



Association of
Democratic Services
Officers

Minutes of ADSO Board Meeting

10th July 2015

**Conference Room 5, Islington Council Town Hall
Upper Street, London
In Attendance:**

John Austin	Chairman	P
John Quinton	Vice Chairman and Director for Government Consultation	A
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
Linda Scott	North East	P
Helen Gee	North West	P
Vacant	Yorkshire and Humberside	-
Matt Kane	East Midlands	P
Georgina Atkinson	West Midlands	P
Tim Revell	London	P
Sarah Selway	South West	A
Paul Wickenden	South East	A
Colin Sweeney	East of England	A
Gary Jones	Wales	P

1.	Welcome and Introductions	Action
	<p>John Austin, ADSO Board Chairman, welcomed members to the meeting and extended a special welcome to Gary Jones from Wales</p> <p>The apologies were noted.</p>	
	2. Minutes of Last Meeting	
	<p>The minutes of the Board meeting held on 20th March 2015 were agreed as a correct record of proceedings.</p> <p>3. Website and Communications Update</p> <p>Laura Latham, Director for Communications, provided an update on the ADSO website as detailed in her report. 1701 Absolute unique visitors on the site. Of the 2205 overall visits to the website 4.8 % were new visitors. This is a slight decrease on the previous period monitored in terms of the number of visitors and overall visits.</p> <p>A copy of the updated Communications Activity and Action Plan was attached for information and any comments.</p> <p>Following approval at the March Board meeting the ADSO Benefits Brochure was refreshed and updated. It was designed to be used primarily as an e brochure but can also be printed.</p> <p>As had been acknowledged previously by the ADSO Board, the website is both the key tool for communicating with the membership but also for promoting the Association and its activity to partners and prospective members. There appears to have been a noticeable dip in the information being put on the regional pages of the website. Whilst activity may not be evenly spread throughout the year across all regions, it is important that pages remain as current as possible.</p> <p>Publishers should contact Laura if they require re-training or any assistance with adding / amending content to the website.</p> <p>In addition to regional web publishers, ADSO has had a volunteer in Leanna McPherson from Barking and Dagenham who will over the months administer the website alongside Laura. Responsibilities will be split to relieve some of the updating from Laura and there will also be increased cover for holidays and capacity to look at future developments.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) That the website statistics and update on the actions taken be noted; 2) That the final version of the ADSO Benefits brochure be noted; 	Region Reps

	<p>3) That all Regions maximise opportunities via the website to promote activities and keep content up to date via the regional web publishers; and</p> <p>4) That the increased capacity and support for website administration and developments be noted.</p>	Region Reps
4.	<p>Conference</p> <p>Sue Keogh, Director for Regional Development and Events, presented the draft programme for the annual conference.</p> <p>The keynote speaker on the first day will be Professor Colin Copus. Sue invited the Board to suggest further ideas for workshops and the facilitated discussions by end July 2015.</p> <p>The Annual General Meeting is scheduled to take place at 4.30 pm on Thursday 26th November 2016.</p> <p>The Chairman had written to the majority of Chief Executives to promote the Awards. It was disappointing that none of them had responded. Only one application had been received so far and the deadline for submission had been extended to 7 August. We will only have the Awards if there are enough credible entries. Board members were requested to promote the Awards in their regions.</p> <p><u>Sponsors</u></p> <p>Matt Kane confirmed that 6 sponsors had signed up to exhibit at the annual conference.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED:</p> <p>1) That the report be noted;</p> <p>2) That further suggestions for workshops and the facilitated discussions be sent to the Director for Regional Development and Events by end July 2015;</p> <p>3) That the Annual General Meeting be held on Thursday 26th November, 2015.</p>	All
5.	Director's Reports	
5.1	<p>Chairman's Report</p> <p>The Chairman presented his report to the Board.</p> <p>Regional events are proving popular in a number of areas. Some regions have opened up these events to non-members in an effort to increase ADSO membership.</p>	

The question had been raised as to whether ADSO should charge non-members for such attendance. This was discussed at a regional representatives' meeting before the last Board meeting and the general view was that a charge should be made.

The Board considered various options and decided that a charge of £25 be made but that it should not be linked to membership in any way.

The Chairman had accepted an invitation to speak at a Governance and Communication Seminar in Glasgow on 2nd September on how Democratic Services officers in England have dealt with the recent challenges in Local Government and what's on the horizon post budget and moving into 2016. The event will be attended by Local Authority decision makers, Health Board members, University and FE Colleges, Housing Associations and Trade Union representatives.

