



Minutes of ADSO Board Meeting

12 December 2014

Conference Room 4, Islington Council Town Hall

Upper Street, London

In Attendance:

John Austin	Chairman	P
John Quinton	Vice Chairman and Director for Government Consultation	P
Sue Keogh	Director for Regional Developments and Events	P
Laura Latham	Director for Communications	P
John Lynch	Director for Finance	P
Mark Towers	Director for Training	A
Tom van Hoven	Company Secretary	P
Linda Scott	North East	P
Helen Gee	North West	A
Vacant	Yorkshire and Humberside	-
Matt Kane	East Midlands	A
Georgina Atkinson	West Midlands	P
Tim Revell	London	P
Jack Latkovic	South West	P

Clive Parker	South East	P
Colin Sweeney	East of England	P

1 Welcome and Introductions

John Austin, ADSO Board Chairman, welcomed members to the meeting.

The apologies were noted.

2 Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 19th September 2014 were agreed as a correct record of proceedings.

At the last meeting the Board discussed ways for working with software providers to ensure that the needs of the sector are met. A virtual working group was suggested to undertake a review.

The Board discussed a number of options and felt that the terms of reference of a task and finish panel be drawn up first before taking it further. Matt Kane seemed to be the ideal candidate to lead on this as he had no link to any of the software providers.

MK

It was RESOLVED:

That Matt Kane lead this initiative and be requested to draw up the terms of reference for a task and finish panel to look at options for working with software providers to ensure that the needs of the sector are met.

MK

John Quinton reminded the Board that any updates to the Business Plan have to be reported to the Board at its next meeting. Any changes should be reported to John no later than end February.

All

John Lynch mentioned that there had been no response from CIPFA regarding the concerns ADSO raised about the Benchmarking Club.

All other action points from the previous meeting had been completed or included in the agenda for this meeting.

3 Association Website

3.1 Laura Latham, Director for Communications, provided an update on the website security breach which occurred recently.

On the 29 October 2014 the ADSO website was brought down intentionally by an internet hacker. This follows two other breaches, the first in 2012 whereby the decision was taken to move the website to an alternative server. In 2013, a further instance of hacking took place, at which point a decision was made to change service providers and refresh the website and move to a new, more secure Content Management System.

Barsbank have confirmed that the hacking attempts have come from IP addresses outside the UK and it is thought that the closeness of the ADSO abbreviation to some other government / space investigatory organisations may be the root cause of the continued hacking attempts. LL

The message has been reiterated to Members that no data held within the site has been compromised.

The ADSO website is one of the facilities ADSO Members highly value (in particular the Forum) and it is one of the key facilitators of the organisation's business, including an income driver. It was important therefore that the issues of security were balanced against those of business continuity in ensuring that the temporary loss of the website was minimised as far as possible.

Given the series of hacking attempts, a decision was taken to move the website to its own more secure server and install an individual Cisco firewall to prevent as far as possible further hacking attempts being successful. The cost of this change will be £45 plus VAT per month.

Whilst the additional security measures were employed, time was required to allow the website to stabilise and for the firewall to be tested against any subsequent hacking

attempts.

Only after the period of stabilisation did Barsbank begin to work with Laura to reinstate the site. All of the plugins have been reviewed to ensure they are not only fit for purpose to carry out the business required through the website but are as secure as possible for all users of the site. As a result some plugins will not be re-added and additional solutions sought.

An initial inquiry has been raised with the provider of the Cyber Insurance which was purchased after the 2013 hacking incident about the possibility of a claim. The website down time has impacted on the organisation's business, although in areas such as jobs and training, bookings have continued to be taken, albeit on occasion, jobs have been circulated via e alert at a much lower cost than the usual advertising package. The Director of Finance will be able to advise the conditions under which a claim will be taken forward.

3.2 Conference Social Media

The provision of social media at the ADSO Conference is now well established and activity is ably led by Wayne Chandai from the London Borough of Lambeth. In addition to preparing for the conference and leading activity on the day itself, Wayne provides valuable support across a number of areas so many thanks to Wayne for his help and assistance this year.

As usual there was a pre-conference blog to enable delegates, non-delegates and sponsors to engage prior to the day and both blogging and tweeting from the conference on the day.

Following success at the #askpickles DCLG Select Committee session in 2013, activity seemed to be progressing to amend the law to permit the distribution of electronic meetings summons. However, despite the continued promises, the required regulation has not been enacted. It was agreed that under the #comeonerica a Twitter Campaign would take place at the conference to seek an update / expediency in this matter. Unfortunately an update has not yet been provided by DCLG.

The matter will be raised again at the #askpickles 2014 session due to take place on 16 December 2014.

Laura reported that she had been contacted by Carl Whistlecraft (who delivered a workshop at our conference on digital democracy and also whom she worked alongside as part of the LD Bytes programme) about our involvement in their Redesigning Democracy Event in February 2015.

The Board felt that not enough information about the event was available at this stage and will consider the request at a later stage. LL

It was RESOLVED:

1. That the progress to date in restoring the ADSO website following the recent hacking instance and the areas outstanding, be noted.

