Minutes of the Executive Committee

6th December 2024
Venue: Virtual (Public) Meeting

SDCT Website: www.cipfa.org/partners/society-of-district-council-treasurers
LinkedIn: Society of District Council Treasurers (SDCT)

SDCT Members in Attendance: Adrian Rowbotham (President), Angela George (Secretary), Alison Scott, Clare Fletcher, Emma Foy, Paul Stone, Bec Maher, Lorraine Rogers, Colleen Warren, David Stanley, Christine Marshall, Hannah Doney, Suzanne Jones, Homira Javadi, Terry Collier, Simon Hewings.

❖ It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate (i.e. one third of Executive members were present)

Also in attendance: Nico Heslop (MHCLG) for item 4, Guy Clifton and Sophia Brown (GT), Mike Newbury (NAO), Alex Burfitt (LGA), Joanne Pitt (CIPFA).

1. **SDCT Executive Apologies:** Jon Illingworth, Richard Baker, Richard Bates, Peter Catchpole.
   Also: Andrew Chappell (PSAA), Rob Baxter (Link), Vicky Davis (NAO), Nicola Morton (LGA).

2. **Goodbyes:**
   - Simon Freeman (Harlow) has now resigned from the Executive. Members thanked him for his input over the years and wished him well for the future.
   - Christine Marshall (S Holl, E Lindsey, Boston) advised that she had been appointed as CFO at Peterborough Council and so would be leaving the SDCT Executive. Members congratulated her, thanked her for her input and wished her well in her new role.

3. **Minutes of previous meetings:**
   The minutes of the previous meeting of 11th October 2024 were agreed and will be published on the website. All matters arising are either completed or considered elsewhere on the agenda.

4. **Financial Issues Update**
   Nico Heslop (MHCLG) attended the meeting to give an update from MHCLG, and the following issues were discussed:
   - The Local Government Policy Statement published on 28th November – this broadly sets out the governments aims to reform local government finance, fix the foundations and ensure taxpayer money is used as efficiently and effectively as possible. It outlines the government's proposals for 2025 to 2026, alongside

longer-term plans for reforming local authority funding. The government has stated it recognises the value of providing notice and certainty to local government in their budget setting process and the aim is to provide further information, including allocations of funding, at the provisional Settlement in December. It was discussed that it was anticipated that there will be more changes than usual in this year's settlement and result in winners and losers as 'need' will be more defined.

- The Devolution White Paper, encompassing reorganisation, is due on 16th December.
- The spending review in the Spring would be challenging.
- A Business Rates discussion paper was published on 30th October which sets out the government's priority areas for reform of the business rates system.
  Action – David Stanley to draft the SDCT response to the paper by the deadline of March 2025.

5. **Local Government Audit update**
   5.1 NAO
   Vicky Davis reported on:
- NAO Homelessness report in due course. PAC Committee.
- Financial Sustainability – due end of February
- TA Subsidy
- Developer Contributions – S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy

  Mike Newbury reported:
- We are now just a week away from the first backstop date. Up to 22/23 expecting 600 opinions of which 428 will be disclaimed.
- WGA Accounts disclaimed due to the current situation. The NAO see this as an Audit issue not a LG Finance issue
  https://committees.parliament.uk/call-for-evidence/3467/
- Next Deadline is he end of February 2025. Plus, this will be the first year under the new audit contracts.

   5.2 PSAA
   With regards to the cost of audit, on behalf of PSAA, Mike Newbury (NAO) advised that PSAA were working hard to achieve a fair position on 'disclaimed' audit fees.
   As reported at the previous meeting, the Works and Fees Consultation has been published (deadline for responses 10th October).

   Richard Baker had circulated notes of the PSAA Advisory Panel held on 6th November (below)

   2024-11-06 PSAA
   Advisory Panel FINAL.

6. **Streamlining Accounts and the Audit Process**
   Adrian and Alison reported that the SDCT paper on Streamlining the Accounts and the Audit Process had been supported in principle and was now with CIPFA to progress.

