**Minutes of the Executive Committee**

**15th January 2021**

**Venue: Virtual Private Meeting**

**SDCT Website:** [**www.cipfa.org/partners/society-of-district-council-treasurers**](http://www.cipfa.org/partners/society-of-district-council-treasurers)

**In Attendance:** Simone Hines (President), Mark Dickenson (VP), Angela George (Secretary), Terry Collier, David Stanley, Adrian Rowbotham, Glenn Hammons, Clare Fletcher, Alison Scott, Peter Stuart, Homira Javadi, Jenny Poole, Sian Moore, Richard Baker, Alan Peach, Sal Khan, Helen Smith, David Heyes.

1. **Apologies**: Simon Freeman, Peter Catchpole
2. **Minutes of Previous Meetings and matters arising**

The minutes of the previous meeting of 11th December 2020 were agreed. Any matters arising are either considered below or further on the agenda:

* 1. **PWLB Consultation response**

An issue was raised that the new rules would mean that any future investment in existing commercial property that is outside the area would be ‘disallowed’. This could have unintended consequences on dilapidation of the asset or exiting the arrangement. Simone will raise this in her regular meeting with MHCLG.

There has been no progress from CIPFA on input into the review of the Prudential Code.

* 1. **CIPFA proposal on Enhanced CPD Requirement for CFO’s**

Simone advised there had been no progress yet from CIPFA on establishing the working group to progress this initiative.

1. **Update on COVID-19**

Simone updated the meeting on the key issues arising from her regular meetings with MHCLG / LGA / ALATS etc. and the Executive discussed the key issues.

Leisure funding – there are significant issues surrounding Leisure funding including:

* The funding is insufficient to cover the losses incurred. The costs of continual closing and reopening are significant and lack of customer confidence even when the facility is open is a growing issue for income streams.
* Retendering of existing contracts is now an issue with some tenders due shortly. Some private sector providers are now in commercial difficulty and may no longer be part of the ongoing market provision. Collapse of the Leisure market would cause Council’s significant difficulties; it was questioned whether the government recognised this as a crucial service to the local population.

Supported Housing Costs – significant ongoing funding issues

Self-Isolating Payment Criteria – any examples?

75% Funding for Collection Fund – concern over adequacy

Business Rate Reliefs – Revs and Bens Teams are under significant pressure to keep up with the changes announced. Whilst it is recognised the changes might necessarily have to be at short notice, it would be helpful if the guidance could accompany the announcements.

Simone will raise these issues with MHCLG. Terry and Sian also agreed to alert their local MP’s to the issues (as current Government Cabinet members).

**Action – Simone Hines**

1. **Financial Settlement 2020/21 – response to consultation**

A draft response from the SDCT has been circulated to the wider membership and issues were discussed. The final date for submission is 16th January and Simone will submit this.

There was some discussion as to whether the May Elections were proceeding and the implications of this - current indications are that they are proceeding.

**Action – Simone Hines**

1. **Audit Issues**

* Simone advised that the DCN survey into Audit issues had been completed and shared with PSAA. A date to discuss the issues was being arranged. (It was noted that the Government have rejected the recommendation in the Redmond review for a new oversight Audit co-ordination body).
* Significant concern remains regarding the state of the audit market in terms of both the additional fees being charged and the auditors’ ability to complete audits. A significant number of 19/20 audits have not been completed and this would impact negatively on the 20/21 audit process - the ability of the Auditors to achieve the November 2021 sign off date was questioned.
* The current situation was considered (by the Executive) to be due to a combination of factors but principally as a result of the Audit firms cutting their fees too much at a time when the accounts were becoming more complex together with additional FRC compliance issues.
* Simone questioned whether given the current state of play of the audit profession together with the Covid workload, the SDCT should accept that albeit pushing deadlines back was against their professional wishes, that a request for an extension to the deadline for Council’s should be made.

1. **Any Other Business**

**Potential Webinar Date** - A date to involve the wider membership would be considered and will be advised in due course.

There are already 2 provisional dates in the diary to potentially involve the wider membership at Warwick University (May 27th / 28th and October 21st / 22nd). It was noted that the May date was already looking optimistic due to continued lockdown restrictions.

**Action – Simone Hines**

1. **Date of Next Scheduled Meeting:**

**12th March 2021 (Virtual)**