

MINUTES OF ADSO INTERIM COUNCIL MEETING

21 January 2011 at London Councils' Offices

Attended: John Austin – Director/Chairman, Sue Keogh – Director, Mark Towers – Director, Laura Latham - Director, John Lynch – Director/Treasurer, Michael Robson – North East, Colin Sweeney – East of England, Helen Gee – North West, Sue Crosland – South West, James Doble – Cherwell District Council (Observer), Heather Scowby – LB Islington (Learner).

Apologies: Tom van der Hoven – Director/Secretary, John Quinton – Director, Helen Abraham – West Midlands, Matthew Kane – East Midlands, Rebecca Owen – East Midlands.

40. Welcome and introductions and apologies

JA welcomed members to the meeting and advised that Heather Scowby, a learner from the London region would be clerking the meeting. The Board thanked Heather for her attendance.

41. Minutes of the last meeting and action points

The minutes of the meeting on the 27 September 2010 were agreed, subject to an amendment on page 2 of the minutes to remove the last sentence of the last bullet point which read 'however none of their officers were members of ADSO'.

The majority of the action points from the meeting were covered on the agenda or had been completed and the following comments were made:

- Nobody from Wales had volunteered to be an regional representative so far but SK will pursue contacts from Merthyr Tydfil and Torfaen Councils.
- CS had recruited two members from Scotland. Andrew Wilson would be leaving Perth and Kinross Council but would be kept involved and would help to generate interest in the association.
- SK will try and find contact details for NI. John Turner from the AEA could help to spread the message to generate interest in the region.

The outstanding action points were highlighted:

- a) Pursue Welsh representation on the Council.
- b) Pursue Scottish representation on the Council.
- c) Pursue Northern Ireland contact.
- d) Talk to Nick Randall re Interim Managers – (deferred)
- e) Draw up content for the website re providing a mentoring service – (longer term aim)

Resolved:

1. That the minutes of the meeting held on the 27 September 2010 be confirmed as a correct record.
2. That SK pursue Welsh contact and liaise with Sarah Titcombe who coordinates the Welsh LGA.
3. That CS pursue Scottish contact and liaise with Nigel Stewart and meet SOLAR governing body.
4. That SK pursue Northern Irish contact and liaise with MT.

42. Association Website

LL summarised the progress since the last meeting:

- The report covered most of the key developments.
- In terms of website usage overall, there was still some way to go but a lot of progress had been made; this was shown by the highest number of users to log on to the website last week, which was 401.
- The online payments system was now ready to use and had been tested with a payment for a place on the 'Supporting Democracy in a Localism Agenda' course. A full assessment of the facility would be undertaken in March 2011. Progress had been made on the qualifications portal. Final system testing would take place in early March 2011 prior to national roll out.
- Members who had signed up to the ADSO page on Facebook were provided with a weekly update. Feedback suggested that Twitter was a more popular method of communication via the web.

During the discussion, the following points were made:

- The Board was pleased with the added value the Democracy Direct bulletin brought to the website.
- The system of regional web publishers was working well.
- In terms of the regional sections of the website LL would investigate whether users' log in ID can identify the region they are from on the website.
- Clive Parker had not chased Jules Pipe regarding comments and pictures as chair of London Councils on the ADSO website. JL would liaise with David Rees at Hackney to try and get something added.

Resolved:

1. That the website statistics provided in terms of monitoring the traffic to www.asdo.co.uk be noted.
2. That the completion of the online payments system be noted.
3. That the ongoing progress in developing the qualifications portal be noted.
4. That LL investigate whether users' log in ID can identify the region they are from on the website.
5. That JL liaise with David Rees at Hackney regarding getting a quote from Jules Pipe as chair of London Councils added to the website.

43. Conference 2010

SK introduced her report and asked the Board to consider arrangements for this year's conference. During the discussion, the following main points were made:

- The Board thanked Laura and Sue for their hard work and the effort they had put into the conference and said it could not have happened without them. It had been a very successful and well attended event and a lot of positive feedback had been received.
- Keeping costs as low as possible would be a priority this year in order to maximise attendees in light of the current economic climate.
- The format of the conference should alternate each year, with this year's conference to be held over one day and next year's conference to be held over one-and-a-half or two days. The possibility of an optional dinner at the end of the

one day was considered as last year a lot of positive feedback had been received for the networking opportunities it provided.

