key steps in the annual process
- Alternative methods of budgeting

Accounting

- Fundamental accounting concepts for local government
- What the financial statements tell you and don't tell you
- How the financial statements differ from the private sector

Controlling

- What happens after the budget is approved?
- Organising the finance function
- Principles of internal control
- Achieving value for money

Who Can Attend?

This training is for anyone with an interest in local government finance but it is especially useful for elected councillors and for officers who have recently joined local government (at any level).

The course is grounded in the system of funding for local government in England. Whilst of general application to local government in Scotland and Wales, the details of local government funding is different in those devolved administrations.

Learning Outcomes:

After completing the course, delegates will be able to:

- Describe how local government is financed
- Explain the strengths and weaknesses of the current system
- Take part in the budget process with a better understanding of its goals
- Recognise important accounting terms in context
- Interpret a council's published financial statements
- Apply the principles of value for money to any decisions you make.