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CIPFA

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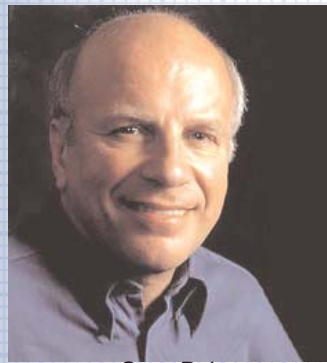
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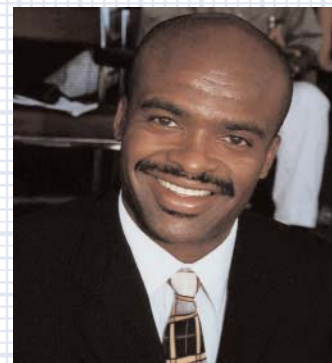
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CIPFA NI CONFERENCE



Greg Dyke



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CIPFA Northern Ireland has launched its programme of speakers for the 2006 Conference, which is being held in the Slieve Donard Hotel, Newcastle on Thursday 28 September & Friday 29 September. Conference 2006 focuses on the lessons that can be learned from public bodies that have been successfully developed and now flourish in a rapidly changing and even more challenging environment - by daring to be different!

Feedback from delegates indicated that last year's conference programme was widely regarded as the best to date - the bar was raised to a new level in terms of relevance and quality of speakers. In 2006, we have risen to this challenge by compiling a conference programme of at least equal standing to 2005.

As always, the CIPFA conference programme provides a platform to learn best practices from inspirational speakers who are prominent in their field and who come with national and international reputations.

Keynote speakers for this year's conference include Greg Dyke who has an international reputation for success in the broadcasting business and is a world class conference speaker and Kriss Akabusi, one of Britain's most recognised and respected motivational speakers and media personalities, who is famous for his achievements in Athletics.

The conference programme is shown on pages 12 and 13 and a booking form is enclosed.

CIPFA NI IN ACTION

CIPFA Northern Ireland Partnership with National School

A new strategic partnership between CIPFA and the National School of Government was recently announced at the CIPFA National Conference in Harrogate on 14 June 2006. One of the aims of the partnership is to develop a range of new accredited and qualification-based training programmes and services in the areas of finance and governance, with a particular emphasis on the provision of core financial skills training and professional development to staff in centres of government throughout the United Kingdom.

Further details on this Partnership, which will enable CIPFA Northern Ireland to run a range of National School programmes in Northern Ireland, will follow in the September Issue of 'The Account'.

New in 2006 - AAT Payroll Qualification

CIPFA Northern Ireland has just announced the latest addition to its portfolio of qualifications - the Association of Accounting Technician's (AAT) NVQ in Payroll Administration. The AAT Payroll qualification is the first formally recognised payroll qualification at NVQ level to be run in Northern Ireland.

The Payroll qualification is offered at two levels - NVQ 2 and NVQ 3 - and is aimed at administrators and managers who wish to develop the knowledge and skills required for payroll preparation and administration. The qualification will enable participants to work in any area of payroll as topics covered will include employee records and determining net pay through to completing year end procedures.

The first tranche of students is currently being recruited for a September intake. For further information about the AAT Payroll Qualification, please contact Julie Canning on 028 9026 1655 or via e-mail at julie.canning@cipfa.org

New in 2006 - Advanced Diploma in Public Audit

CIPFA Northern Ireland is delighted to announce the launch of the Advanced Diploma in Public Audit. This new audit qualification, which was approved by the Institute's Qualifications Development Panel in 2005, provides a pathway of study for those practising auditors (who have previously completed CIPFA's Diploma in Public Audit or the Institute of Internal Auditors' PIIA) to develop the skills required at audit management level.

The Advanced Diploma will consist of four modules: Strategy, Governance, Regulation and Ethics, Advanced Audit Techniques and IT & Audit.

