



Association of
Democratic Services
Officers

Minutes of ADSO Board Meeting

20th March 2015

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 der Hoven	Company Secretary	A
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	A
Jack Latkovic	South West	P
Clive Parker	South East	P
Colin Sweeney	East of England	P

1.	Welcome and Introductions	Action
	<p>John Austin, ADSO Board Chairman, welcomed members to the meeting.</p> <p>The apologies were noted.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes of Last Meeting</p> <p>The minutes of the Board meeting held on 12th December 2014 were agreed as a correct record of proceedings.</p>	
3.	<p>Website and Communications Update</p> <p>Laura Latham, Director for Communications, presented the update report. She referred to the website security breach which had taken place in October 2014. The website provider had resolved the majority of issues and approximately 95% of the site was now functioning. ADSO would not be pursuing an insurance claim for the repair work.</p> <p>Due to the resource required to reinstate the web site, the Communications Action Plan had been put into abeyance. Laura welcomed suggestions from the Board for the implementation of actions and future activity, particularly in respect of creating and sharing news relevant to Democratic Services. The Chairman emphasised that ADSO needed to enhance its role in identifying and generating newsworthy items independently.</p> <p>The Board discussed the role of the lead spokespeople who had been appointed to stimulate discussion across ADSO within a specific area of practise. It was acknowledged that the reliance on volunteers to deliver this work may not achieve the prompt response that ADSO needed in order to issue press releases and publish articles ahead of others. Despite this, it was recognised that the spokespeople did have a valid role in identifying news stories and preparing articles with a unique focus on the practicalities, i.e. what does this mean for Democratic Services?</p> <p>The General Election was identified as an opportunity for Democratic Services to be ahead of the game in terms of the impact of any legislative changes on local government and Democratic Services. It was suggested that the lead spokespeople could analyse the pre-election manifestos of the main political parties to identify the potential impact on their areas of practise; for example, what were the parties' intentions with regard to Police and Crime Commissioners? The findings could be shared via email, or a conference call, to pull together a combined view of ADSO. It was also suggested that the pre-election televised debates could also be analysed for practical implications. The Chairman agreed to circulate the manifestos to the spokespeople.</p>	<p>All</p> <p>Lead Spokes</p> <p>JA</p>

	<p>The Board considered how it could develop stronger links to DCLG and ministers. To do so confidently, ADSO would need to identify its unique selling point, such as expertise and an understanding of the practical implications of bills.</p> <p>To accelerate ADSO's response to consultations, the Vice-Chairman suggested that an initial response be drafted and shared on the Consultation Forum for members to comment on for a set period of time, followed by a detailed response based on comments received. He stressed the importance of all members identifying and notifying the Board of consultations to ensure that opportunities were not missed.</p> <p>With regard to the ADSO Blog, Laura reminded the Board that the initial suggestion had been for a non-political, interactive blog which encouraged comments and discussion on key topics; however, it was not clear whether members wanted this feature, given the low response to the conference blog. It was suggested that a guest blogger, rather than an existing practitioner, would offer a different angle and may stimulate more debate. Following discussion, it was agreed that the development of a blog remain as an issue on the Action Plan, but was not urgent.</p> <p>With regard to communications material, Laura advised that ADSO currently used paper-based Benefits Brochure; however, this quickly became out of date and it was proposed that an e-brochure be designed which could be easily maintained and updated when required. Paper copies could be printed when required. Laura had obtained three quotes from different providers and proposed Company B as the preferable option.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) That the website statistics and update on the actions taken since the web site security breach in October 2014 be noted; 2) That the Communications Action Plan be noted; 3) That the lead spokespeople be asked to consider the pre-election manifestos for their areas of practice and identify potential implications; and 4) That Company B be approved as the preferred option for the design of an e-brochure. 	<p>All</p> <p>JQ</p> <p>All</p> <p>LL</p> <p>Lead Spokes</p> <p>LL</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Conference</p> <p>Sue Keogh, Director for Regional Development and Events, advised that the Conference had been scheduled for 26th and 27th November 2015 at Birmingham City Football Club, using the same two-day format as last year. Improvements for this year would include use of the syndicate rooms for facilitated discussions and clarity on the target audience for workshops. Sue invited the Board to suggest a theme for the event and ideas for workshops and discussions.</p>	<p>All</p>

The Birmingham FC charge for the event would be the same as last year; in light of this, the Board agreed to charge delegates at 2014 rates as follows: £199 early bird rate, £249 full rate (unless unforeseen circumstances required this to be reviewed).

