



## **Minutes of ADSO Board Meeting**

**13 December 2013**

**Committee Room 4, Islington Council Town Hall, Upper Street, N1  
2UD**

### **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 der Hoven	Company Secretary	P
Vacant	North East	-
Helen Gee	North West	A
Brendan Martin	Yorkshire and Humberside	P
Matt Kane	East Midlands	P
Georgina Atkinson	West Midlands	P
Tim Revell	London	P
Rosalind Reeves	South West	A

Clive Parker	South East	A
Susan Farrell	East of England	P

## **1 Welcome and Introductions**

John Austin, ADSO Board Chairman, welcomed members to the meeting. He extended a special welcome to Brendan Martin ( Yorkshire and Humberside) and Georgina Atkinson (West Midlands)

The above apologies were noted.

## **2 Minutes of last meeting**

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

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

## **3 Association Website**

Laura Latham, Director for Communications, provided an update on the ADSO website as detailed in her report. Laura discussed with the Board the statistics from the period 1 November to 1 December 2013.

1716 Absolute unique visitors on the site. Of the 2190 overall visits to the website 16.3 % were new visitors.

Of the total page views, the most popular continue to be Members Forum, Resources – Democracy Direct, Conference and ADSO training/booking pages.

Following approval by a sub-committee of the Board in April 2013 Barsbank were commissioned to rebuild the site based on a refreshed look and

feel.

The site went live on 24 May 2013 as a skeleton site and all users were issued with new passwords.

The second stage of the website build was completed on schedule around the end of September.

This created additional functionality including:

- Social media stream (linking to the social media strategy below)
- Polls Facility to enable instant views to be gathered on topic issues based on Yes / No criteria or a selection of (a), (b), (c) choices
- Permanent space for advertisements / sponsors information on the front page
- Enhanced use of existing calendar on front page to flag up ADSO regional events and training

Sue has received initial website administrator training prior to the Board meeting and this will be followed up w / c 16 December with briefing notes and amended permissions for web publishers in the regions. Tom will receive training in January 2014. LL

Laura and the Board expressed a huge thanks to Wayne Chandai from the London Borough of Lambeth for coordinating the social media activity for the conference.

This year's conference saw even more interactions via our Social Media channels, in addition to tweeting throughout the day. We kept people updated through the ADSO Conference 2013 blog. The blog is used just for the conference and for those who don't use (or don't have access to) twitter this is a useful way to keep in touch about the day.

The blog began in July, earlier than previous years. This helped to build some interest in advance of the conference, give important information out, and

request feedback on the facilitated discussions session and the drinks reception. The other main difference this year was the increase in the amount of people tweeting who were at the conference. This made Laura's job a lot easier as she was able to re-tweet (share via our twitter feed) experiences and views of our delegates in attendance.

Going forward, Laura suggested that we try new ideas or concepts for the next conference to keep the idea of Social Media fresh and current

The new ADSO website is fully social media compatible. Bearing in mind the success of the social media element of the conference it is important that the Association starts to use social media functions to broaden the impact of ADSO discussions and promote the association more widely.

Social media is also increasingly being used by Government departments such as the recent #AskPickles session.

Successful use of social media will require active engagement from Board Members and of volunteers within the regions to tweet locally and monitor various social media activity.

A phased approach to implementing activity across different channels is proposed with the work under the Next Steps Element being undertaken between January – March 2014 with full implementation of the activity thereafter.

Wayne Chandai is happy to continue to lead on the practical implementation of the Strategy with support and oversight from Laura Latham..

To continue to develop and promote the Association both within the democratic services profession and more widely across the local government and private sectors a comprehensive and focussed approach to communications is key.

Laura suggested a number of options to move the

matter forward.

The Board's preference was to engage with an external partner who would, for a fee, assist with the development of an overall communications plan for the Association and support ongoing activity.

