

**Society of District Council Treasurers**

**Minutes of the Executive Committee held on 4th April 2014**

**At the CIPFA Offices, Robert Street, London**

**In Attendance:**  Paul Cresswell (Vice President and Chair of the meeting), Angela George (Secretary), Jason Vaughan, Alan Peach, Bob Palmer, Frank Wilson, Simone Donaghy, Jo Wagstaffe, Chris Brewer, Jill Penn, William Jacobs, Sandra Cowley, Alan McFarlane, Rob Bridges, Norma Atlay, Jane Kitchen, Nick Eveleigh.

**Also in attendance:** Sally Marshall (DCEN), Bevis Ingram (LGA), Cecilie Booth (Capita), Jon Hayes (Audit Commission), Aileen Murphy (NAO), Sally Marshall (DCEN)

1. **Apologies**

**Apologies** were received from –Peter Stuart (President), Peter Gillett, Martin Henry, Steve Richardson, Kevin Jaquest, Dean Langton, Shirlene Adam.

**Goodbyes**

It was noted that this would be the final meetings for both Paul Cresswell and Alan McFarlane and the Executive expressed their appreciation to both for the support they have given to the Society. The roles that Paul and Alan currently hold will be re-allocated to other Executive members.

1. **Minutes of Previous Meeting and actions arising**

Minutes of the previous meeting of 28th February were agreed.

The SDCT Accounts will be presented to a future meeting.

**Action – Frank Wilson**

**Action - Frank Wilson to report on the meeting with the VOA (now attached)**

Other outstanding actions have either been actioned or picked up elsewhere on the agenda.

1. **Single Fraud Investigation Service**

Sue Francis, DWP attended the meeting and gave a presentation (attached) on the current state of the project and some of the key issues under consideration. One of the key issues not on the presentation appears to be that only fraud cases over the value of £2000 is intended to be passed to the DWP. This was news to the Executive and is a matter of concern as it fundamentally changes the nature of the service that is being left with Local Authorities. Sue agreed to take this issue back for discussion.

1. **Business Rates**

It was reported that there had been no progress on the accounting regulations. The LGA and the Audit Commission are also asking about this as clearly it is imperative that we understand the rules prior to closing the 2013/14 Accounts. The appeals situation is the issue causing the most concern for year-end estimation purposes and on-going financial projections.

The Business Rates Administrative Review would be underway shortly.

**Action – Action** **– Steve Richardson to attend the next meeting of the Business Rate Implementation Group and keep members informed of progress on outstanding issues.**

**Note – Alison Scott from CIPFA will attend the next meeting of the Executive.**

1. **Welfare Reform**

The roll out of the programme is currently being announced. It is anticipated to be a slow rollout.

**Action –Simone Donaghy to take over the advisor role and report any updates as appropriate.**

1. **Audit Update**

Bob Palmer provided a briefing note on the key audit issues (attached).

* 1. **National Audit office**:

Aileen Murphy reported on current issues including the fact that they had new VFM powers from midnight. A Financial Sustainability report is planned and is now attached

* 1. **Audit Commission**

Jon Hayes from the Audit gave a presentation of key issues (attached)

1. **CIPFA Conference Workshop Agenda**

Suggestions included LCTS, Business Rates, SFIS and Role of S151 officer.

**Action – Angela George to progress finalisation of agenda and speakers.**

1. **Advisor Reports**

8.1 Council Tax Partnership Forum (note attached from Paul Cresswell)

8.2 Transformation Challenge (Verbal update from Jo Wagstaffe)

8.3 Nick Eveleigh provided an update on key pensions issues (attached)

1. **Reports from External Bodies / Sponsors:**

**9.1 DCEN –** There had been no meetings of the DCEN to update members on.

**9.2 LGA –** Bevis Ingram gave an update on some of the key issues and in particular:

* Flooding (particularly the Repairs and Renewals Fund)
* Business Rates appeals
* SFIS
* LGA Improvement offer

**9.3 Capita Update –** Cecilie Booth provided an update on current issues as follows:

Capita Asset Services is seeking to work in partnership with local authorities to develop a tailored and flexible Capital Model, based on a 5 – 10 year profile of the local authority capital investment ambition. The model incorporates the authority’s current capital programme and any elements of the authority’s capital ambition that it would wish to model over this period. The aim of the model is to provide a sound base for longer term planning, better information on which to base decisions and clear quantifiable benefits in terms of local funding streams, income streams, growth and sustainability. The service can also include a Capital Planning review to assist the authority with ensuring that the existing strategic capital strategy and capital programme is meeting the authority’s priorities and the building blocks are in place for the Capital Model to provide maximum value to the authority, including stronger links to the Treasury Management Strategy.

The Revenue Modelling Service will seek to work in partnership with local authorities to develop a tailored and flexible Revenue Model, based on a 5 – 10 year profile of its capacity for service delivery and its funding sustainability. The model will incorporate the current elements of the authority’s Medium Term Financial Strategy, both externally and locally influenced, but will also look beyond this medium term horizon to link to the authority’s investment and local growth ambition to establish if a more independent and sustainable revenue funding position can be achieved. The service can also include a strategic financial planning review to assist the authority with ensuring that the existing business planning process is meeting the challenges that the authority is facing and the mechanisms are in place to populate the Revenue Model with quality information. Such mechanisms include Business Rates Retention forecasting and other major funding streams.

Anyone interested in these tools should contact their local Capita advisors

1. **Any Other Business:**

10.1 CIPFA Apprenticeship Scheme. James Platt from CIPFA attended the meeting and gave a presentation on what looks like an excellent scheme (attached).

10.2 Caravans as Main Residences – Paul Cresswell raised an issue as to whether this might be an opportunity for additional Council Tax / NHB. Following discussion Executive members generally felt there were a number of problems with this approach.

10.3 Licences – Issue of outstanding NNDR Debt (note from Rob attached)

1. **Date of Next Meeting** – 16th May, followed by lunch at Boyds Brasserie.
2. **Part B – Private Executive Business**
   1. **SDCT Constitution**

The draft constitution was discussed and amendments proposed

**Action – Angela George to finalise for agreement.**

* 1. **Vice President Elections**

There are three nominations for this role and the election process would take place in the coming week.

**Action – Angela George to progress the election process.**

**NOTE: Following the election Norma Atlay was elected to the position of Vice President.**

* 1. **SDCT lunch arrangements –** agreed Boyds Brasserie at lunchtime on 16th May.

**Action – Angela George to progress arrangements**

* 1. **Website SLA –**

**Action - Peter Stuart to finalise arrangements. NOTE: the website address will change in the near future.**