It was considered that the post-election period offered a suitable theme for the event. It was agreed that the headline theme would be "Progress, Politics, Powers and Performance".

Suggestions for speakers and workshops / discussion topics included:

- Devolution
- Joint authorities/governance
- Austerity and the transformation of services
- Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2015
- Pension Boards
- Richard Vize
- ICSA and Company Secretary roles
- Representation from INLOGOV, a Community Association, Taxpayers Alliance and press/media.
- MP representation – possibly Clive Betts, given his attendance at a previous conference, or the Chair of the CLG Select Committee.

Sue agreed to explore these areas and welcomed further suggestions from the Board.

Sponsors

Matt Kane presented the options for conference sponsorship. In 2014, Modern.gov had been appointed as the main sponsor for a two-year period and had already paid for their place at the 2015 Conference.

A discussion took place with regard to sponsorship prices for 2015. It was considered reasonable to request a slight increase, which would include the opportunity to run a facilitated discussion on a topic of the sponsor's choice. This would give the sponsors greater contact and discussion with delegates. Although the Board would want to have sight of the selected topic, to ensure that it was in keeping with the conference theme, it would be the responsibility of the sponsor to promote the topic to delegates to encourage participation.

With regard to offering all sponsors a two-year package, it was considered that ADSO would need to have a clear two-year conference plan in place at the outset.

Matt advised that the drinks reception for the 2014 Conference had not attracted sponsorship. Given the success of that feature, and the relatively low cost, the Board agreed that ADSO would fund this for the

SK / All

	<p>2015 Conference in the absence of expressions of interest from sponsors.</p> <p>The Board considered the proposal to offer sponsorship to hotels and taxis within the vicinity of the Conference venue, in exchange for delegate discount. After discussion, it was agreed that this would not be pursued.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) That date and venue for the 2015 Conference be noted; 2) That the delegate fee will be £199 early bird rate and £249 full rate; 3) That the theme for the Conference will be “Progress, Politics, Powers and Performance”; 4) That the sponsorship fee for the Conference will be £650 plus VAT, which will include the standard benefits, plus the opportunity to run a facilitated discussion and two places at the awards dinner; 5) That the fee for the attendance of additional sponsor staff be calculated (both with and without the dinner) be calculated; 6) That the drinks reception be funded by ADSO in the absence of expressions of interest from sponsors; 7) That sponsorship from local hotels and taxi companies would not be pursued. 	<p>SK</p> <p>SK</p> <p>MK</p> <p>SK</p> <p>SK</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>ADSO Awards</p> <p>Sue Keogh, Director for Regional Development and Events, advised that at its last meeting the Board had agreed to continue the ADSO Awards for 2015.</p> <p>A survey had been circulated to members to request feedback on the 2014 Awards – 63 responses had been received (ten of those had submitted an application). Those that had submitted an application commented that the awards process had been appropriate, i.e. not too onerous, but suitably robust. The use of Skype to conduct the interviews had been well received. There had been a suggestion that a standard template for all submissions would be helpful.</p> <p>General comments from members who had not applied, and the reasons for not doing so, included: lack of good work to showcase, no support from the authority; the application was too time consuming; and/or unawareness that the awards were taking place. The Board acknowledged that the awards would benefit from greater publicity and accessibility this year.</p> <p>Of the respondents, 44 felt that the awards should continue, four felt that it shouldn't and the remainder did not answer.</p> <p>The Board considered the Learner of the Year category which had been cancelled in 2014 due to a low number of applications. It was proposed</p>	