- Potential venues for this year's conference were considered and it was agreed that a Local Authority or a conference centre would be suitable.
- Town Halls were likely to be cheaper to hire than hotels however it was likely that potential break-out rooms would be taken up by Committee meetings. The Board agreed to offer the host authority free places on the conference.
- If a lot of people registered and wanted to stay overnight, discounted rates could be negotiated at hotels such as Premier Inns or Travel Lodges. Attendees would be responsible for booking their own accommodation; this would allow them some degree of flexibility and ease the administration workload for ADSO.
- The Board evaluated host regions and it was decided that London and the surrounding areas would be most suitable this year. This was because the area was easily accessible and rail fares were likely to be cheaper due to more direct routes. The region was also justified because the conference was only for one day therefore less people would need to pay for an overnight stay and because the last two conferences had been held in the North and Central regions of the UK. If held in London it was also more likely that a greater range of speakers would attend the conference, such as a Government Minister.
- SK would research suitable host authorities and consider the venues off the beaten track such as the Friends House venue in Euston. Jane Wilmshurst would be contacted for help in researching suitable hotels in the area.
- The Board agreed that a request should be posted on the website for members to suggest suitable venues and locations for the conference, i.e. one with space for up to 150 attendees and three to four breakout rooms, as well as ideas for guest speakers. This could be done via a thread on the Members Forum and could also be mentioned in the Chairman's newsletter.
- The conference was not designed solely with the incentive to make a profit but rather for the increased credibility and respect it afforded to the organisation.
- NACO held conferences each year but so far they were struggling with bookings for their conference in March. The Board considered offering to hold a joint conference with ADSO, possibly in 2012.
- The location of Birmingham was agreed in principal for next year's conference with a two day, or one and-a-half day format.
- This year's conference would be held in late October or early November and this would correlate well with the timings for the Royal Assent of the Localism Bill.
- The Board agreed that the Localism Bill should be a theme or major topic for the conference.
- DCLG would welcome coming to the conference.
- JA would also speak to John O'Brien regarding London Councils attendance.
- It was agreed that Thursday would be the most appropriate day of the week to hold the conference on.
- The board discussed ways to involve the sponsors more in the conference and suggestions included printing the contact details of the sponsors on the programme, allowing them advertising space on the website and giving them one minute during the conference for them to conduct a sales pitch. JL would liaise with Graeme Ratten from Opportunities to help progress these ideas and negotiate further with sponsors regarding fees.
- SK volunteered to project-manage the conference again this year and said that it would be helpful to have more people involved to help with some of the leg work. The Board agreed but JA stressed that roles and responsibilities need to be clear. MR volunteered his time for the project.
- Careful consideration of the programme was essential as the conference would only be held for one day. It was important to offer a range of learning styles with good speakers and workshops. It was agreed that three or four workshops would be plenty.

Resolved

- (1) That SK draw up a project plan for this year's conference.
- (2) That SK and Jane Wilmshurst research venues and locations for the conference.
- (3) That LL post a request on the ADSO website for members to suggest speakers and venues for the conference.
- (4) That JL liaise with Graeme Ratten regarding how best to involve and approach sponsors with regards to the conference and with negotiation of fees.
- (5) That JA speak to John O'Brien and DCLG to invite them to the conference.

44. Association Business Plan

MT provided a brief update on the business plan and stated that a more detailed update would be provided at the next meeting.

In the discussion the following points were made:

- There was a need to revise the timescale for the Association Business Plan.
- SK suggested asking for help from volunteers.
- JA agreed and said that there was a danger of taking on too much.

Resolved

- (1) That the update be noted.
- (2) That MT provide a more detailed update on the Association Business Plan at the next meeting.

45 Directors' Reports

(a) Chairman

JA introduced his report.

During the discussion, the following main points were made:

- MT, JD and JA had been to visit DCLG who had been working on the draft Localism Bill. Details of the Bill were discussed and the DCLG were provided with valuable feedback from a practitioner's point of view. Further contacts in the DCLG policy team were provided and they would be interested in working together in the future.

