



**Minutes of ADSO Board Meeting**  
**21 September 2012**  
**Birmingham City Football Club, Birmingham, 11am**

**In Attendance:**

John Austin	Chairman
Helen Abraham	West Midlands
Sue Keogh	Director of Administration and Events
Laura Latham	Director of Communications
John Lynch	Director of Finance
Jo Morrison	South West
Clive Parker	South East/Vice-Chairman
Tim Revell	London
Tom van der Hoven	Company Secretary
Hywell Ruddick	Birmingham CC / Clerk
Donna Deuster	Asst City Clerk and Treasurer, City of Racine, Wisconsin

**Apologies for Absence:**

Gareth Davies	North East
Susan Farrell	East of England
Helen Gee	North West
Matthew Kane	East Midlands
John Quinton	Director of Regulatory Governance and South West
Michael Robson	North East
Anita Searby	South West
Mark Towers	Director of Training

**126. Welcome and Introductions**

John Austin, ADSO Board Chairman, welcomed members to the meeting. He also welcomed Hywell Ruddick of Birmingham CC who had offered to clerk the meeting. Gareth Davies will be taking over from Michael Robson as representative for the North East region.

John Also welcomed Donna Deuster to the meeting who was here as part of the IIMC International Exchange Programme and was with John Lynch for the week.

Apologies were recorded as above.

**127. Minutes of last meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2012 were agreed as a correct record of proceedings.

All action points from the previous meeting had been completed, with the following exceptions and comments made:

- A bulletin will be put out to recruit regional web publishers.

## **128. Association Website**

Laura Latham, Director for Communications, provided an update on the ADSO website as detailed in her report. Laura discussed with the panel the statistics from the period of 16 August - 15 September 2012. The statistics showed an increase of 360 absolute unique visitors on the site compared to the previous month. The busiest days continued to be Monday and Tuesday which was in line with the distribution of the Democracy Direct Bulletin.

Since early April, effort has been made to 'tweet' from the ADSO account at key events. It will assist if regions and individuals also 'tweet' their activities, via the ADSO account to keep its usage active and to raise our presence nationally.

Laura reminded Board Members that they should be active on the Forum during their allocated weeks to keep threads going. Where cover cannot be provided it was up to those individuals to make alternative arrangements with one of the other Board Members. The Chairman pointed out that some Board Members did not even log in during their week of cover and this was not acceptable.

Laura explained that the election software was ready to use if elections for the position of Chairman or Vice-Chairman were contested. She will be meeting up with Tom on 2nd October to prepare for the election. Tom will also be trained as a backup to Laura.

It was **RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the web development update and statistics be noted.
- 2) That the increasing use of social media be noted and that opportunities be used to promote activity via the ADSO account.
- 3) That the software preparations for the potential Chairman/Vice-Chairman elections 2012 be noted.
- 4) That Board Members consult the rota and ensure they monitor and reply to posts on the ADSO forum at their designated time.

## **129. Conference and Sponsors Update**

Sue Keogh, Director for Administration and Events, updated the Board on the plans of the ADSO Conference 2012 which would take place on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012. Sue reported that bookings had gone well with 187 confirmed. A maximum of 200 delegates can be accommodated and it was agreed to allow an extra 10 delegates - to be advertised in the weekly Bulletin.

To accommodate two extra workshops it was agreed to book an additional syndicate room. Consideration was given to suitable topics. Options were Health and Wellbeing (Melanie Jones – John Q will contact her), Social Media (Alison Hook - Helen will approach her),

Seven learners will receive their certificates at the conference - Councillor Richard Kemp of Liverpool CC and one of our Member Champions has agreed to hand over the certificates.

Clive Betts MP, Chair of CLG Select Committee has been arranged as Keynote Speaker. To prevent duplication between him and Glenn KcKee's workshop, John undertook to brief Clive Betts.

Taxis have been arranged to transport delegates after the conference to the city centre and train station. Someone will be needed to coordinate that on the day and Sue undertook to allocate that in her list of roles and responsibilities.

Tom reminded the Board that a meeting of the new Board was to be held after the conference to approve the appointment of the Company Secretary and 5 Directors for a 3 year term of office.

