



Association of  
Democratic Services  
Officers

## ADSO Conference 2023 - Speakers and biographies



### **Natalie Ainscough**

Prior to co-founding Hoey Ainscough Associates Ltd, Natalie had worked on public policy development for various Government agencies, including nearly 6 years at Standards for England in a key policy role developing and implementing an evolving local standards framework where she led a multi-disciplinary team in the development of statutory guidance.

She also developed and implemented entity risk management systems designed to identify, assess and prioritise risks to local authority governance from standards issues and had responsibility for management of content for Standards for England's national stakeholder conference.

### **Jon Alexander**

Jon is author of *CITIZENS: Why the Key to Fixing Everything is All of Us*, and co-founder of the New Citizenship Project, a book and company that work to shift the dominant story of the individual in society from Consumer to Citizen. Among other plaudits, *CITIZENS* was recently listed by McKinsey as one of its Top 5 Recommended Books in its Summer Reading Guide 2022, described as "an underground hit" in the Financial Times, and selected by the World Economic Forum for its CEO Book Club. Jon began his career with a decade in the advertising industry, winning the prestigious Big Creative Idea of the Year, before making a dramatic change. Driven by a deep need to understand the impact on society of 3,000 commercial messages a day, he gathered three Masters degrees, exploring Consumerism and its alternatives from every angle. In 2014, he co-founded the New Citizenship Project to bring the resulting ideas into contact with reality. In *CITIZENS*, he is ready to share them with the world.



Links: [LinkedIn profile](#) [CITIZENS website](#)

[Citizen Future: Why We Need A New Story Of Self And Society](#) via BBC Future

X: @jonjalex



### **John Austin**

Apart from four years after leaving school, John's career in local government was within democratic services, culminating in his role as Assistant Director, Corporate Governance and Monitoring Officer at the London Borough of Enfield. John is Chair of ADSO which he helped establish in 2009 and also carries out independent investigations into complaints against councillors. He is an Everton FC supporter and volunteers one day a week for its charity, Everton in the Community, which works across all age ranges and sectors of society to turn lives around.

### **Michelle Beaumont**

Michelle has worked in Democratic and Member Service roles since 2013, at both the London boroughs of Richmond and Wandsworth and Spelthorne Borough Council. In 2016 Michelle moved away from the Civic Office to work in Democratic Services and was joint Company Secretary for ADSO from 2020-21.

Michelle returned to the Civic Office in 2021 to manage Richmond and Wandsworth's Mayoralty teams for just over a year before moving back into Democratic Services and becoming ADSO's Qualifications Manager.

Michelle was recently appointed Training Office for NACO and will be working with the Chair and the Executive to look at a potential learning program for NACO members. Michelle is a keen runner and has run eighteen marathons to date several of which have been in aid of the Mayor's charities.





### **Karen Bradford**

Karen is the Chief Executive of South Kesteven District Council in Lincolnshire. She has lead responsibility for the strategic direction of the Council ensuring excellent quality services are provided for all local residents. Karen works in partnership with key stakeholders such as Lincolnshire County Council, Lincolnshire Enterprise Partnership, Health Sector, Fire and Police Services to deliver key community schemes and projects. Karen has over 35 years' experience of working in Local Government including holding a number of senior positions across the country. Key positions held by Karen are:

- Company Director of LeisureSK Ltd from January 2020 to June 2023
- Director of a local investment Children's Charity since October 2020
- As of October 2022, Karen is now the National Deputy Spokesperson for Housing and Planning for

SOLACE, a networking organisation for Chief Executive's and senior officers in the public sector.

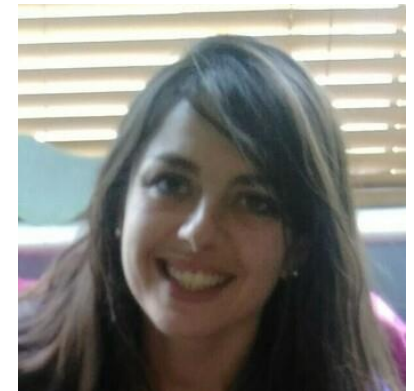
- In July 2022, Karen joined ALACE as a Council Member. ALACE is the recognised negotiating body for Chief Executives' terms and conditions of employment.
- Chief Executive of the Year finalist 2021-2022.

Karen's previous positions have included being a Trustee, Vice Chairman of a Multi Academy Grammar School Trust, Robert Carre Trust for 6 years. Karen was the National Secretary for the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) from September 2019 until September 2021. Karen was also a Company Director at InvestSK Ltd, Economic Development Company for South Kesteven in Lincolnshire.

### **Katie de Bertrand**

Katie has worked for Oxfordshire Mind and Mind in Berkshire for over 10 years, and now brings the extensive knowledge and experience gained in front line work to her role as the Workplace Wellbeing Training Manager. She is responsible for the creation and delivery of our workplace wellbeing suite.