The Advanced Diploma will commence in late September 2006 with the Strategy and Advanced Audit Techniques modules leading to a March examination diet. Tuition for the other two modules will begin in June 2007 with examinations in December 2007. A conversion course for students with the PIIA qualification who wish to study for the Advanced Diploma in Public Audit will be held in early September.

For further information about the Advanced Diploma in Public Audit or the PIIA Conversion Course, please contact Suzanne Jones on 028 9026 6770 or via e-mail at suzanne.jones@cipfa.org

New in 2006 - Advanced Diploma in Business and Finance

Not so much a new qualification but the return of an old favourite, the Advanced Diploma in Business and Financial Management remains the best grounding that a (business) manager can get. The Advanced Diploma is a rigorous, practically relevant course aimed at professionals who require all round business, finance and resource management skills. The course syllabus includes:

- Finance and financial techniques
- Personal development
- Public services management

- Quality management
- Organisational management
- Strategic and business planning
- Human resource management.

The Course requires approximately 15 months of part time study involving 40 days tuition and a series of assignments.

For further details on this qualification, please contact Steve Mungavin on 028 9026 6778 or via e-mail at steve.mungavin@cipfa.org

Beyond 'On Board'

Demand for the 'On Board' training programme in Northern Ireland and across the United Kingdom continues to grow and its position as the United Kingdom's leading governance programme for Boards of public bodies is now unchallenged. However, CIPFA Northern Ireland recognises that to be effective, Boards and Non-executive Board members require more than just an induction into their key roles and responsibilities etc but specific training in other key aspects of their role.

With this in mind, CIPFA Northern Ireland has launched a series of new governance training programmes for delivery in the Autumn of 2006. These governance programmes, which are also available on a public and an in-house basis, are as follows:

- Finance for Board Members - 17 November
- Strategy, Risk and Performance Management for Board Members - 30 November
- Effective Sponsorship of Public Bodies - 26 October
- How Good is your Governance? - A Board Effectiveness Workshop - 6 & 7 November
- Effectively Chairing a Public Body - the Six Key Success Areas - TBC

For further information on these programmes, please contact David Nicholl on 028 9026 6770 or via e-mail at david.nicholl@cipfa.org

How Good is your Governance?

CIPFA's new Board Effectiveness workshop - How Good is your Governance? - is designed to help Boards and senior managers assess how well they are operating against the standards identified in the CIPFA Good Governance Standard produced by the Independent Commission on Good Governance in Public Services in 2005. The Higgs Report recommended that Boards in the private sector should review their own effectiveness annually and this practical programme has been developed to enable Boards of public bodies to realise the maximum benefits from such a process.

The facilitator on this programme is Professor Frank Clark CBE who is one of the UK's leading experts in corporate governance. Frank has experience as a Chief Executive, Chairman and Non-executive Board member of various public bodies in Scotland.

'How Good is your Governance?' is being run as a public course in Belfast on 6 and 7 November 2006 and London on 11 and 12 October 2006 (1½ days). The workshop is also available on an in-house basis as a one-day workshop.

The first in-house programme was run in June 2006 for Derbyshire Mental Health Trust. Mike Shewan, Chief Executive of the Trust, was extremely impressed:

"This was an excellent day which stimulated much debate and reflection on the part of the Board and has resulted in a substantive Action Plan for improvement and a newly invigorated Board which is up for the challenges ahead. Frank Clark was an excellent facilitator".

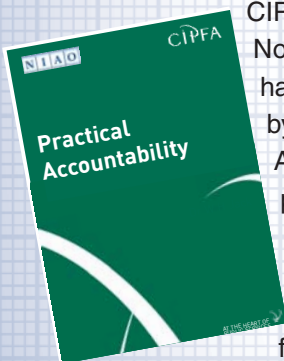
Reflecting on the first running of this new workshop, Professor Frank Clark was upbeat: "Derbyshire Mental Health Trust is a good Board but one open to being challenged as to how it can be even better. This made it an ideal candidate for the 'How good is your Governance?' workshop. The workshop itself is an excellent vehicle for giving practical effect to the Good Governance Standard for Public Services and CIPFA Northern Ireland is to be commended for its foresight in developing such a programme which meets a very real need".

