



Cabinet Member Report for Finance

Northampton Borough Council

15th September 2014

Finance

The Council's Statement of Accounts for 2013/14 is due to be signed off by KPMG, the Council's external auditors, on 30th September. KPMG's annual report on the Accounts to Audit Committee on 9th September confirmed they "have identified no issues in the course of the audit that are considered to be material....and anticipate issuing an unqualified audit opinion". In addition KPMG are proposing to issue a positive opinion on the Council's value for money position.

The focus for the forthcoming six months will be the development of the Budget for 2015/16 and a refresh Medium Term Financial Plan. As previously reported the Council continues to face significant challenges on its finances as the planned reductions in Government funding are expected to continue until at least 2018. This will particularly affect the General Fund revenue budget and the Council must reduce its spending and increase its income to balance its budget. At the same time the Council will continue with its investment in the regeneration of the Borough, particularly around the Town Centre.

Revenue and Benefits

Pressure on the Benefits service is expected to increase during the second part of the year with the introduction of two reforms. One will see monthly data transfers of real – time earning information from HMRC. This will lead to a large number of cases requiring manual review and re – assessment. Funding is expected from the Department for Work and Pensions. A second change to the method of applying earnings to work cases is also expected. This could lead to a reduction in benefit against the old assessment method, leading to increased enquiries to the service. The position will be monitored carefully.

Councillor Alan Bottwood
Cabinet Member for Finance