7. **SDCT Conference 20th and 21st March 2025**
   An agenda will be drawn up soon. The flyer will be sent out in the new year.

8. **Upcoming Consultations:**
   - CIPFA Internal Audit consultation – circulated. Deadline 28/11
   - Local Authority Funding Group Distribution of DHP – deadline 27/11

9. **External Advisor updates:**
   8.1 LGA:
   Alex Burfitt updated the Executive on the current work of the LGA:
   - NI Costs
   - Business Rates consultation
   - Policy Statement – flexibility of capital receipts
   - IFRS9 override.
   - LGA Conference 9/1/25. Adrian is speaking.

   8.2 Grant Thornton
   Guy Clifton
   Guy updated on current GT work and provided the following links:
   https://localis.org.uk/research/present-tense-renewing-modernising-local-governance/
   https://www2.grantthornton.co.uk/2025-Q1-Audit-Committee-9142_Page.html
   https://www.icaew.com/insights/podcast/behind-the-numbers/can-we-unclog-the-local-audit-backlog

   in the current GT VFM work:
   - LG VFM is 99% complete for 22/23 and earlier years; and
   - We continue to progress our 23/24 work in line with 23/24 opinions.

   Working to get as many opinions through as possible.

   Sophia Brown updated on GT backlog and reported that IFRS16 was not being looked at in enough depth by authorities and GT intend to hold workshops.

   8.4   CIPFA:
   Jo Pitt reported on current CIPFA initiatives including:
   - Chair BRG
   https://www.cipfa.org/policy-and-guidance/better-reporting-group
   - Webinar Audit Committees
   - Update on AGS
   - Resilience Index
   - Guidance on S25 statements

- CIPFA CFO Retreat Oct 2025
- Retreat for Deputy CFOs planned for 24th and 25th April. Succession Planning.
- Recruitment and Retention

10. SDCT Executive - Advisor updates
Proforma updated and confirmed accessible by Executive:
- PSAA update from Richard.
- Clare provided an update (circulated) on the DWP Meeting

There were no further updates from the Executive.

11. Any Other Business
- Timetable of meetings 2025. The draft circulated was approved except for the meeting on 2nd May which has been moved to 9th May, due to Council elections.
  Action – Angela to circulate
- Updates from other meetings - none

12. DONM – 10th January 2025 10am (PUBLIC – virtual)

13. Private Executive Business:
- **Updates from other meetings:**
  None

- **IFS Proposal**
  Adrian will discuss the proposals with the IFS to progress the studies
  Action – Adrian

- **Advisor areas update**
  Circulated but will need amended again due to Christines departure and 2nd VP election.
  Action - Angela

- **Executive vacancies and 2nd VP Election**
  There are currently 2 Executive vacancies
  Nominations for 2nd VP once Adrian hands over to Jon in March will be sought
  Action – Angela (NB: deadline for nominations 3rd January)

- **Sponsorship Proposals**
  The Executive have been approached by a prospective sponsor. Clare will ensure current sponsors are intending to continue before a decision is taken.

- **Potential Agenda for SDCT Conference March 2025**
- The conference and potential subjects for the March Conference were discussed. It was agreed that Clare's PA would be able to carry out the work and the SDCT would recognise the support given in an appropriate way.
  Action – Angela to draft programme and Flyer

- Adrian reported on a Room 151 Housing Conference, offering the SDCT a 20% discount:
  Room151's Housing151 Conference - 5th March 2025, London Room151's 4th Housing151 conference is the place for senior local government finance and housing officers to come together with private and third sector partners to discuss finding and financing sustainable solutions to the UK's housing crisis.
  EVENT<https://longviewnetworks.com/conferences/room151s-housing151-2025/> | SPEAKERS<https://longviewnetworks.com/conferences/room151s-housing151-2025/#speakers> |
  AGENDA<https://longviewnetworks.com/conferences/room151s-housing151-2025/#presentations> |
  REGISTER<https://longviewnetworks.com/conferences/room151s-housing151-2025/#registration>
  20% discount for SDCT Members with Code: SDCT20

  Action – anyone interested in attending please register stating the appropriate Code.