The Board urged all Board members to actively engage in at least one social media activity in 2014. ALL

It was RESOLVED:

1. That the website statistics be noted.
2. That the completion of the second stage web build and roll out of permissions to web administrators and regional publishers be noted.
3. That the Social Media Strategy be endorsed and its phased launch and implementation in early 2014 be approved. LL
4. That an external partner be engaged who would, for a fee, assist with the development of an overall communications plan for the Association and support ongoing activity. LL
5. That the Board's appreciation be extended in an appropriate way to Wayne Chandai from the London Borough of Lambeth for coordinating the social media activity for the conference. JA

#### **4.1 Conference Update**

Sue Keogh, Director for Regional Developments and Events', tabled a review of the recent conference.

This year's conference was held at Birmingham City Football Club again. The venue provides good value for money and the BCFC staff were once again extremely helpful and easy to work with both before and during the conference. 98% of

respondents rated the venue as excellent or good and 95% rated lunch and refreshments as excellent or good.

The conference was initially sold out at the end of the early bird offer in August, before a programme had been publicised. There were 134 paying delegates and Board members, speakers, sponsors and guests took the total to 179 attendees. 100% of respondents would recommend the ADSO conference to their colleagues in future which bodes well for future attendance.

The feedback was generally positive on the programme and range of speakers and workshops. 84% rated Paul Lankester as excellent or good and 94% rated Kevin O'Keefe as excellent or good. The most popular workshops were the ones on Making an Impact, LEAN systems and Member Development.

The facilitated discussion sessions were really well received with lots of positive comments about them. A number of delegates commented that it was difficult to hear with so many talking at once and that they would have liked the opportunity to move onto other tables during the session.

The other additional feature this year was the post-conference reception which went well.

The main procedures for administering the conference are now well established and it seemed to run smoothly again this year. It was a great team effort on the day and there was some very positive feedback on the organisation of the event.

- The Board discussed various options for the 2014 conference. Much discussion took place on the advantages and disadvantages of holding the event in London and over a longer period than one day. The main prohibitive factor against London was the cost.

The Board expressed its appreciation to Sue for all her hard work arranging a very successful conference once again. Also to those that supported her.

It was RESOLVED:

1. That the feedback from delegates to the 2013 conference at Birmingham City Football Club on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2013 be noted.
2. That the 2014 conference be held at Birmingham City Football Club again at a date to be agreed. SK
3. That the conference be held over a day and a half on a Thursday and Friday.
4. That an evening event be held on the Thursday which will include the handing over of certificates to learners and an awards evening.
5. That a small number of learners and recently qualified learners be invited to join a working group to consider the format and criteria for our own awards scheme. SK

#### **4.2 Feedback from Sponsors**

Following the Conference all five sponsors (Modern.gov, Astech, Sennheiser, Public-I and Web Labs) and the two guests (CIPFA and Parliamentary Advisory Service) were asked to complete an online evaluation via Survey Monkey.

Six of the seven responded.

All in all the Conference was well received by the sponsors. The number expressing an interest in taking up more sponsorship is particularly encouraging.

Perhaps unsurprisingly sponsors wanted more time

to speak with delegates. One sponsor commented verbally that a two-day conference would be preferable from their perspective. It is surprising in light of the sponsors' comments that few of them stayed for the post-event drinks at the end of the day. We perhaps need to emphasise as part of next year's conference the post-event opportunities that exist for sponsor/delegate contact.

There are also steps we can take to encourage more delegates to get out of their seats during lunch time and refreshment breaks and go and explore the sponsors' stands. One idea would be to have a quiz where people are asked to find out a particular fact about each of the sponsors with a prize for the winner.

The Board expressed its appreciation to Matt for the way in which he managed this very challenging task of attracting and managing our sponsors.

It was RESOLVED:

1. That the feedback from sponsors be noted.
2. The Board endorsed the suggestion to hold a quiz to encourage delegates to engage with the sponsors at the 2104 conference. MK

## **5 Directors' Reports**

### **5.1 Chairman's Report**

#### MJ Awards

Following discussion at the last meeting, the Chairman had advised the MJ that we will not be sponsoring the 2014 awards.

