**Minutes of the Executive Committee**

**6th December 2019**

**CIPFA Offices, Mansell Street, London**

**SDCT Website: www.cipfa.org/partners/society-of-district-council-treasurers**

**In Attendance:** Simone Hines (President), Jo Wagstaffe (VP), Mark Dickenson (2nd VP), Angela George (Secretary), Simon Freeman, Paul Deal, David Stanley, Ian Knowles, Alan Peach, Homira Javadi, Terry Collier.

**Part A - Private Executive Business**

1. **Apologies**: Peter Stuart, Peter Catchpole, Clare Fletcher, Sal Khan, Steve Hearse, Adrian Rowbotham. Helen Smith, Jenny Poole.

**Welcome:** Terry Collier (Spelthorne) was welcomed to his first meeting of the Executive.

1. **Minutes of Previous Meetings and matters arising**

The minutes of the previous meeting of 11th October were agreed with some minor amendments. The Executive discussed some key issues around the subjects of Audit; Commerciality and Resilience.

Any matters arising are considered further on the agenda.

1. **Update from ALATS meeting**

Simone updated the Executive on the key issues arising from the special ALATS meeting held on 22nd November to discuss with Alex Skinner from MHCLG several key issues including:

* Where we are on the 2020/21 settlement? - clearly compromised by current developments.
* How we are managing / deferring outstanding issues (e.g. Business Rate / FF etc.)?
* What is the plan for SR 2020 and all the ‘deferred’ issues that remain in play?

The outcome for these issues clearly depends on the outcome of the general election called for 12th December with MHCLG working on some Best / Likely / Worst case scenarios.

ALATS was taking advice on being able to set a budget without the settlement figures (worst case scenario).

1. **Communications with Members**

Jenny was unable to attend the meeting but had reported that there were still issues with the SDCT Distribution list in that there are still a significant number of ‘bounce-backs’. Admin resources are required to keep on top of this and other communications issues and this will be investigated further.

**Action – Jenny**

Several other suggestions for improving the current communications were discussed including:

* Whether we could join with another organisation to assist (CIPFA / DCN etc)
* Using (say) LinkedIn
* Utilising additional resources to respond to consultations.
* Presidents Blog of key messages / issues from meetings.

These will be considered further.

1. **AGM 10th January 2020**

Currently the plan is for the AGM to proceed on 10th January, but this may have to be reconsidered dependent on the outcome of the general election and timing of announcements etc.

**Postscript** – subsequently postponed due to the delay in the announcement of the settlement figures. An ordinary Executive meeting will take place instead.

**Action – to rearrange a date for the AGM.**

Jenny had circulated a copy of her Treasurer’s Report for 2018/19 including:

* proposals for a subscription freeze for 2020. This was approved by the Executive.
* It was noted that the introduction of the ‘no purchase order, no pay’ in authorities had significantly impacted on the administration of the subscription process and additional administrative resources are being sought to assist.

1. **AOB**
   1. Timetable of SDCT meetings for 2020 – This was discussed and will be issued.

**Postscript** - the timetable for 2020 has been impacted on by the postponement of the AGM and will be considered further at the next meeting.

**Part B – Main Meeting**

**In attendance (in addition to Executive members);** Aiva Statkevicius (LGA), David Aldous (NAO), Andrew Chappell (PSAA), Guy Clifton and Tom Foster (Grant Thornton)

**Apologies:** Nicola Morton (LGA), Rob Baxter (Link), Aileen Murphie (NAO), Alex Skinner (MHCLG)

1. **General update on SR/ BRR etc**

Aiva Statkevicius (LGA) reported that there was no indication about the timing of the settlement yet - it was highly dependent on the outcome of the election and the immediately following days. However, a lot of the elements (except for the flexibility for district councils on council tax) seem to have been signalled at the technical consultation.

The flexibility for Council Tax (increase from 2 to 3%) needs to be reiterated again to MHCLG and Simone undertook to do this.

**Action - Simone**

1. **CIPFA Update (Joanne Pitt)**

Jo updated the Executive on several initiatives including:

* The Prudential Property Guidance is now issued.
* CIPFA / LASAAC Initiatives (to be considered in more detail at the next Executive meeting)
* CIPFA’s response to the Redmond Review including the role of the Audit Committee.
* The FM Code is now published. The Guidance is being developed and is due to be considered by the CIPFA Public Finance Management Board at the end of January.

**Action – Peter Catchpole**

* The publishing timetable for the Resilience Index. The index is due out on 10th December and CIPFA have produced an Internal CIPFA Q and A document to assist. (On SDCT Website). She also advised that Andy Burns would discuss with individual CFO Societies any ‘problem’ authorities.
* A discussion is required on which CIPFA Groups / Panels the SDCT is represented.

These issues will be considered further at the AGM / Next meeting.

1. **Financial Foresight - Grant Thornton presentation**

Guy Clifton and Tom Foster made a presentation to the Executive on the GT Financial Foresight model which forecasts the long-term financial sustainability of local government by individual authority (slides available from GT). The aim is to assist LA’s to structure their long-term financial strategy. It is a future focussed model and allows LA’s to plot the impact of different policy decisions.

The cost of the product was discussed and it has been subsequently confirmed that there may be some flexibility on price for Districts but this would impact on the GT / CIPFA inputs into the Six Step process. Further information is available by contacting GT directly.

It was noted that there is no link between this work and the Financial Resilience work from CIPFA.

Guy also mentioned that GT have launched their Sustainable Growth Index (SGI – formally the Vibrant Economy Index). A report can be found via [this link](https://www.grantthornton.co.uk/en/insights/sustainable-growth-index-how-does-your-place-score/?utm_source=0&utm_medium=None&utm%20_campaign=gtgo), which also provides links to regional overviews, and also a link to an interactive map which presents the results, using local government geography.

1. **Audit Issues Update**

* Simone will respond to the Redmond review – there has been an extension to the consultation deadline to 20th December.

**Action – Simone Hines** (Postscript - copy of response now on SDCT Website)

* **NAO**

Ian had responded to NAO Code of Audit Practice (Copy on SDCT Website). David Aldous (NAO) reported that there had been a good range of responses received and there were a range of different opinions on the VFM commentary issue. He advised that the publication of the Code can go ahead without the findings of the Redmond Review as the Code was looking at Financial Reporting.

The Commerciality Study is not yet completed and would be reported in the new year.

1. **Advisor Reports**- None
2. **Reports and Updates from External Bodies**

**12.1 LGA (Aiva Statkevicius)**

* In response to all major national parties pledging reviews or abolition of business rates, ​LGA Executive has asked​ LGA Resources Board to review LGA's policy on business rates as a tax. This feeds into the work programme on fiscal devolution.
* The LGA have been collecting case studies about the impact of the ​PWLB rate hike on councils' plans, especially housing and regeneration. Information from treasurers is very welcome as this helps us in discussions with Government. Local authority borrowing will also be a topic of a session at the LGA's annual conference on 7 January 2020.
* The LGA has submitted its response to the NAO Code of Audit Practice consultation and will be submitting a response to the Redmond Review. ​ (in fact, they are now both [publicly available here](https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/finance-and-business-rates/other-issues-local-government-finance))
* Many thanks from the LGA team to SDCT for all the work and cooperation over the past year. This has helped build a stronger and unified message from the sector, especially ahead of the 2019 Spending Round. We look forward to working together in 2020 which is set to be a crucial year.

1. **Any Other Business** – None
2. **Date of Next Meeting:**

* **10th January 2020 – previously was the SDCT AGM but now to be a normal meeting of the Executive. 10am CIPFA Offices, Mansell Street.**