Resolved

- (1) That the update be noted.
- (2) That JA invite Councillor Richard Kemp, Member Champion, to be a speaker at the conference.
- (3) That a section on the website be created for Councillor Richard Kemp to raise his profile amongst members and that JA draft something for him.
- (4) That LL provide the following people with guest access to the website:
 - a. Clive Mentzel (new chair of the London Scrutiny Network)
 - b. Jo Miller (Local Government Association)
 - c. Policy officers from the DCLG who are working on the Localism Bill

(b) Finance Director

JL updated the Board on the accounts and made the following points:

- Overall the account was looking quite healthy.
- All documents relating to January to December 2010 had been given to the accountant to prepare the annual accounts.
- The accountant would be preparing the VAT return from October to December 2010.
- The main issue was keeping track of what was coming in and who it was going to. Authorities tended to lump payments for membership, training and conferences together, or pay the money into the wrong account or if payment was made by BACS, gave few details or a reference number as to who the payment was from. In future, every two weeks when bank statements are received, items would be ticked off and correctly labelled to maintain an accurate understanding of where things are going. This would save a considerable amount of time.
- Just over £27,000 was in the qualifications account and £56,000 was left in the main account.
- In June £3,500 would be paid as the final instalment of this year's MJ Awards.
- In terms of money generated from the conference this year, there was an outstanding payment from Bristol of £124 and £264 from LAIOG.
- This year's busy period would be between September to October due to the conference and membership renewals taking place. It would be more important than ever to ensure detailed records during this time. The online payments system was expected to make this process easier.
- The accountants' fee was yet to be paid.

The Board thanked John for the update and for his hard work on the association's finances.

Resolved:

That the update be noted.

(c) Report of the Secretary

During the discussion, the following main points were made:

- The current Constitution was not necessarily what would work best for ADSO as it had been drafted before they had starting operating as an association.
- The Board considered whether they were committed to holding elections this year and agreed that they would ask members whether this could be deferred until next year in order to continue the review for the best way of working.
- The terms 'Chairman' and 'Vice-Chairman' should replace the terms 'President' and 'Vice-President'.
- The number of days for handing in a completed nomination form should be changed from 120 days to 28 days, prior to an AGM.
- A maximum of £1500 was decided to be sufficient to subsidise a learner to attend an IIMC conference.
- A competition would be held to find the best candidate for an IIMC exchange, and could follow the example that recently featured in the MJ/LGC as a guide. SK will draft an outline process for the competition.
- JA would liaise with Denise, but ultimately the candidate would make his/her own arrangements, such as flights and accommodation.

Resolved:

1. That JA suggest to members that the elections will be carried out next year instead.
2. That JA liaise with TVDH regarding the amendments to the Constitution.
3. That officer positions be reviewed at the next meeting.
4. That the following recommendations be NOT AGREED:
 - i. That elections for the position of President and Vice President be held in 2011.
 - ii. That the term of office of the first President and Vice President to be elected in 2011 be one year/two years.
 - iii. That the election of the first President and election of Vice Presidents be by way of postal ballot as contemplated in Clause 7.7 of the Articles
 - iv. That the Rules on Annual Elections as set out in Clause 7.7 of the Articles be introduced with effect from the AGM in 2012/AGM in 2013.
 - v. That the following Rules for Nomination of Officers be agreed:
 - a. That a completed nomination form signed by the candidate and supported by their regional branch/regional branch representatives. In the event that a branch has not been established, the nomination be supported by two full members of the Association.
 - b. Written endorsement of candidacy from their local authority/employer be provided
 - c. That all documentation be submitted to the Secretary 120 days before the AGM at which the election is to be held
 - vi. That the AGM in future be held at lunch time on the first day of the conference.
 - vii. That the following Officer positions be established with immediate effect:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
5. That the following recommendations be AGREED:
 - i. A recent photo for the newsletter and website be submitted.
 - ii. A 200-word essay detailing the candidates qualifications and work experience be submitted (Essay will be published in the newsletter and website).
 - iii. That the quorum for a General Meeting be lowered to 5% of the paid up membership of the Association at the date of the meeting and that this be recommended to the next AGM.

(d) Training and Qualifications

MT provided an update on the work undertaken regarding qualifications and training.