#### Alternative to MJ Awards

Following an informal discussion with their current President, the Chairman approached Lawyers in Local Government to see if they were interested in the principle of joint governance awards with ADSO in 2014. He received a response to say that they wished to hold their own separate legal awards.

### Wales

Following discussions at conference, and with the support of Kevin O'Keefe (a speaker at conference) the Chairman had written to the Welsh LGA to introduce ADSO and offer to discuss how we could expand our membership into Wales. He will update the Board further when he receives a response.

It was RESOLVED:

1. That the Chairman's Report be noted.
2. That the situation with regard to the MJ awards be noted.
3. That the contact with the Welsh LGA be noted. JA

## **5.2 Finance Report**

John Lynch presented the Finance report and updated the Board on ADSO income and expenditure.

Since the last Board meeting we have had another 14 jobs advertised on the website. This brings the total number of jobs and income since 1st January 2013 to 5th December 2013 to 46 jobs at £18,840.

John gave an update on the membership numbers (959) per region and income received and outstanding as at 5th December 2013.

Costs/expenses for the conference received to

date amount to £8896.74. This would give us an overall profit for the event of £15,851.56

It was RESOLVED:

That the Finance Report be noted.

### **5.3 Company Secretary Report**

#### European Symposium

The Chairman and he attended the IIMC Symposium Working Group meeting in Brussels on 4th November 2013. The Symposium will take place in Brussels on Thursday 26th and Friday 27th June 2014.

Putting this event together is an ambitious project. The biggest challenge will be to sign up sufficient attendees to make it financially viable. Most of the attendees will probably be from the Netherlands and Belgium as it is close and travel costs will be relatively cheap. It will be more of a challenge for the likes of ADSO, SLCC and others to encourage our members to attend. Having said that, it will be a unique opportunity to meet and learn from colleagues from around the world and we should do everything in our power to encourage our members.

The associations involved in putting this together are the IIMC, Nick Randle as Region XI consultant, ADSO and SLCC from the UK, ECG from Belgium, IAM from Israel and VVG from the Netherlands.

The Dutch and Belgium colleagues are working on the programme and venues. Hotel accommodation has provisionally been arranged with Pullman Brussels Midi.

IIMC will handle the registration.

The theme of the symposium/conference is "Broadening your Horizons—a European

Perspective” – “Democracy in Action across Europe”.

ADSO was asked to prepare the marketing material. The provisional budget suggests the following conference fees:

- Early Bird (March 2014) Euro 125 (IIMC members)
- After March: Euro 175 (IIMC members) and Euro 225 (others)

The reason for the difference between IIMC members and others is to encourage people to take up IIMC membership at \$18.

Associations have been asked to seek sponsorship from their own sponsors and try and raise Euro 2,000 each. The fee to exhibit is Euro 2,000, to be included in the brochure and sponsor a session – Euro 1000 and to be allowed to attend and network – Euro 500.

The projected fees are Registration - £104, travel - £96 and one night hotel accommodation - £100. Total of £300.

The Board noted progress on the arrangements for the Symposium/Conference. The Board also noted the projected cost for attendance and endorsed in principle the suggestion to make a contribution towards the costs of attendance.

#### IIMC Region XI Management Board

Following the above meeting we also had a short meeting of the Region XI Management Board. The following items were discussed:

- Review of the Region XI Action Plan
- Each association was asked to nominate an individual to review and update the Global

Network pages – Tom offered to do it.

- Bulk Membership Scheme

Noted that details had been received from the IIMC the evening before the Board meeting – too late to be considered. It would therefore be discussed at the next meeting.

- Newsletter

Agreed that, due to Nick Randle's position as interim clerk that there will only be a bi-annual newsletter instead of quarterly. This will be supplemented with e-mails.

- Region XI Funding/ Resourcing

To be considered in future.