Katie is qualified in delivering adult learning, is a Mental Health First Aid instructor, and maintains her own private practice as an integrative therapist. Her therapeutically informed background influences her work with organisations to ensure workplace wellbeing strategy follows best practice. Her most recent course creation includes directorate aimed courses designed to get senior leaders on board and informed with how to implement an organisation-wide wellbeing strategy.





### **Tracy Frisby**

Tracy has worked in local government since leaving school, all of it with Cleethorpes Borough Council which, under LGR 1996, became the unitary authority of North East Lincolnshire. With some background in finance and human resources, most of the time has been spent in the Registration Service. Tracy has worked in the Civic Office for eight years and thrives on the variety of the role. She was delighted to have been elected Chair of NACO; an association which guided her through her early days of civic life. NACO is an association that prides itself on offering what our members need, rather than telling them what it thinks they need and to encourages members to engage whether that be by using the Message Board (like the ADSO Forum), accessing the variety of resources available or by getting in touch the Executive. NACO has over 1,400 members from all types of local authority and with their knowledge, experience and good practice, continues to develop further and build on its solid foundations. Tracy has also been a school

governor since 2011, most of that time spent as Chair with responsibility for finance and safeguarding.

### **Caroline Green**

Caroline has been Chief Executive of Oxford City Council since March 2021 and is responsible for the overall running of the council, driving new ways of working and the pursuit of the council's objectives for Oxford to secure an inclusive economy, more affordable housing, thriving communities and a zero-carbon future. Prior to becoming Chief Executive, she was Assistant Chief Executive at the Council and has led the council's work across a range of its strategic partnerships spanning growth and investment in housing and infrastructure, community safety, safeguarding, and charting the council's way forward from COVID-19. She also serves as a Director on OxWED LLP, and previously on Barton Park LLP, both Joint Venture Partnerships. Prior to coming to Oxford, Caroline worked in Westminster leading on housing, transport, planning and environmental work for the Local Government Association.



Caroline has a background and strong interest in sustainable development and regeneration and its role in making a positive impact on people's lives and the places and environment we live them in.



### **Ed Hammond**

Ed is Deputy Chief Executive at the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. He has worked at CfGS for 15 years in various roles. Ed supports councils on matters relating to corporate governance and scrutiny, both directly and through the LGA, with which the CfGS holds a support contract. Ed also leads CfGS's work on English devolution, having carried out detailed research on the dealmaking process between 2015 and 2017, and having produced guidance on CA scrutiny. Ed leads on the convening of the Combined Authorities' Governance Network, an officer body that facilitates cross-CA discussion and dialogue.

X: Ed Hammond (@cfigs\_ed)

### **Paul Hoey**

Paul is Co-director at Hoey Ainscough Associates Ltd which runs national and regional training events on local standards issues, provides tailored advice and support to individual councils, carries out investigation work and provides intervention support for parish councils. He has been the acknowledged national expert on the local government standards framework for the last decade.

Hoey Ainscough Associates have worked with over 400 authorities since the company was founded in 2012. They were advisers to the 2019 Committee on Standards in Public Life enquiry into the local standards framework and were commissioned by the Local Government Association to draw up a new model Code of Conduct and associated guidance in 2021.

Before setting up Hoey Ainscough Associates Ltd, Paul was the director in charge of strategy and stakeholder relations at Standards for England.





### **Mike Jackson**

Mike Jackson has been chief executive at Richmond and Wandsworth Councils since October 2022. He has been a local authority CEO since 2013, at Bristol City Council from 2018, and at North Somerset Council before that. Mike has held a variety of other leadership roles across the public sector, working in the Department of Transport, Cabinet Office and Government Office for the East Midlands, as well as Nottingham City Council and Norfolk County Council.

An economist by training, Mike began his local government career in economic development at Birmingham City Council before joining the Government Economic Service and subsequently moving into policy roles in the civil service.

### **Sarah Papper**

Sarah is a Learning and Development Officer at South West Councils with over 20 years' experience in education and training, apprenticeships, assessment and quality and compliance.





### **Priya Patel**

Priya has worked in Democratic and Member services functions for over 17 years and within local government for over 20 years. Her experience spans across six councils, starting out as a Democratic Services Officer and working through the length and breadth of democratic services and member support. Priya recently worked at Richmond and Wandsworth Councils and worked to support the implementation of a new governance model at Richmond.

Priya is currently Head of Democratic & Electoral Services at Wokingham Borough Council which involves supporting a council which is finely balanced and has no overall control. She also had a stint as ADSO's Company Secretary over a period of two years.