With the kind support of Modern Mindset, ADSO exhibited at the LGA Annual Conference between 30 June and 2nd July.. Sue Keogh and the Chairman attended to staff the exhibition stand. The main purpose in attending was to raise ADSO's profile amongst councillors and Chief Executives. Benefits of an event such as this are not always immediately obvious or capable of being quantified but they certainly had the opportunity to talk to a number of members and Chief Executives who were not aware of ADSO's existence until then. They left the stand much better informed. So for that alone, it was worthwhile.

Modern Mindset had already booked the stand when the Chairman approached them and they agreed to allow ADSO to join them at a cost of £750. This was well below the cost had ADSO taken a stand outright. Therefore, it presented good value for money. The LGA Conference in 2016 is in Bournemouth and the Chairman undertook to contact Modern Mindset at the appropriate time to see if they would be willing to repeat this year's arrangement.

Sue Keogh referred to the promotional items offered by exhibitors at the LGA conference. ADSO did not have anything to offer visitors other than pens and it was agreed that she investigate what was on offer and report back tot the next Board meeting.

It was also suggested that other opportunities be explored such as what ADSO could offer to the NHS for instance. The Board requested Laura Latham to establish a small working group to explore the options.

It was RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Chairman's Report be noted.**
- 2. That non-members be charged £25 for attending ADSO events organised in the regions but that this not be linked to membership.**

Region
Reps

	<p>3. That the Director for Regional Development and Events investigate what promotional items are suitable for ADSO use and report back to the next Board meeting.</p> <p>4. That the Director for Communications establish a small working group to explore what ADSO could offer to the NHS.</p>	SK LL
5.2	<p>Finance Report</p> <p>The Director of Finance presented his Finance report to the Board.</p> <p>Since the March 2015 Board Meeting there have been a further 17 jobs advertised on the website which has generated £7,650 incl VAT income. This brings the total to 31 jobs advertised since 1st January.</p> <p>Membership at 1st July stood at 925 members.</p> <p>So far 6 sponsors have signed up to sponsorship packages, as well as our main sponsor ModernGov, for the Annual Conference in November.</p> <p>The Board agreed at the last meeting to reinvest £85,000 in a two year fixed rate bond with Raphaels Bank with an interest rate of 2.05% gross. This matures on 27th March 2017 and will earn £3,525.59 interest. The second fixed rate bond of £50,000 we have with Raphaels at 1.80% gross matures on 20th August 2015 and will earn interest of £1,126.85.</p> <p>The Director of Finance suggested that authority be taken under urgency procedures on the expiry of the above to agree which organisation to reinvest money in a fixed rate bond, given rates at that time. He also suggested that a total of £65,000 is reinvested in a second bond which would give £150k invested in fixed rate bonds overall.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED:</p> <p>That the Finance Report be noted and that further action be taken under urgency procedures (Chairman, Finance Director and Company Secretary) to decide how much and which FSCS organisation to invest in a second fixed rate bond for a two year period.</p>	JL
5.3	<p>Company Secretary Report</p> <p>IIMC Bulk Membership Scheme</p> <p>Chris Shalby, IIMC Executive Director, presented a report to the IIMC Board in May to explain the rationale behind the request for a review of the current Bulk Membership Scheme.</p> <p>There was some concern that the fees would be further reduced but it was more a case of those individuals not fully understanding the issues. In the end the Board was supportive of the idea and agreed for him to</p>	

work up a scheme together with the Region Directors and the International Development Consultant.

The proposed scheme will be discussed with the Associations in Region XI and if agreed, it will be presented to the IIMC Board in November for implementation in January 2016.

IIMC Region XI Director – Jaap Paans

Many ADSO members will have met Jaap Paans, of the Netherlands at our conference in November. Jaap was the Griffier (Clerk) of the Rotterdam Council. He was recently nominated as the new Mayor of Alblasserdam in the Netherlands. His appointment was approved by the King and he was invested as Mayor on 1st July 2015.

Jaap had been a force within the IIMC Board in representing Region XI and will be sorely missed. He may be able to continue serving as Region Director for some time but that will depend on his new duties.

IIMC Annual Conference

The 2015 IIMC Annual Conference was held May 17 - 20, 2015 in Hartford, Connecticut. This was IIMC's first four day conference. ADSO was represented by John Quinton, Vice Chairman and Kim Pocock and Leanna McPherson who ADSO sponsored. The Board noted the articles which they wrote about their experience.

IIMC Region XI European Symposium

The Programme Committee is still waiting for the Committee of the Regions to decide their work programme for 2016 before a date can be allocated to for the Symposium. This was to be confirmed by end of June or early July. Unfortunately all arrangements are on hold until a date is determined.

In 2014 ADSO sponsored up to 10 members to a maximum of £200 each to attend the Brussels conference. Priority was to be given to learners. The Board also agreed to sponsor Board members to a total of £3000. The Company Secretary suggested that the Board considers repeating this offer.