2. That the Director of Finance, in consultation with the Director for Communications, be authorised to consider submission of a claim against the Association's Cyber Insurance Policy. JL

3. That the conference social media activity for 2014 be noted and Wayne Chandai thanked for his continued support. JA/LL

4. That further consideration be given to support of the Redesigning Democracy Event in February 2015 when more information is available. JA/LL

4 Conference 2014

4.1 Sue Keogh, Director for Regional Development and Events provided feedback on the 2014 Conference.

What went well:

- 53 delegates overall impression of the event was excellent and 22 rated it as good
- 71 delegates thought the venue and refreshments

were good or excellent

- The plenary /keynote speakers were well received, especially Stephen Houghton
- A high proportion of delegates thought the facilitated discussions were worthwhile with a good range of topics
- Most delegates enjoyed the addition of the Panel Q&A session
- 62 delegates thought the 1.5 day format should be repeated in future
- Most useful parts of the conference were opportunities for networking (including the facilitated discussions) and the keynote speakers
- 74 delegates would recommend the conference to colleagues

Areas to improve:

- Noise levels during the facilitated discussions were an issue for a number of delegates
- Some suggestions on getting more questions from delegates for Panel session
- There was mixed feedback on the workshops - ratings from excellent to poor on most of them
- A number felt the target audience for the conference is not clear – pitched at too low a level?
- Some negative feedback on timings
- Quite a few complaints on taxis, traffic and hotels!!

The Board considered the feedback and were happy to continue with the current format of 1.5 days.

The venue at Birmingham City Football Club suited our conference and they were very professional in setting it up for us. There was no real advantage in moving to an alternative venue although the Board did take note of various comments.

The dinner on the first evening was appreciated by everyone and provided a good networking opportunity.

Consideration will be given to whether a reception be held prior to dinner or whether the opportunity should be given to sponsors to host their own receptions.

The Awards ceremony provided an excellent opportunity to recognise various achievements and best practice in front of peers and the Board agreed that it should be repeated. Consideration will be given to reviewing the categories.

The Board noted the comments about noise during the facilitated discussions and agreed to use some of the syndicate rooms for this purpose.

To create greater awareness of the Awards the Chairman JA undertook to ask those that provided submissions to make it available for publication on the website. Also to ask the winners whether they'd be prepared to do a YouTube video of their experience.

The Board was happy to continue with the same categories subject to a review of the learner category. The Board also supported continuation with the same criteria and process for evaluation of the submissions.

4.2 Matt Kane provided an update on the feedback received MK from the sponsors. The Conference hosted seven sponsors. Five of the seven sponsors completed the feedback form. With such a small return it is difficult to draw conclusions.

The Board considered the responses and was pleased to note that they all commented favourably on the format of this year's conference. The Board noted the request from some to make members' e-mail addresses available and reconfirmed its position on this matter which is not to do so.

It was RESOLVED:

1. That the next conference be held on 19th and 20th November 2015 at Birmingham City Football Club. SK
2. That the Annual General Meeting be held on 19th November 2015.
3. That, in organising next year's conference, the various feedback and comments from the Board be taken into consideration.

5 Directors' Reports

5.1 Chairman's Report

Weekly Bulletin

It was time to renew our arrangement with LLG for the weekly Bulletin at a cost of £2k per annum which the Board was happy to support.

IIMC Annual Conference

The usual invitation to the IIMC annual conference has been received. If any Board member was interested to attend on behalf of the Board they should let the Chairman know. All

The Board also agreed to sponsor a learner again and Sue Keogh, Director for Regional Development and Events undertook to make learners aware of it. SK

Kim Pocock, winner of the Democratic Services Officer of the Year category, has yet to confirm whether she will take up the sponsorship to attend the conference. If she does not take it up, it will not be made available to other members JA

The Chairman reported that we now had a Welsh member and who has agreed to help promote ADSO amongst his colleagues.

The Chairman had met up with the Acting Director of Assurance at LB Barnett who is keen to encourage JA

membership of ADSO amongst her colleagues.

5.2 Finance Report

The Director of Finance, John Lynch presented his Finance report.

Since 1st January 2014 to 5th December 2014 there have been a total of 73 job adverts which brought in income of £32,220. We lost £600 potential income when the website was down.

Some authorities use recruitment agencies to place their job adverts. If authorities do use one of the agencies then they should double check what the agency is charging the authority as they could well be charging Councils more to place adverts on the ADSO website than if the authority did it themselves direct with us.

The majority of the costs are now in for the conference and the estimated profit is £19,988.23.

As of 8th December, membership stood at 965. He JL undertook to speak to Sunderland about the renewal invitations being sent out so late.

It was RESOLVED:

That the Finance Report be noted.

5.3 Company Secretary Report

IIMC Bulk Membership Scheme

The Board supported the IIMC bulk membership scheme in principle.

At the October IIMC Region XI Management Board meeting in Bristol, it was explained to the meeting that the current scheme would not attract much interest from ADSO as it was too costly for what was being offered.