### **Imogen Payter**

Imogen has over a decade of experience in advising politicians internationally. Having worked in both the British and Australian Parliament, and as a Councillor herself, she is keenly engaged in political issues and earned a formidable reputation as a trusted advisor in both national and local government circles. In 2022 she was nominated for the Parliamentary Staffer of the Year award. In 2022, Imogen founded the UK Friends of Ukraine. Representing St Faith's Ward on Havant Borough Council, Imogen founded a local business association and coordinated the borough's support network during Covid. In 2021 she was nominated for the national Young Councillor of the Year award and she cofounded the Young Councillors' Association.

Imogen holds a number of board positions with the Centre for Commonwealth Affairs, The Friends of the British Overseas Territories, Bankers for Net Zero, Havant Business Association, Next State Policy Partners, and others. She was a Governor of Fairfield Infant School for several years.





### **Anna Perrett**

Anna is a Principal Democratic Services Officer at Wirral Council, and responsible for the five Policy and Services Committees, as well as member learning and development.

She joined Wirral Borough Council in 2011, starting work in Revenue and Benefits before moving to the Scrutiny Team in 2018. Anna joined Democratic Services in 2020, just before the change of Governance and helped with the transition to a Committee System.

### **Dr Martin Reeves**

Martin has been Chief Executive of Oxfordshire County Council since March 2023. He was previously Chief Executive of Coventry City Council for over 14 years and was also the Chief Executive of the West Midlands Combined Authority from March 2016 to September 2017. He had previously been with Bedfordshire County Council for three and a half years as Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Executive.

Martin has held strategic leadership roles in a District and an outer London Borough and was Programme Director for Work Smart, Westminster City Council's flagship transformation programme.

Martin spent much of his early career as a lecturer and researcher and has a PhD in applied economics. He has an Honorary Doctorate from Coventry University in recognition of his service and commitment to the City of Coventry and is the first Honorary President of LARIA (Local Area Research and Intelligence Association).

He is a former President of SOLACE (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives & Senior Managers) and is the current Local Government Association (LGA) National Procurement Champion.







### **Hans Rijs**

Hans has been a municipal clerk in the city of Bodegraven-Reeuwijk since 2011 and has worked in the clerk's profession since 2003. An active member for VvG, the Dutch Clerks' association, for many years and a board member responsible for conferences, ICT, sponsoring and communication since 2017.

The first (and currently only) Dutch ADSO member and a member of the IIMC Foundation Development Committee which raises money to help members financially with education, it is Han's goal to let clerks from the UK and the Netherlands benefit from the foundation. Over the last 2 years Hans has taken the initiative to strengthen ties with ADSO and with other organisations within Region XI. Hans has attended several ADSO conferences and has brought along Dutch sponsors and is passionate about encouraging networking and sharing of ideas, experiences, and learnings.

### **Dan Sharples**

Dan is the manager of Democratic Services at Wirral Council. Having started as an apprentice in Democratic Services at 17 in 2013, he has only ever worked in Democratic Services, starting at Stockport before moving to Cheshire West and Chester and finally Wirral in 2021.





### **Paul Staines**

Paul has worked in local government in Oxfordshire for over 30 years, mainly in the spheres of affordable housing but also spatial and infrastructure planning. For the past 10 years he has worked within the partnerships frameworks of Oxfordshire and has led a number of key partnership projects, including most recently as Head of Programme for the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.

Since last year Paul has also worked for Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority leading their Corporate Improvement Plan as they seek to move out from their Best Value notice and secure enhanced devolved powers. He has also led their bid for enhanced devolved affordable housing funding, a bid with DLUHC for consideration.

Married with 4 daughters and a dog, Paul lives in South Oxfordshire.

### **Peter Stanyon**

Peter is Chief Executive of the Association of Electoral Administrators. Alongside his daily responsibilities, he works as an examiner for the Association and is an accredited trainer.

He previously worked for two London Boroughs (including alongside John Austin for too many years to mention!) and two district councils. He was also seconded to the Electoral Commission on two separate occasions to advise on guidance and law.

In addition to managing the electoral process, he has been responsible for the delivery of Democratic Services, Overview and Scrutiny, Mayoralty, Political Group Offices and Births, Deaths and Marriages. He was formerly a member of ADSO. He is a strong advocate of those who deliver democratic services, whether in electing individuals to public office or ensuring good governance of the decision-making process.

X: @AEA\_Elections





### **Karen Widdowson**

Karen is an experienced Democratic Services practitioner having worked in the profession for 20+ years across all key areas of Democratic Services including meetings and civic support, member development, scrutiny, citizenship, and elections.

Karen has worked for several types of local authority; starting her career at Lancaster City Council, then re-located to Hampshire County Council where she worked for many years, then an opportunity arose to work for the London Borough of Ealing. Since July 2017 Karen has been working at Charnwood Borough Council in Leicestershire.

Working for such different organisations has built up extensive knowledge and experience about local government decision making and different political arrangements. Karen is currently a Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer where she is responsible for the management of Committee Administration, Councillor training and development, and the Civic Office.

Karen is also an ADSO qualifications assessor and trainer, and an Independent Person for Sheffield and Barnsley Councils.