The Board received Matthew Kane's update on sponsors. Since the last meeting, two companies have been confirmed as affiliate sponsors - Astech (CMIS agenda management software) and a new company IML who provide electronic voting and live meeting software. Sue will speak to Matt to find out if Astech are interested in providing conference bags with their logo, although it may be too late for this year. It was hoped that a further two companies will become affiliate sponsors bringing the total number of stands at the conference to five.

In lieu of sponsorship Thomas Fattorini has offered to provide a civic chain at cost price for the ADSO Chairman at cost price. The Chairman made it clear that it was not something he necessarily favoured. However, it could be appropriate at social events which involved other association such as at IIMC conference. The meeting agreed that cost would in the end be the primary determining factor. A no obligation quote should be obtained for further discussion.

John undertook to speak to Robert Light (LGA) to see if they will promote ADSO in the LGA publications.

Work has begun on the Association's Suppliers" Directory whose purpose is to provide a single point of contact for all democratic services supplies.

It was **RESOLVED:**

- 1) The Board noted the progress and updates with arrangements for the conference and sponsors.
- 2) That 10 additional delegates be allowed and that it be advertised in the weekly Bulletin.
- 3) That two additional workshops be held with possible topics of Health and Wellbeing and Social Media ( John Q and Helen to contact potential contributors)
- 4) Chairman to brief Clive Betts MP.
- 5) Matt to contact Astech re bags.
- 6) The offer of a sponsored civic chain be considered after receipt of a quote.

## **130. Director's Reports**

### ***a. Chairman's Report***

John Austin, Chairman, presented the Chairman's report.

He reported on the Director's Away day which was held on 24th August 2012. The Directors reviewed the Business Priorities and asked the Board to agree the updates to the Business Plan and the revised priorities.

This included a recommendation that regional representatives should in future be elected in order to strengthen their role and profile.

In a conversation with Nick Randle of SLCC member benefit sponsors came up and Nick has given John the contact details which he will pursue. We need someone to take the lead on this initiative and Tom will put this on the next agenda.

In order to inform the Business Plan objectives and priorities the Directors recommended that a member survey be undertaken. Laura and Sue agreed to undertake it at the end of October.

It was agreed that John L would draw up a specification of certain finance work that could be carried out by others more effectively and get quotes in for this to report to a future meeting. Directors considered options for increased income and agreed a set of recommendations to the Board which John L will pick up in his financial report.

For the sake of business continuity and a more even distribution of workload the Directors had reviewed and revised the current responsibilities. All Directors should have 'promoting/raising the profile of the organisation' in their role profile.

It was also agreed that Mark would draw up a proposal for incentivising and engaging volunteers to bring to a future Board meeting.

It was suggested that the current Director titles of 'Administration and Events' and 'Regulatory Governance' be changed to 'Regional Development and Events' and 'Government Consultation' respectively. Tom pointed out that it would require an amendment of the Articles which he will take to the AGM.

John reported that Weightmans had agreed to co-sponsor the MJ Awards next year and recommended the Board to agree ADSO sponsorship of £8000 plus VAT.

Tom reported on the meeting he and John had had with Nick Randle of SLCC regarding Region XI matters, the current support to the region from the IIMC and the role of the IIMC Directors.. It was a constructive meeting. IIMC intended to appoint a consultant to work with Region XI associations and members to overcome some of the problems with especially communication. A region XI meeting will be held in October in Bristol and feedback will be give at the next Board meeting.

A submission was delivered to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee and John thanked those that contributed. He had also written to DCLG asking for a meeting to discuss the meaning and implementation of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012. Both ACSeS and CfPS have welcomed our initiative and have offered to accompany and support us if CLG agreed to meet. CLG have however responded but are not interested to meet with us.

John had also written to Bob Neill, the then Secretary of State for Local Government setting out our views on the new standards regime. A reply had been received from Brandon Lewis, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at DCLG which had been posted on the Directors' Forum.