In the discussion, the following points were made:

- EdExcel and City and Guilds were being considered as alternative awarding bodies due to the cease of the contract with the Open University Awarding Body.
- Skills4Justice, the recognised Sector Skills Council for ADSO, had been very supportive in the assisting with identifying a new awarding body. Big thanks were given to Lesley Dunlop and Fiona Turton in particular, for their support.
- A final decision on whether to pursue membership with Skills4Justice would be made at the meeting in March on receipt of all of the relevant information, although the Board was minded to agree. The cost of an annual level 2 membership was £1300.

- Positive discussions had taken place with CfPS.
- The 'Supporting Localism in a Democracy Agenda' had been the most successful training programme in the (pilot) ADSO training programme so far. A formal evaluation report on each of the training sessions would be provided at the meeting in March.
- Consideration was given to offering the trainers an additional learner place for free.
- Thanks were given to all of the trainers, to Becky for her role in the administration and to Mark, James and Laura for their hard work.

Resolved:

- (1) That the update on the ongoing progress of the Certificate and Diploma be noted.
- (2) That the update report for the search for a new awarding body be received.
- (3) That the work undertaken so far with Skills4Justice be noted and the final decision on whether membership should be pursued be taken at the meeting in March.
- (4) That the update on the pilot ADSO Training Programme be noted and a full final evaluation report be submitted to the March meeting.
- (5) That JA forwards the update on the positive discussions between ADSO and CfPS to Clive Mentzel.

46. Regional Updates

i. East of England

The first branch meeting was due to be held next Friday and six volunteers had been recruited from Norwich.

ii. North East

A training event had been held in Northallerton, North Yorkshire to generate interest in the area. There were now 20 members in the North East. A branch meeting had not yet been set up; however an informal meeting under the ADSO banner was being considered. Currently there was no lead member in Yorkshire. MT would be attending a breakfast meeting joint with South Yorkshire and was hoping to recruit someone. Angie Aspinall was a potential representative and had a good reputation for being very proactive in member development. She had agreed to take this forward to generate interest in Yorkshire however was not able to pursue this presently due to work commitments.

iii. East Midlands

The East Midlands branch had met on 14 December 2010 and their next meeting would be in March 2011. Discussions had focused on job evaluations, the Localism Bill and an update on last year's conference.

iv. London

A steering group had been set up and they had met last year. The first branch meeting was scheduled for the end of March 2011 to formally appoint members to the branch and representatives to the Board. A pilot was taking place for people interested to put their names forward on the website. Details of expressions of interest would be provided to the Board before the next meeting.

v. North West

A survey had been conducted on how best to carry out branch operations and it had been inconclusive. It had been suggested that the branch hold two meetings a year and was HG was planning to organise a meeting in March to formally establish the branch.

vi. South East

The region was struggling to get a regional branch off the ground and needed someone other than Board members to drive it. Clive Parker had agreed to draft terms of reference. The few who had attended the last network meeting had discussed holding virtual meetings or alternating locations for hosting the meeting, as the South East was such a large area. Discussions included the possibility of a weekly or monthly update from the regions being a potential feature on the website, such as in the form of a newsletter.

vii. South West

There were now 40 members in the region. The first branch meeting was planned for July 2011 and a networking session had been planned for October 2011.

vii. West Midlands

HA sent her apologies. An update would be considered at the next meeting.

47. Communications

JA would check whether artwork was included in the price for the quote received for printing the Association leaflets. In addition to the leaflet, other promotional literature could be provided, such as screen pages from the website, information on the IIMC, details of partners, jobs advertisements, information on the weekly bulletin and the forum. SK and LL would review the promotional CD to see whether it included resources that could be used. JL would investigate the types of packages that could be offered to sponsors, such as a feature page in the promotional literature or a stand at the conference.

48. Working with Others

i. MJ Awards

ADSO and Weightmans were sponsoring the MJ Awards and an advert was now on the website. There was a need to promote the awards and generate interest as so far no submissions had been received, although it was likely that local authorities would leave it to the last minute to apply. JA would email all the Directors and regional representatives for their support in promoting the Awards and Clive Parker would also be asked to actively promote them.

ii) CIPFA benchmarking

JA would email David Henderson-Stewart for an update on actions carried out since the CIPFA questionnaires had been completed. Results were expected by April 2011.

iii) Opportunities

- SK would talk to SEE about ADSO coming to the South East Employers conference this year. There was likely to be a small charge.
- An offer could be given to share places on CfPS and ADSO conferences. JA would liaise with Clive Mentzel to progress this. The CfPS conference was usually held on or around 30th June.