- Marketing Region XI

We're selling ourselves short. Nick Randle was tasked to produce marketing material so that we can market to members and potential members and to national associations.

- Region XI members who are interested to serve on IIMC committees to put their names forward to the President Elect.

### IIMC Board representation

IIMC Board members serve a term of three years to represent the countries outside of North America and Canada. At the moment Region XI is represented by Sam Shippen of SLCC and Jaap Paans of the Netherlands. Sam's term of office expires in May 2014. The IIMC Constitution prevents a Region XI Board member from serving two consecutive terms unless there are no other candidates. Sam has indicated that she would like

to continue if no one else is interested.

ADSO has never been represented on the Board. When Tom served he did so in his different capacity as it was prior to ADSO's establishment. Since then Region XI has been represented by SLCC for two terms, IMASA from South Africa, Belgium for a term and a year, Netherlands once. ADSO should consider whether a nomination should be put forward. Nominations are due early January 2014.

It was RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That ADSO members be encouraged to attend the IIMC Region XI conference in Brussels. JA/TvdH
3. That Matt and Tom discuss sponsorship of the conference with our own sponsors. MK/TvdH
4. That ten places at the conference be sponsored, with preference given to diploma and certificate learners. That travel and registration costs be paid by ADSO. SK/JL
5. That Board members that wish to attend the conference also be sponsored up to a maximum cost of £3,000 in total. JL
6. That the Company Secretary produces a marketing plan for the IIMC bulk membership scheme for consideration at the next Board meeting. TvdH
7. That the Honorary Secretary be supported in his candidacy for IIMC Board Director for Region XI and that The Chairman and Director Finance agree any financial support if required. JA/JL

As agreed at the last meeting, a sub-group of the Board met on 8 November to review the ADSO Business Plan. The group comprised John Austin, John Quinton, John Lynch, Tom van der Hoven and Sue Keogh.

The sub-group did a 'root and branch' review of our mission, vision and aims and draft objectives for 2014-17 together with a SWOT analysis. The detail of this was included in the Board agenda.

The sub-group agreed the following as the next steps:

- We would continue to use the term 'democratic services' rather than change the association branding to governance but would include references to governance where possible
- Association members need a page on the website showing mission, vision and aims (this should go in the public area)
- The Board needs a more detailed document setting out the mission, vision, aims, priorities and action plan in order to monitor progress
- The following content was no longer required in the business plan (some of it could go onto the website to provide more information about the Association): Who are we, What consultation have we done, What challenges do we face, How do we manage our finances, What training is there for our members.

### Regional Structure

The sub-group also considered the current situation with regard to the regional structure. They discussed whether it should recommend a full scale review of boundaries to try to achieve a more appropriate structure, particularly for those regions in need of development.

After discussion, they decided against the full

review. This was primarily for the reason that some of the regions were working well – so why change them? Instead it was recommended that the Board focuses on areas which are not as well established.

It was RESOLVED:

1. That the Vision, Mission, Aims and priorities be agreed subject to the deletion of the words “ ... within all aspects of local and community governance” from the first aim.
2. That the following Directors lead on drawing up action plans, timelines/target dates and costs for the March Board meeting:
  - To raise the profile of the Association, regionally, nationally and internationally – JA in conjunction with JQ and TvdH
  - To increase the learning and development opportunities for our members — MT/ in conjunction with SK
  - To increase membership and improve membership engagement – LL in conjunction with SK, TvdH and region reps
  - To build a sustainable organisation and increase financial stability – BM in conjunction with GA, MK, JL and TvdH.
3. That a template with examples be circulated for the action plans and that a ‘traffic light system of RAG rating for actions be included.
4. That progress on actions be updated at each Board meeting in future.

5. That the proposal not to fully review the SK regions but to focus support on those that need it be endorsed.

## **7 Training and Qualifications**

Mark Towers, Director for Training, provided an update on training courses 2013.