	<p>that Regional Advisers complete a short survey upon each qualification completion regarding the learner's performance, which would then be evaluated to identify learners for commendation at the awards dinner. The Board agreed that that the 2014 award categories continue for 2015 and that an additional category for Public Engagement be explored.</p> <p>Sue requested that each Regional Representative promote the ADSO Awards at branch meetings and regional events in order to raise awareness and encourage participation. Previous award winners could also be invited to present their winning work at their regional branch meeting.</p> <p>A discussion took place with regard to a fee for shortlisted candidates to attend the event. The Chairman emphasised the importance of having the applicants present at the awards dinner. The Board acknowledged that many delegates would have paid for the conference attendance in advance of entering an award application. Sue Keogh agreed to explore a 'dinner-only' rate for candidates who were unable to attend the conference.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) That the 2014 ADSO Awards categories continue for this year's event and that an additional category for Public Engagement be explored; 2) That a 'dinner-only' rate be explored for those candidates who are unable to attend the conference; 3) That the governance of award payments be discussed a later stage; and 4) That the judges for this year's ADSO Awards be agreed at a later date. 	<p>JA</p> <p>Reps</p> <p>SK/JA</p> <p>SK</p> <p>SK</p> <p>SK</p>
<p>6.</p> <p>6.1</p>	<p>Director's Reports</p> <p>Chairman's Report</p> <p>The Chairman presented his report to the Board.</p> <p><u>DCLG Consultation</u></p> <p>He and the Vice-Chairman had met with DCLG officials on 26th February to discuss ADSO's response to the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2015, following the internal consultation on the Members' Forum. ADSO had offered a constructive and practical response which had highlighted a number of issues which DCLG had not considered. The Chairman thanked the Vice-Chairman for his work in drafting and finalising the response.</p>	

	<p><u>IIMC Conference</u></p> <p>The IIMC Conference would be held 17th to 20th May in Hartford, Connecticut. A member of the Board would be able to attend and expressions of interest were invited.</p> <p><u>Northern Ireland</u></p> <p>The Board was advised that Astech had invited the Chairman to attend an event that they had organised in Northern Ireland on 26th February. Unfortunately, attendance had not been possible on this occasion and Astech had promised to keep ADSO informed of any future events.</p> <p>The Chairman had since been contacted by an officer at Craigavon Borough Council in Northern Ireland who had enquired whether ADSO would be interested in developing a branch in that region. The Chairman had responded positively to this request and was now awaiting further communication from the officer.</p> <p>Laura Latham and the Chairman had arranged placements for Parliamentary Select Committee staff during the pre-election period. Four expressions of interest had been received which would be linked with participating local authorities.</p> <p>The Chairman advised that a representative of Bridgend County Borough Council in Wales was interested in developing a branch for that region. He had agreed to attend the July meeting of the Board. The Chairman agreed to provide the Vice-Chairman with the representative's contact details regarding a recent consultation regarding local government in Wales and also to Jack Latkovic (South West Regional Representative) so that he could be invited to attend the next branch meeting.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED that the Chairman's Report be noted.</p>	<p>All</p> <p>JA</p> <p>JA/LL</p> <p>JA</p>
<p>6.2</p>	<p>Finance Report</p> <p>In the absence of the Director of Finance, the Chairman presented the Finance Report and the draft accounts for 2014. Overall, ADSO had had a positive year with an increase in operating profits to £84,000. Membership had decreased slightly to 968, yet income from job adverts and training courses had increased.</p> <p>The Chair referred to the work John Lynch had done on book keeping support. This would be considered separately by the Directors, along with Directors' roles and remunerated positions.</p> <p>The Board considered the reinvestment of two fixed rate bonds with Raphaels Bank. The £60,000 bond was due to mature on 27th March 2015 with an accumulated interest of £3,037.50. The Director of Finance</p>	

