



Minutes of the Executive Committee

1st August 2025

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: David Stanley (Vice President), Suzanne Jones, Adrian Rowbotham, Homira Javadi, Richard Bates, Paul Stone, Richard Baker, Colleen Warren, Bec Maher, Peter Davy, Lorraine Rogers, Peter Catchpole, Angela George

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

Also in attendance: Elsa Esberger (MHCLG) for item 3, Mike Newbury (NAO), Lee Geraghty (LG Futures), Paul Dossett and Will Guest (GT), Bevis Ingram (LGA), Jo Pitt (CIPFA).

1. SDCT Executive Apologies:

Apologies: Jon Illingworth, Clare Fletcher, Alison Scott, Simon Hewings.

Also: Vicky Davis (NAO), Guy Clifton (GT), Nicola Morton (LGA), Rob Baxter (MUFG), Andrew Chappell (PSAA).

2. Minutes of previous meetings:

The minutes of the previous meeting of 20th June 2025 were agreed and will be published on the website. All matters arising are either completed or considered elsewhere on the agenda.

3. Financial Issues Update

Elsa Esberger (MHCLG) attended to give an update. She stated that a Policy Statement is expected on October with the provisional LG Finance Settlement in late November / early December.

Questions were asked about the models circulating and the differences therein. MHCLG cannot currently share their models and figures.

4. Local Government Audit update

Mike Newbury (NAO) gave an update on PSAA and NAO issues:

- PSAA are working on fee implications of the build back process

- Overview of the Local Audit Office – legislation is required. LAO will require a Chair and Panel – appointment expected in Autumn in tandem with the legislation. 2nd Reading and committee stages expected in the Autumn with Royal Assent in early 2026.
- NAO work update – reports due on Home to School transport and Unlocking Land for Housing. NAO keen to talk to any councils that would find this useful / helpful.
- Expecting PAC report on improving local areas through Development Funding.

5. Upcoming Consultations:

- Funding Reform 2.0
- Simplification of Council Tax administration
- DFG Allocations
- Improving Energy in Socially Rented Housing
- Rent Convergence

LGA advised that they would be responding to all consultations.

Action – David to progress

6. External Advisor updates:

LGA (Bevis Ingram):

- LGA – Provision expected in legislation to mandate Independent Members on Audit Committees – noted that there is clear guidance needed on this and sharing of good practice in recruiting as it appears to be patchy. The Executive I raised need for support for Ind Members and said happy to offer assistance.

Grant Thornton – Paul Dossett:

- GT expecting to produce a summary report of auditor findings in annual reports – noted that there are as many recommendations on financial governance as well as financial sustainability.
- Build back approach – where there is good level of assurance for the 2024/25 accounts likely that the time from Jan to March 2026 will be used to try and reduce the number of disclaimers on opening balances as possible.
- IFRS 16 – noted that where there is already a disclaimed opinion, getting this right will be essential to avoid a qualified opinion. S151s should be alert to ensuring completeness, have considered risk assessment. Free Webinar from GT on this on 19 August – link has been shared.

LGFUTURES – Lee Geraghty:

- MHCLG have said that both the LGF and PIXEL models are sound. Noted that the key area in the consultation is that the roll in of social care would be to the advantage of district councils.
- Noted that the key is what assumptions are made about notional CTAX levels rather than the actuals.

MUFG – not present but Rob Baxter sent a note reiterating:

- **LG Devolution/ Reorganisation**

- MUFG can support the process and has done so for Northamptonshire, North Yorkshire and Cumbria
- Service offering includes, but is not limited to –
 - Consolidated Capital Strategy
 - Consolidated TMSS (borrowing strategy/ investment strategy/ MRP policy/ prudential indicators)
 - Consolidation of debt and loan novation
 - Investment Management Practices (IMPs) for non – TM investments
- **Member training**
- As the recent local elections have produced some significant changes in the overall control of Councils, training for new members will be key
- MUFG can provide training to members on TM/ Statement of Accounts etc

CIPFA – Jo Pitt (slides below)

- There will be a CIPFA consultation on the Prudential Code and TM coming out. Part of wider work on Better Reporting
- CIPFA will respond to FF and press point that it still does not increase funding overall and that there are longer term policy issue including council tax reform needed.
- Links with ICAEW growing and there will need to be a consultation – likely at least 12 months before anything really moves forward.
- LGR – CIPFA has a template and are supporting some councils with business cases. Free event on 10 Sept from 9 to 12 on the subject
- Doing work to try and assess how much spent on Prevention Work and also more work with LLG and Solace on Golden Triangle.



Policyupdate august
2025.pptx

7. Any Other Business

None

8. DONM – 5th September 2025 (Virtual Private)

- **10th October 2025 (Virtual Public)**

9. Private Executive Business:

- Richard Bates gave an update on Surrey LGR:

There are 2 options out for consultation which is 27 pages and not at all easy for residents to engage with. Risk that residents will disengage.

Mid Oct announcement still expected for Surrey outcome and view that this will hinge on financial stability.

Surrey County Council have asked districts to do a voluntary S24 (no more disposals) however districts have refused. Woking and Spelthorne both have commissioners so there will be forced asset sales hence they cannot

agree. Guildford and Mole Valley also already have asset disposals strategy underway to support current capital plans hence they not keen to do that either.

Surrey CC been told that they will to be a continuing authority.

Business Cases – be ready to justify your evidence in any business cases.

Expecting as part of Spending Review in September that there will be something about partial debt write offs for Woking and for Thurrock – no numbers yet. Suggestion that there may be further financial support.

Noted that the engagement is currently with small team of MHCLG officials so very much an issue of capacity and hunch that there will be slippage elsewhere – possibly in the combined mayoral space but that it could knock on.