Modern.gov agreed to sponsor the Symposium in 2014 and also attended it as an exhibitor. When details are known, we should approach them again.

Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

The Board noted the proposed timetable for the election of Chairman and Vice Chairman.

The Directors were appointed for a term of three years which ends in November 2015. Following the AGM, the Board will have to make new appointments. In light of the discussions on the revised composition of the Board and roles of Directors, the Company Secretary was requested to review the procedure set out in the Constitution for their election.

It was RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the feedback articles on the IIMC Annual Conference by John Quinton, Kim Pocock and Leanna McPherson be noted.
3. That ADSO sponsor up to 10 members to a maximum of £200 each to attend the Brussels 2016 conference - priority to be given to learners. That Board members be sponsored up to a total of £3000.
4. That IIMC and Udite be requested to rather consider a June date for the Symposium as many of our members will be involved with budget meetings in February 2016.
5. That the timetable for the election of Chairman and Vice Chairman be agreed.
6. That the Company Secretary review the procedure for the election of the Directors and report back to the next Board meeting.

6. Training and Qualifications

In the absence of the Director for Training, Sue Keogh presented the report.

ADSO Training Programme – 2014 and 2015

Due to the elections, there have not been any training courses run since the last Board meeting. Law and Practice courses are the next to be held during July 2015, with the first one to be run in Norwich on 6th July and the others on dates, following the Board meeting.

Blackpool and SEE hold quarterly Centre Meetings and at the last meeting in June 2015, a proposal was discussed to add into next year's training programme one day courses to cover all the assignments (except the Understanding your own Environment) in both the certificate and the Diploma (six in total). It was estimated that the cost to ADSO to do this would be a net cost of approximately £1,500.

ADSO Training Programme Administration

The administration for the ADSO Training Programme was re-awarded to London Borough of Richmond in December 2013 with Laura Latham as

the lead contact. She has now given notice that the administration support will cease in December 2015 and the Board will have to look to either re-tender for this work or appoint an individual with the relevant skills to undertake this work.

Qualifications Update

With regard to the Certificate in Democratic Practice, the learner numbers are as set out below:

Active: 66 (was 73 at last Board meeting)
Completed: 47 (was 46 at last Board meeting)
Withdrawn: 50 (not reported at last Board meeting)

With regard to the Diploma in Local Democracy, the current learner numbers are as follows:

Active: 44 (was 50 at last Board meeting)
Complete: 7 (was 6 at last Board meeting)
Withdrawn: 11 (not reported at last Board meeting)

Regarding the withdrawals we have for the last 12 to 18 months undertaken intervention with warning letters but we are finding that a lot are now withdrawing due to voluntary redundancies, re-organisations, lack of support at work and moving out of the sector and out of local government. This is a worrying pattern and one to bear in mind planning for the future of the qualification.

A national standardisation meeting was held in Birmingham on 11th June which had a good attendance and covered standardisation issues regarding assignments and observations.

ADSO Development Portal

The Board had previously agreed to purchase a new Development Portal from Ecordia. An initial session was held with Advisers and Centre representatives in January in Birmingham and following some tailoring to the system a full training exercise was held in Birmingham for Advisers led by a representative from Ecordia.

All recent and new learners have now been set up on the system and a training manual has been cascaded down to learners and Advisers. Some regional training will also be offered as appropriate.

External Quality Assurance Visit – 7th July 2015

The annual external quality assurance visit took place on Tuesday 7th July at the Blackpool part of the centre. Jeff Aston from Proqual is the

	<p>nominated external quality assurer and observed Advisers, the internal quality assurer and a learner and also spoke with several people. His main objective as a quality assurer was to seek assurance on standards and procedures across the centre. His last visit was the end of August 2014 so this visit was slightly earlier than expected but the centre was well prepared and got a glowing report at the end of the day.</p> <p>Jeff was very pleased with the purchase of the new portal and understood the pressures currently on local government and democratic staff. He made particular reference to the standard of observations he had witnessed and the evidence he had sampled and commented that this was one of the better run centres he visited. There were no action points for the centre to follow up.</p> <p>Many thanks to Mark Towers and Sharon Davis (Blackpool), Sue and Bev (SEE) and the Advisers, learners and (nearly qualified!) quality assurers who all played key roles leading up to the day or on the day.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Training and Qualifications Report be noted. 2. That the outcome of the external quality assurance visit be noted and all those involved be congratulated. 	
7.	<p>Regional Updates</p> <p>Regional updates were provided by the North East, North West, West Midlands, East Midlands, London, East of England. These can be found on the regional pages of the ADSO website.</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed Gary Jones to his first meeting and proposed that he be formally appointed as the representative of the Welsh Region.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked Georgina Atkinson who represented the West Midlands region and would be leaving her position at Warwickshire CC to join the NHS. She had done a great job in the West Midlands and he wished her all the very best in her new job.</p> <p>Jack Latkovic had also stood down as representative of the South West region and the Chairman thanked him for his contributions. Sarah Selway had agreed to cover the position on a temporary basis.</p> <p>The Director for Regional Development and Events confirmed that nominations would be sought in these two regions.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) That the Regional Updates be noted. 	