iv) London Scrutiny Officers Network

JA had met Clive Mentzel, the new chair of the network. Clive had also been given access to the ADSO website and hoped for a closer working relationship in the future

Resolved:

- (1) That the updates be noted.
- (2) That JA check whether artwork was included in the quote for printing the conference leaflets.
- (3) That JA email the Directors and regional representatives and Clive Parker for their support in promoting the MJ Awards.
- (4) That JA email David Henderson-Stewart for an update on actions carried out since the completed CIPFA questionnaires had been received.
- (5) That SK talk to SEE about ADSO coming to the conference this year.
- (6) That JA liaise with Clive Mentzel regarding sharing places at the CfPS and ADSO conferences.

49. Future Developments

i. Review of Constitutions (report from GR on Directors Forum)

The report was noted and thanks given to GR for providing it.

ii. ADSO involvement in Local Democracy Week (HG)

HG provided an update on ADSO's involvement in Local Democracy Week.

In the discussion, the following points were made:

- A page should be added to the ADSO website to advertise Local Democracy Week and members should be encouraged to say whether they would be doing anything for it. This was something that JA could mention in his newsletter.
- The British Youth Council Shadowing pilot should be included on the website.
- Links to the British Youth Parliament and partners should be added to the ADSO website
- Thanks were given to Helen and she agreed to take a lead on the actions arising.

iii. Responding to legislation (JQ)

- SK suggested publishing JQ's report on the ADSO website.
- JA had met with representatives from the CLG that morning to discuss the draft Bill and transparency agenda and they had agreed to involve the Association in the future.
- LL suggested posting the Chairman's report on the website in future so that members are kept informed of progress and the positive work being undertaken.

50. Any Other Business

- There were 761 ADSO members, JL was chasing 40 people for membership fees.
- David Smith from Birmingham would be given a free ADSO membership next year and some wine to say thank you for his support with the conference.

Next Meeting - 18 March 2011:

SK would liaise with Colin regarding hosting the next meeting in the East of England region. SK would book the London Council's offices for the following meeting on 4th July 2011.

ACTION	WHO
Pursue Welsh contacts and liaise with Sarah Titcombe who coordinates the Welsh Association.	SK
Pursue Scottish contact and liaise with Nigel Stewart.	CS
Pursue Northern Irish Contact and liaise with MT.	SK
Investigate whether users' log in ID can identify the region they are from on the website.	LL
Liaise with David Rees at Hackney regarding getting a quote from Jules Pipe as chair of London Councils added to the website.	JL
Liaise with Phil O'Brien from NACO to discuss possibilities of a joint conference with ADSO in 2012.	SK
Draw up a project plan for this year's conference.	SK
Research venues and locations for the conference.	SK
Post a request on the ADSO website for members to suggest speakers and venues for the conference via a thread on the Members Forum/mention in the Chairman's newsletter.	LL/JA
Liaise with Graeme Ratten regarding how best to involve sponsors and negotiate fees.	JL
Speak to John O'Brien regarding London Councils attendance.	JA
Provide a more detailed update on the Association Business Plan at the next meeting.	MT
Invite Councillor Richard Kemp, Member Champion, to be a speaker at the conference.	JA
Create a section on the website for Councillor Richard Kemp and that JA draft something for him.	LL
Provide the following people with guest access to the website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clive Mentzel • Jo Miller • Policy officers from the DCLG • Fiona Turton 	LL
Ask members if the elections can be carried out next year instead.	JA
Liaise with TVDH regarding the amendments to the Constitution.	JA
Get further costs for options for voting and online polls on the website.	LL
Review officer positions at the next meeting.	ALL
Forward the update on the discussions between ADSO and CfPS to Clive Mentzel.	JA

Check whether artwork was included in the quote for printing the conference leaflets.	JA
Email the directors and the regional representatives and Clive Parker for their support in promoting the MJ Awards.	JA
Email David Henderson-Stewart for an update on actions carried out since the completed CIPFA questionnaires had been received.	JA
Talk to SEE about ADSO coming to the conference this year.	SK
Liaise with Clive Mentzel regarding sharing places at the CfPS and ADSO conferences.	JA
Give David Smith from Birmingham a free ADSO membership for 2012 and some wine to say thank you for his support.	JA