

Foreword

In the modern era of Scottish public services, local government finance is managed within an environment which is constantly changing and is now set against the background of a devolved administration. The challenge to financial managers, local and national politicians, students and others with an interest in local government is to ensure that their general understanding of local government finance remains current.

The complexities of local government finance means that rarely is there a consolidated text which seeks to explain both the legislative and the financial management framework. The CIPFA Guide to Local Government Finance in Scotland is however, the established tool for this purpose and is consequently, the essential aid for anyone seeking to gain a general understanding of local authority finance in Scotland.

Since the last edition in 2002, local government finance has seen a substantial number of changes arising from developments in financial management and in legislation, of which the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 was, and continues to be, a significant driver of both change and accountability. These changes are described throughout the Guide.

The design of this guide reflects the expectation that from time to time, there will be a requirement to source information on a single specific topic or particular area of interest. In such circumstances it is neither practical nor desirable to consult a full text. The inclusion of a full index means that the guide can also be used as a ready reference tool or be of use for academic study.

Inevitably, some readers will require further detail on specific areas which are outwith the scope of detail of this Guide. To address this, practical references for further reading have therefore been provided at the end of each chapter.

Local government finance is an area of acknowledged complexity and inevitably, this Guide refers to words and phrases which may be unfamiliar to the reader. The inclusion of an appendix providing an expanded explanatory list of useful local government finance terms also means that an understanding of terminology, essential to understanding local government finance, can be obtained.

Our unique role as the accounting standard setter for local government, makes us well placed to author this guide. We can provide further support in the form of either general or bespoke training. More details can be found on our website. I hope you will find the guide useful for increasing or refreshing your understanding of local government finance in Scotland.

Angela Scott
Head of CIPFA in Scotland