

CIPFA 2019 Annual Conference Write Up

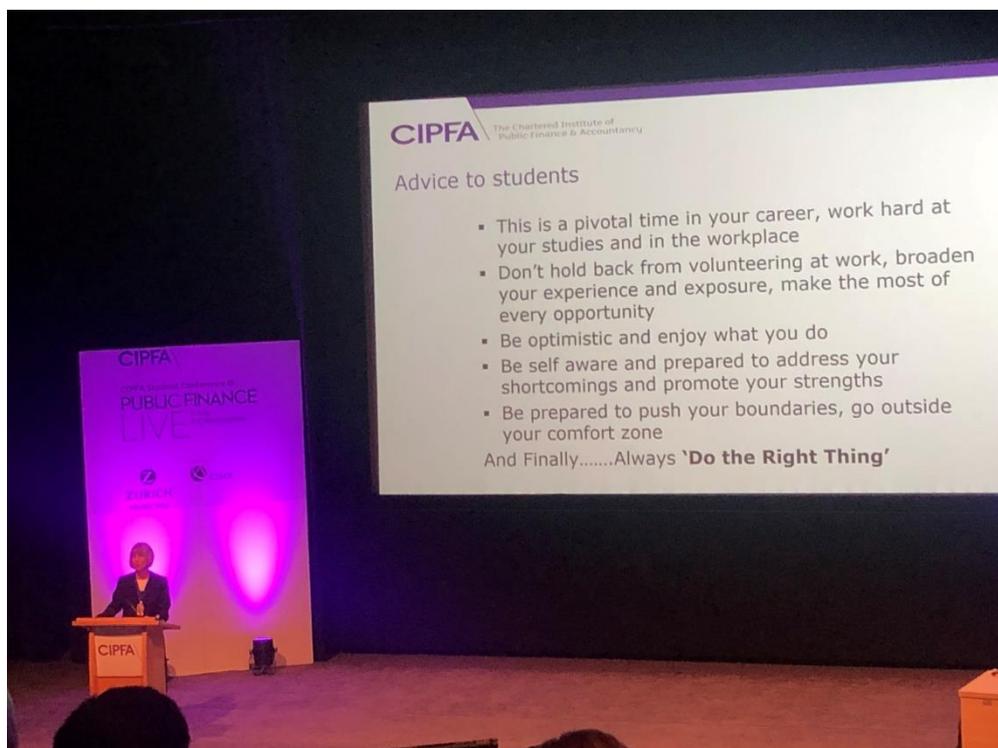
Firstly, I would like to thank CIPFA North East for sponsoring my place at the CIPFA annual conference this year. So many organisations are under significant pressure financially and having the ability to fund employees to attend events such as this one is becoming increasingly difficult – so to be given this opportunity was greatly appreciated.

The CIPFA annual conference was my first experience of attending a national conference, so not only was I unsure of what to expect, I also felt very anxious about networking, making a good impression and representing my employers well. Luckily before I set off I was put in touch with another CIPFA student in the North East region so I was able to meet up with some fellow students over the course of the two days.

The event was held at the Birmingham ICC, which is very easy to find and registration was simple, before I knew it I had a badge and coffee in hand. A very useful app was set up and ran by Oracle which I was able to download on my phone through the app store, this gave you all the information you needed for scheduling the workshops, a map of the venue, and some information on the speakers present in each workshop.

Presidents Welcome

I have to admit I wasn't sure who the president of CIPFA was before attending this event, but I found a little bit more about Carolyn Williamson after the first day. After officially welcoming all attendees to the conference, she even came to one of the student workshops to share and inspire us with the story about her career and how she came to be a public finance leader, with her own advice to students about how to shape their own careers.



Faye Revely
CIPFA Student

Lunch

All refreshments and food is provided at the event, which catered to many dietary requirements and was of high standard. This also gave you an opportunity to explore the exhibition room with over 50 representatives from organisations such as AAT, Zurich and CIMA to name but a few. Here you were able to share experiences from your own organisations and had the opportunity to leave your contact information to receive more information about the companies and if they can offer your organisation any added value. Many of the stands have freebies to take away with you such as stationery, speciality coffees, power banks and one stand was even giving away a holiday!

Networking 101

Next on the agenda was a networking workshop, which was met by me with great enthusiasm as I felt I had much to learn on this particular subject.



In this workshop we were encouraged to partner up with unfamiliar faces in the audience, and not to stick with the person next to you. This workshop gave you some useful tips about how to work a room during an event, knowing who to approach and how. I ended up meeting 3 students based in Northumberland during a practical exercise and also a Deputy Director of Resources from Enfield Council (who also happened to be called Faye). I have since connected with Faye on LinkedIn, and she introduced me to another student from her own organisation. Meeting with other students was by far the most beneficial part of attending the conference, as we were able to share experiences and discuss our courses which I have been unable to do in my workplace due to the lack of CIPFA students.

To close the first day in the student hall, there is an announcement and presentation of prize winners. These prizes were given to students who received top marks in case studies and exams, followed by a champagne reception.

Faye Revely
CIPFA Student

That evening, a sponsored dinner was held by Zurich at the Hyatt Regency. Luckily a few other students were also attending and we managed to get sat at the same table, although I also got sat next to the Director of Resources from Cumbria County Council which proved another connection made on LinkedIn. The event was great fun, and a chance for me to get to know the other students better.



Day Two

The second day started off for me at the Regeneration Property Conference, the reason I chose to attend this workshop is because of the relevance to the role I am currently working in. I am covering the maternity leave for the Senior Accounting Officer for Regeneration within Middlesbrough Council, working on projects such as the Tees Advanced Manufacturing Park and the local housing plan. A presentation given by Alison Jarrett from Birmingham City Council was very interesting learning about one of the city's biggest regenerating projects called Paradise Circus, which around the ICC you were able to see all of the construction work currently ongoing. This project was to improve the realm of the city, offering improved office spaces and facilities for companies to move into. A similar project but on a smaller scale is kicking off in Middlesbrough so some of the insight gained from this workshop was very useful and I have passed the presentation onto my Finance Business Partner.

Faye Revely
CIPFA Student



That afternoon followed an address from James Brokenshire MP (Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government). I was impressed that a representative of such a prestigious level within the Government was in attendance, and most of the conference attendees came to this address as there seemed to be a buzz about what he would be speaking about. There was an opportunity for the audience to pose questions to James, but if you felt a little nervous about speaking in front of such a large crowd, part of the app had an add on called Slido available in all the workshops – which can be used to anonymously ask questions to the speaker who would then respond to the audience as a whole. The app did come in very much use and I did submit questions of my own through slido that I probably wouldn't have raised myself in front of the crowd.



Faye Revely
CIPFA Student

The final workshop I attended was the 'Finance Transformation: How to tell the story of your numbers' delivered by Malcolm Hewlett of Insight Software, Malcolm is a very well established systems accountant with a wealth of knowledge about the public and private sector. This thought provoking session looked at how organisations interpret and report the story of their numbers, and briefly demonstrated the software available through Insight in order to do this. I found this session very useful and I used Slido to ask for a recommendation for a forecasting tool or application which he felt was the most beneficial to Local Authorities.



Final Thoughts

In summary, if students are given the opportunity to attend, I would absolutely recommend they go. I felt a sense of revitalisation towards the CIPFA course after the event and meeting other students or former students who have gone on to be leaders in finance definitely gave me a boost of motivation to continue putting in the hard work and dedication to the course. It helps you keep up to date with the latest news and topics of discussion in the public sector and this conference may also give you a better idea of where your passion lies within the public sector and what path you may wish to take within your career.