The ADSO Training Programme has continued in earnest since the last report in March. Detailed feedback is provided separately to the Director of Training by the London Borough of Richmond, but as previously agreed to respect confidentiality, the report to the Board only covers the main factual information in relation to the events held.

The report provided a summary of the fully evaluated courses since the last meeting.

In September 2011, the arrangements were agreed for the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames to undertake the administration of training events. (LL declared an interest as she is employed by LB Richmond). She took no part in the discussion or decision.

As it was a new arrangement, this was initially undertaken on a 12 month basis and is due for review. In September 2012 this was agreed again by the Board.

Following discussions with the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames lead representative, it was recommended that this is continued with the same arrangements but for a 2 year period on the same rates. This is an arrangement which works extremely well and is key to the success of the programme.

An induction session for 12 new Certificate learners was held in September and a third cohort of 10 Diploma learners met at the London Borough of Camden on 5th December for their induction. Over the last 12 months we have also recruited a

further 11 Regional Advisers. There are now 70 learners on the Certificate and 28 learners on the Diploma.

At the conference it was another opportunity to celebrate the success of those who have achieved ADSO qualifications this year.

It was RESOLVED:

1. That the feedback on the training events so far reported upon be noted.
2. That the Training Administration Agreement with the London Borough of Richmond be extended on the same rates of pay as indicated but for a 2 year period until December 2015. MT
3. That the qualifications update be noted.

## **8 Membership Benefit Scheme**

The Board had previously agreed to the principle of a members' benefit scheme. In most cases, the schemes work with retailers, both online and on the high street, to provide market-leading offers and discounts to employees and members of participating companies, and their families.

They usually consist of online discounts, reloadable gift cards, downloadable vouchers or cashback.

A number of associations and local authorities provide this for their members – CIPFA, SOLACE, Ashford Borough Council, Islington, RB Kingston Upon Thames to name a few.

The last quote was 0.75 p per member per annum based on 900 members = £675 p.a.. There will be a setup cost (£350) which could probably be

negotiated. Total cost approximately £1,000.

It was RESOLVED:

1. That a member benefits scheme be introduced – initially for a trial period of 12 months.
2. That the Company Secretary be authorised TvdH to invite quotations from leading providers.
3. That the quotations be evaluated and a JA/TvdH/JL scheme agreed by the Chairman, Company Secretary and Director of Finance.

## **9 Vacancy West Midlands Region**

Georgina Atkinson of Warwickshire County Council has agreed to represent the region on the Board.

Hugh Peacocke who had previously indicated an interest had withdrawn.

It was RESOLVED:

1. That Georgina Atkinson be appointed to represent the West Midlands Region.
2. That members again be made aware of the SK/JA vacancy in North East by way of the weekly Bulletin.

## **10 Regional Updates**

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

on the website:

## **11 Working with others**

SK mentioned that the sponsorship to attend the 2014 IIMC conference had been advertised and that the closing date for applications was 31<sup>st</sup> January 2014. Details are available on the website.

## **12 Consultations**

John Quinton reported that he had chased up the Department of Health to offer ADSO's help with the Health Scrutiny Guidance and on behalf of ADSO he had submitted evidence to the House of Commons Transport Committee inquiry on Local decision making in transport expenditure. Also in liaison with the Chairman a letter had been sent to Brandon Lewis to offer ADSO assistance with the drafting of any regulations arising from the Audit and Accountability Bill in relation to electronic delivery of summons and the recording of decisions.

CLG has published draft Standing Order Regulations regarding the dismissal of top council staff and recording decisions on budget setting. John Quinton will circulate the draft regulations via the Members Forum asking for comments so that ADSO can respond to the consultation by mid January.

## **13 Next meeting and dates for 2014**

The next meeting will be held at 11.00 am on 21 March 2014 at Islington Council.

Future dates for 2014 are 11<sup>th</sup> July, 19<sup>th</sup> September and 12<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

The meeting closed at 3.15 pm.