It was **RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the Chairman's report be noted.
- 2) That the update to the Business Plan be agreed.
- 3) That the following priorities be agreed:
  - a) Enhancing knowledge and learning opportunities for all members.
  - b) Influencing central Government and raising the Association's profile nationally and internationally.
  - c) Increasing the number of members and strengthening the benefits of membership.
  - d) Developing regional activity in the Association and supporting regional representatives in their role.
  - e) Increasing financial income and commercial support for the organisation.
- 4) That a member survey be undertaken at the end of October to inform the Business Plan and priorities.
- 5) That the revised responsibilities for Directors be agreed, including the new role of supporting regional representatives which will be undertaken by Sue Keogh.
- 6) That the current Director titles of 'Administration and Events' and 'Regulatory Governance' be changed to 'Regional Development and Events' and 'Government Consultation' respectively and the Company Articles be amended accordingly.
- 7) That the MJ Awards 2013 be sponsored at a cost of £8000 plus VAT.

## ***b. Finance Report***

John Lynch presented the Finance report and updated the Board on ADSO income and expenditure. This included proposals to increase some of the fees and charges.

Helen mentioned that there was a perception in regions of a lack of financial support from ADSO. It was made clear that this was the wrong impression and that the Board would welcome applications. Funding was indeed available for projects and submissions should be made to the Finance Director.

Questions were raised as to what the position would be if some employers decided no longer to pay the membership fees for their employees and individuals had to pay it themselves. What support would ADSO be able to give? The Chairman and Finance Director undertook to investigate.

It was noted that some members already paid subscriptions themselves. If it made it easier for authorities to pay invoices that said training and development on them rather than Membership Fees we could do that when asked. Also we could investigate whether we could offer in exceptional circumstances to allow individuals to pay in two instalments if asked. The issue of the relatively small membership fee was discussed compared with other professional organisations and the cost of collecting it needed to be considered. John L would check that the AEA would not charge us any more for collecting an invoice in this way.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- 1) That the Finance report update be noted.
- 2) That the following fees and charges be agreed:
  - a) Job Adverts - charges be increased from £200 to £300 for ADSO members and from £300 to £400 for non ADSO members with effect from 22 September 2012. The extra cost for e-mail alerts would remain unchanged.
  - b) That ADSO stop using Opportunities for adverts with effect from 22 September 2012 and start promoting jobs on Facebook and LinkedIn ourselves.
  - c) That the cost of training courses be increased from £50 to £60 for ADSO members and from £75 to £85 for non ADSO members with effect from 1 January 2013.
  - d) That membership fees be increased from £45 to £55 with effect October 2013. This will include those new members booking early in July, August and September.
  - e) Above fees and charges are subject to VAT.

## ***c. Company Secretary's Update***

Tom reminded the Board of the deadlines for submission of nominations at noon on Friday 28 September 2012. If more than one nomination is received for each of the positions of Chairman and/or Vice Chairman, an election would be held. Members will be informed of the outcome by 5th October.

The Board was also reminded that a meeting of the new Board was to be held following the conference to appoint the Company Secretary and 5 Directors for a term of office of 3 years.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- 1) That the Company Secretary report be noted.

## **131. Training & Qualifications**

Mark Towers, Director for Training, had provided an update on training courses 2012/13.

The final part of the programme 'The Adaptable and Effective Scrutiny Officer' is due to be run in January 2013 and will be advertised shortly.

Sue provided an update on the qualifications and explained that the Centre is looking to recruit additional Regional Advisers and Specialist Regional Advisers to support future learners.

#### ADSO Training Programme Administration:

In September 2012 arrangements were agreed for the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames to undertake the administration of training events. This was initially undertaken by them on a 12 month basis. Laura Latham declared an interest as an employee of the authority.

Mark recommended that the arrangements be continued on the same basis and rate as during the trial period.

It was **RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the feedback on the training events/programme and the qualifications update be noted.
- 2) That the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames be re-appointed to undertake the administration of the training programme on the same basis and rate as during the 12 month trial period.

#### **132. List of ADSO members interested in interim/temporary appointments**

Tim reported that he and the Chairman had met with Richard Hood to discuss the implications. If we wanted to proceed with the initiative we would have to canvas the membership and then make employers aware.

The Board was not convinced that it was something it should take forward itself. It was suggested that Sue discuss this with SEE to see if they were interested. Tim offered to draft a specification.

#### **133. Executive Regulations - Modern.gov**

Nick Crump, Director of Xpress and a colleague attended the meeting and gave an update and how they might be able to support democratic services in complying with the new Regulations by way of changes to their software. It was clear from the discussions that they could benefit from advice from practitioners. Discussions are taking place on their user group forum.