Chris Shalby, Executive Director, and Jaap Paans, Region XI Director, were sympathetic to our plea for a review and undertook to discuss this with the IIMC Board.

The new International Consultant will be tasked to work with the Executive Director and Region XI Directors to work up a formal proposal for the IIMC Board to consider in May 2015.

IIMC Region XI Director

Following Sam Shippen's resignation as Region XI Director, Bruce Poole, an SLCC member was elected to replace her for the remainder of her term.

IIMC International Development Consultant

The IIMC Board established this position to work closely with Region XI Directors, IIMC staff and the International Relations Committee to increase international participation in IIMC and develop and deliver services to IIMC members particularly in the international community.

The Board, at its mid-year meeting in November appointed Tom van der Hoven to replace Nick Randle.

IIMC Region XI Management Board

The Board met on 8th October in Bristol and ADSO was represented by Tom van der Hoven, Company Secretary, and Sue Keogh, Director for Regional Development and Events.

Members Benefit Scheme – Wider Wallet.

There was initially good uptake of the scheme but that has decreased. The Company Secretary will do a review of the Scheme in January 2015 following the Christmas period. Sustained promotion through the Weekly Bulletin will continue. TvdH

Alison Jones from Wider Wallet attended the Conference in Birmingham to promote the scheme and hopefully this will have a positive impact.

It was RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

6 Training and Qualifications

Mark Towers, Director for Training, provided an update on training courses.

The ADSO Training Programme has not been scheduled to run many courses since the last meeting, as it was the period when the ADSO Conference was held.

The Speaking with Confidence course was held in Birmingham and London and received excellent feedback. The 'Meetings Procedures Plus' course ran in October and was a well-supported course. The Council and its Governance Arrangements courses have just finished (aimed at learners, as it is written to tie in with the module on the Certificate in Democratic Practice).

The first course of the 2015 Training Programme, 'The Effective Scrutiny Officer' will be promoted soon and will run in January.

There are now 79 learners on the Certificate with 39 having completed, 41 learners on the Diploma in Local Democracy, with 6 having now completed and waiting lists for each qualification. We ran an induction session for 18 new learners in October and are running a session for our 4th cohort of Diploma learners on 9th January 2015.

At the conference certificates were handed out to recognise those who had completed during the year.

There is still a need to recruit more Regional and Specialist Advisers, to work with the Centre and with learners.

The development of the qualifications portal was an important action in the Centre's Business Plan. Following the last meeting an Urgency Committee was constituted and agreed to purchase a system run by Ecordia.

This will now be rolled out to new and recently registered

learners in the New Year.

Board members expressed concern about the fact that some learners did not progress as they should in completing their studies. Should we consider writing to the authority Chief Executive when a learner registers to make them aware? Might be worth a try.

It was RESOLVED:

That the training and qualifications update be noted.

7 Transfer of Membership Class

Tom van der Hoven will be taking early retirement at the end of December. In order not to lose his ADSO membership he has applied for his membership to be converted to the class of Past Service Membership.

The authority to determine membership applications is a matter delegated to the Company Secretary. Hence this application will have to be considered by the Board.

Due to Tom's situation it would not be possible for him to provide the support to the Director for Communications with members' registration on the website. He will also not be available for the March Board meeting. The Board agreed to recruit an assistant to work with the Company Secretary. The Chairman, Director for Communications and Company Secretary will draw up a job description for the role in January.

The Board also considered it an appropriate time to look at a way of recognising people's time commitment to the Association.

It was RESOLVED:

- 1. That Tom van der Hoven's application to transfer his ADSO membership to the class of Past Service Membership with effect from 1st**

January 2015 be approved.

2. That an Assistant to the Company Secretary be recruited and a job description for the role be drawn up. JA/LL/TvdH

3. That consideration be given to a way of recognising people's time commitment to the Association. JA/JQ

8. Regional Updates

Regional Updates were provided by North East, North West, West Midlands, London, East of England, South West and South East. These can be found in the regional pages of the website once that is restored.

9. Urgent Decision

The Board agreed at the last meeting to the purchase of an on-line portfolio system subject to the approval of the Urgency Committee.

The Urgency Committee approved the purchase of the Ecordia system.

It was pointed out that the Annual cost and cost for IV Matrix was one and the same.

It was RESOLVED:

That the decision of the Urgency Committee to approve the purchase of the Ecordia on-line portfolio system be noted.

10. Working with others

Informal secondment arrangements

ADSO had been approached to see if ADSO could facilitate the need for opportunities for informal secondment arrangements for parliamentary staff in January/February 2015. The Chairman undertook to

JA

investigate it further.

11. Consultations

A response had been submitted on behalf of ADSO on GA
“Local policing - accountability, leadership and ethics.”

The Board agreed for Jack Latkovic to lead on “IT” due to his role change. A replacement lead for scrutiny is to be identified.

12. Next meeting and dates for 2015

The next meeting will be held at 11.00 am on 20th March 2015 at Islington Council.

Future dates for 2015 are 10th July, 18th September and 11th December 2015.

The meeting closed at 3.55 pm.