	<p>recommended that this bond be increased to £85,000 and re-invested with Raphaels Bank on a further two-year basis at 2.05%.</p> <p>A second £50,000 bond would mature on 20th August 2015 with interest of £1,126.85. The Director of Finance recommended that the reinvestment of that bond be considered at the Board meeting in July 2015.</p> <p>The Board expressed its thanks to the Director of Finance for the draft accounts and the healthy financial position of the Association.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The Finance Report be noted and the draft accounts for 2014 agreed; 2) The first fixed rate bond be reinvested with Raphaels Bank to the value of £85,000 on a two year basis at a rate of 2.05%; 3) The reinvestment of the second bond be considered at the Board meeting in July 2015; and 4) The Chairman be asked to check the rules regarding the Financial Services Compensation Scheme. <p>6.3 Company Secretary Report</p> <p>In the absence of the Company Secretary, the Chairman presented the report.</p> <p><u>IIMC Bulk Membership</u></p> <p>The Board had previously supported a bulk membership scheme to the IIMC, provided that it was affordable. Agreement was sought on the maximum fee that ADSO would pay to register all of its members. The Chairman considered that it was beneficial for ADSO to be affiliated with the IIMC, particularly to increase its influence within Regional XI and in the development of the 2016 Symposium. Although the bulk membership would not require an increase to the individual ADSO membership fee, it was considered that further work was required to promote the benefits of IIMC membership to ADSO members.</p> <p>ADSO's membership database would be shared with the IIMC for registration and all members would be notified one month in advance and able to opt-out.</p> <p>With regard to ADSO membership fees, the Board acknowledged that a decision to increase would need to be made at an appropriate stage following careful consideration.</p>	<p>JA/JL</p> <p>JL</p> <p>JA</p> <p>TvdH</p>
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	<p><u>IIMC Region XI Director</u></p> <p>It was announced that following Sam Shippen's resignation, Bruce Poole (SLCC) was elected to replace her for the remainder of the term.</p> <p><u>IIMC International Development Consultant</u></p> <p>The Chairman advised that Tom van der Hoven had been appointed as International Development Consultant to the IIMC. Tom would be attending the IIMC Annual Conference in May.</p> <p><u>IIMC Region XI Management Board</u></p> <p>Following a teleconference on 12th February 2015, the Board was asked to confirm representation on the Management Board, a representative to serve on the 2016 Symposium Steering Committee and acceptance for the communications and facilitated discussions logistics for the event.</p> <p><u>Company Secretary Role</u></p> <p>The Board acknowledged that Tom's appointment as Company Secretary would cease in November 2015 and that support would be required in the interim period, from 1st June to November 2015, until a successor had been appointed. The Chairman agreed to consider an appropriate level of remuneration (using the AEA as guide) and circulate a proposed role profile and remuneration to the Board for comment. Once finalised, this would be advertised on the website.</p> <p>The Board discussed remuneration for other roles within ADSO, such as finance support and training administration. It was proposed that a detailed review of key roles be undertaken by a Working Group (made up of the Board's Directors) to explore remuneration for posts and develop the ADSO's Business Plan accordingly.</p> <p><u>Wider Wallet</u></p> <p>As use of the scheme had been low, the Board considered whether it should be extended for a further 12 months.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) That Tom van der Hoven be authorised to negotiate the bulk membership to the IIMC at a maximum cost of £2,000 for one year; 2) That ADSO members be given one month notice of the IIMC membership and able to opt-out; 3) That ADSO be represented by the Chairman on the Regional XI Management Board and 2016 Symposium Steering Committee; 4) That ADSO be represented by the Director for Regional 	<p>JA</p> <p>TvdH</p> <p>TvdH</p> <p>JA</p> <p>SK</p>
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	<p>Development and Events on the 2016 Symposium Steering Committee;</p> <p>5) That ADSO accepts responsibility for communications and facilitated discussion logistics for the event;</p> <p>6) That Jack Latkovic leads on communications on behalf of ADSO;</p> <p>7) That the Chairman draft a role profile and remuneration for the temporary Assistant to the Company Secretary role and circulate to the Board for approval; and</p> <p>8) The membership to the Wider Wallet scheme be discontinued.</p>	<p>JLat</p> <p>JA</p> <p>TvdH</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Training and Qualifications</p> <p>In the absence of the Director for Training, Sue Keogh presented the report. The Steps to Management course, which was being held in September 2015, would be delivered jointly by Sue and South East Employers. The course was being run as a pilot and would include areas such as management theories, creative thinking, and building resilience.</p> <p>The development of the qualifications portal was ongoing; a system had been purchased from Ecordia which would be rolled out to new and recently registered learners. An initial session was held with Regional Advisers in January 2015, which had identified that further tailoring to the system was required. It was anticipated that the new system would be launched on 1st June 2015.</p> <p>There was a request from Jack Latkovic that more training courses be held in the South West region. As courses required a minimum 15 delegates to be worthwhile, a number in that region may have been cancelled because of low take-up. Regional representatives were invited to canvass interest in their region to identify training needs. Access to ADSO's Survey Monkey account, to assist regional representatives to conduct surveys, would be considered.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED that the Training and Qualifications Report be noted.</p>	<p>SK</p> <p>Reps</p> <p>LL</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Updates on the Business Plan</p> <p>The Vice-Chairman referred to the latest version of the Business Plan and requested updates on actions.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED:</p> <p>1) That the Vice-Chairman circulate the updated Business Plan; and</p> <p>2) That the Communications Action Plan be appended to the Business Plan.</p>	<p>JQ</p> <p>JQ</p>