The Board considered whether a small group of democratic services officers could meet to suggest best practice to the various software suppliers but decided not to pursue that at this stage but first see what changes are made by Modern.gov and other software suppliers.

#### **134. Regional Updates**

Regional Updates were provided as follows:

**London:** Tim reported that they last met in July. The branch now has a complete set of branch officers. A seminar is due to be held on 18 January 2013 which will include an unscripted workshop.

**East Midlands:** Matt submitted the following report:

The East Midlands Branch was joined by Paul Hoey and Natalie Aincough, of Hoey Aincough on 14 September in Blaby, Leicestershire. The Branch considered items on the "role of Independent Persons" and "predetermination – can members just say what they like?!" Paul and Natalie's insights

proved interesting and provoked a lively discussion amongst members of the Branch. I would thoroughly recommend that other regional reps invite them along to their meetings.

Other issues considered included the new Access to Information Regulations, disclosable pecuniary and other interests as well as the usual ADSO Board update.

We next meet in December at South Kesteven.

**South West:** Jo reported that Anita Searby might be standing down as representative - she herself was the alternative representative. A network meeting was due to be held on 30th November. It will be open to non ADSO members. Will have a session for ADSO members only. She welcomed SK's new role in support of regional representatives.

**South East:** Clive reported that up to now there had not been much enthusiasm in the region for a formal structure. He intended to meet with Tom and others after Christmas to pursue the formalisation of a branch further.

**West Midlands:** Helen reported that a meeting was held in Staffordshire. There was lots of interest - 15 ADSO members attended. People wanted to talk about PCC elections, PCC Panels, Localism, Standards. Will not meet till next May.

### **135. Working with others**

#### ***IIMC***

As in the past ADSO will again sponsor a Director, a member and a learner to attend the IIMC conference in Atlantic City, New Jersey from 19 to 23 May 2013 at a total cost of £4500 (£1500x3). Sue will make the necessary arrangements to invite applications from interested members.

### **136. Consultations**

#### **a) Scrutiny Regulations**

The Health Scrutiny regulations had been out for consultation and John Q has submitted comments on behalf of ADSO.

#### **b) Communities and Local Government Select Committee.**

see Chairman's report.

#### **c) Response to Political & Constitutional Reform Select Committee**

Tim had drafted a response on the Draft Code for Central and Local Government. The deadline for submissions is 5th October. Any comments to be sent to Tim before then.

#### **d) My Society Local Hansards**

Their aim is to build a set of technologies whose aim is to start making the production of written transcripts of local government meetings a normal practice. In discussion by the Board there was consensus that the Minutes remained the official record. This could prove very confusing to members of the public. It was important for ADSO to put its views forward. The Chairman will draft a response in consultation with Laura.

### **137. Next meeting and dates for 2013**

The AGM will be held on 22 November at the conference.

The following future dates were agreed:

- 17 December 2012 – London (Note: initially agreed as 20 December)
- 22 March 2013 - tbc
- 12 July 2013 - London
- 20 September 2013 - tbc

The meeting closed at 3.00pm.

### ACTION POINTS

Board Members should be active on the Forum during their allocated weeks to keep threads going.	All
Two additional conference workshops to be organised.	SK
Keynote Speaker to be briefed	JA
MK to contact Astech re conference bags	MK
To obtain a no obligation quote for a civic chain from Thomas Fattorini	MK
JA to investigate member benefit sponsors	JA
Member Benefit Sponsors - lead required. Item to be added to next agenda	TvdH
Members survey to be undertaken at the end of October	LL/SK
Draw up a specification and quote for financial work to be undertaken	JL
Revised Directors' Profiles to be published.	SK/LL
Proposal for incentivising and engaging volunteers	MT
Revised titles for two Directors. Report to AGM	TvdH
CP to coordinate the update of the Business Plan. JL and MT to provide the updates.	JL/MT/CP
Support to individuals where employers stop paying membership fees	JA/JL
Increase in membership fees to be reported to AGM	JL
Interim/temporary appointments. SK to discuss with SEE. TR to draft a spec.	SK/TR
IIMC conference - to invite applications	SK