	<p>2) That Gary Jones be formally appointed as Region Representative for the Welsh region.</p> <p>3) That Laura Latham and Sue Keogh set up arrangements to invite nominations for representatives in the West Midlands and South West regions.</p>	LL/SK
8.	<p>Review of Board Composition, Directors' Roles and Associated Issues</p>	
	<p>The Chairman introduced his report and explained the proposed revised composition of the Board and roles for Directors. He emphasised that this was the beginning of the process and not the end. He stressed the need for a more corporate and strategic approach within the Board and for more effective delegation, business continuity and succession planning to ensure a sustainable future for ADSO. The proposals were presented for approval as the basis for further discussion at the forthcoming away day to which all the Board will be invited.</p> <p>He set out the process leading up to the formulation of the report and wished for an open and constructive debate. A number of issues needed to be discussed and resolved as part of the review before the roles could be finalised.</p> <p>Following the Chairman's presentation, a number of questions were asked by Board Members to gain a better understanding of the proposals and the reasons for them. Most related to the proposed role covering events and training. It was noted that joining the two current portfolios into a single strategic role was intended to see 'development' in its widest sense across many of ADSO's activities to ensure the continued development of DSOs within the profession and the Board itself.</p> <p>The Chairman reminded the Board of the Director for Training's views and concerns expressed in his e-mail to Board members. The Vice Chairman had also expressed certain reservations. Unfortunately neither could attend today but will again have the opportunity to put their views across at future discussions.</p> <p>The Chairman suggested that a facilitated away day be held in the summer to develop the thoughts further. He will draw up a specification for this and invite two further proposals.</p> <p>Those present felt that the discussion resolved any queries outstanding and the Board unanimously expressed support for moving forward to further discussions on the basis proposed subject to the role being re-titled 'Development and Conference.</p>	

	<p>The Director of Finance role includes day-to-day responsibility for payments and invoices etc. The current arrangement has proved very beneficial and effective. But it is not sustainable. It presents issues for the Director concerned and carries risks in terms of information security and business continuity. We also need to separate out the strategic and operational functions of the role. Whatever is agreed in the long term, it is important that the Board formalises the current arrangement more immediately. Therefore the Chairman recommended that the London Borough of Islington be paid £10,000 for the services provided by John Lynch for the period 1 January to 31 December 2015. During this time, consideration will be given to outsourcing the role.</p> <p>The Board considered all the options and proposals and following a lengthy debate</p> <p>It was RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the proposed changes to the Board’s composition and Directors’ roles be agreed as the basis for discussion at a facilitated away day subject to the title of the role for “Training and Conference” being changed to “Development and Conference”. 2. That the London Borough of Islington be paid £10,000 for the financial services for the period 1 January – 31 December 2015 be approved. That it be paid upon receipt of invoice. 3. That Caroline Wood from Lupton Wood and Partners be employed to carry out bookkeeping for ADSO from 1st January 2016 at an estimated cost of £16, 848 per year incl vat for a 3 year term with annual review. The duties would be those set out in the specification attached as Appendix A to the Director of Finances report. In addition to these duties they would also be asked to undertake the quarterly VAT returns for which they would charge separately as set out in Caroline Woods reply set out in Appendix B to the Director of Finances report. 4. That specifications and tender documentation be prepared for services in the following order of priority: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training administration • Website administration • Project co-ordinator/administrator for Annual Conference 5. That the Board keep under consideration other ‘operational’ duties which could be carried out externally for an agreed fee to allow Directors more time to focus on strategic issues and priorities. 	<p>JA</p> <p>JL</p> <p>JL</p> <p>JA</p> <p>All</p> <p>JA</p>
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	<p>6. That a facilitated away day be held in the summer to develop the proposals further and that the facilitator be appointed by the Urgency Committee.</p>	
9.	<p>Working with Others</p> <p>Covered in previous reports</p>	
13.	<p>Consultations</p> <p>Nothing to report</p>	
14.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>None.</p>	
15.	<p>Next Meetings and Dates for 2015</p> <p>The next meeting has been scheduled for Friday 18th September 2015, commencing 11.00 a.m. at Islington Council.</p> <p>Future date for 2015 is: 11th December 2015.</p>	