<p>9.</p>	<p>Working with Software Providers</p> <p>At its last meeting, the Board had agreed that a virtual user group be established to act as a sounding board between ADSO members and software providers who support the democratic function. Matt Kane referred to the draft Terms of Reference for the user group and proposed that expressions of interest be sought from members. Consideration would also need to be made in terms of which providers should be invited.</p> <p>The Board acknowledged that tensions between competing providers would need to be managed. The user group would need to remain focused on the vision and needs of the sector and communicate this to the providers.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) That a joint authority and authorities that had shared Democratic Services be added to the membership of the virtual user group; 2) That the Terms of Reference for the virtual user group be agreed, subject to the addition at 1); 3) That a list of software providers be drawn up; 4) That a request for members of the user group be made via the website and Democracy Direct bulletin; and 5) That access to the Members' Forum be for members only and not extended to software providers. 	<p>MK</p> <p>MK</p> <p>MK</p> <p>MK</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p>Regional Updates</p> <p>Regional updates were provided by the North East, North West, West Midlands, East Midlands, London, East of England, South West and South East. These can be found on the regional pages of the ADSO website.</p> <p>Sue Keogh advised that Paul Windie from North East Lincolnshire had expressed an interest in being the representative for the Yorkshire and Humber region. Paul would be attending the next Board meeting in July.</p> <p>Following Clive Parker's resignation, four expressions of interest had been received in respect of the South East region; in light of this, an election would be required. The Chairman and the Board expressed its thanks to Clive for his contribution to ADSO and the region and wished him well in his new role.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) That the Regional Updates be noted; and 2) That Laura Latham and Sue Keogh set up the arrangements for the election of the South East Regional Representative. 	<p>LL/SK</p>

11.	<p>Support to Company Secretary</p> <p>This had been discussed at Item 6.3, 'Company Secretary Report'.</p>	
12.	<p>Working with Others</p> <p>The Board considered the opportunity to join Modern.gov at the LGA Conference in July 2015. It was agreed that the Chair explore this further with Modern.gov.</p> <p>The Vice Chair had spoken to Mark Upton, a policy development consultant, who might in the future be able to help ADSO in this area or indeed assisting with the Conference.</p>	<p>JA</p> <p>JQ</p>
13.	<p>Consultations</p> <p>John Quinton provided the Board with an update on recently completed and live consultations. As discussed earlier, ADSO had submitted a response to the DCLG in response to the proposed Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2015, following the internal consultation on the Members' Forum.</p> <p>With regard to future consultations, John Quinton stressed the importance of all members identifying and notifying the Board of consultations to ensure that opportunities were not missed.</p> <p>It was RESOLVED that the Consultations Update be noted.</p>	<p>All</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 10th July 2015, commencing 11.00 a.m. at Islington Council.</p> <p>Future dates for 2015 are: 18th September and 11th December.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 2.05 p.m.</p>	