'On Board' Scotland

The second edition of the 'On Board Guide for Board Members of Public Bodies in Scotland' has recently been published. The Guide, which has been written by David Nicholl (Head of CIPFA Northern Ireland) in conjunction with the Public Bodies and Relocation Division of the Scottish Executive, is the official Guide which is given to every Non-executive Board member of every public body in Scotland.

'On Board' 2 provides significantly more detailed advice on topical areas such as conflicts of interest, gifts, hospitality and other issues around ethical standards and behaviour to reflect the statutory Ethical Standards Framework introduced since the publication of 'On Board' 1. 'On Board' 2 also provides even more relevant and practical advice on the roles and responsibilities of the Board, its members and Chair on areas such as relationships with the Minister and the Sponsor Department.

Practical Accountability



CIPFA Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Audit Office have jointly published guidance by Dr Bill Jack on 'Practical Accountability' based on his presentation at the CIPFA Northern Ireland Conference 2005. In this short publication, Dr Jack, a former Comptroller and

Auditor General in Northern Ireland, draws on his experience to look at the practicalities of being an effective Chief Executive and Accounting Officer.

For a free copy, please contact Emily Brown at CIPFA, telephone 028 9026 6774 or via e-mail at emily.brown@cipfa.org

Senior Executive Programme

The second CIPFA/IOD Senior Executive Development Programme is scheduled to begin in October 2006. This well respected leadership programme is aimed at Chief Executives, Directors and other senior executives across the public services who operate at a strategic level who seek to

lead their organisations through a period of significant change. Delegates on the first programme have been unanimous in their praise of the quality and relevance of the Senior Executive Development Programme. Ivor Johnston of the Home Office says:

"I can strongly endorse the programme from both a content and organisational perspective. This a most useful programme to help update my knowledge from both a theoretical and practical perspective. The modules themselves cover as broad a spectrum as the MBA itself, but where I have gained most value is in sharing the experiences of fellow participants and course deliverers. The course materials on corporate governance have also proved to be most useful in developing the Agency's governance arrangements."

CIPFA Northern Ireland is now taking expressions of interest from those who wish to consider participation on the 2006 intake. For further information, please contact Steve Mungavin on 028 9026 6778 or via e-mail at steve.mungavin@cipfa.org

Training news

Based on the success of two pilot training programmes run in 2005, CIPFA together with Cooperation Ireland and the Centre for Cross Border Studies is running a third Cross Border Training Course for public officials who operate on a North-South basis. The innovative course starts with a two-day residential on 7 September 2006 in Newry. A number of applications have already been received - the closing deadline is 31 July 2006.

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Recruitment continues for the Association of Accounting Technician's professional qualification, with intermediate and technician levels starting in the autumn of 2006, and the next foundation level intake planned for January 2007.

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For those people working in Internal Audit in the Public Sector who wish to obtain a formal qualification, the next intake for CIPFA's Diploma in Public Audit will be in September 2006. The qualification takes ten months to complete and there are seven modules taught over two levels.

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CIPFA has published its Autumn Programme of open training courses. Details of the courses available can be seen at www.cipfa.org/ni

VIEW FROM A PAC MEMBER

In this article, PAC Member Richard Bacon MP provides his view on governance, accountability and value for money in Northern Ireland's public services.

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) is a guardian of taxpayers' money. We are not a policy committee and so, by and large we do not pursue policy questions. The nature of the PAC's work is that we do not look at the 'should' question – should the Government's policy be x or y or z, but rather at the question if the government pursues a particular policy, did it do so well? Did it spend taxpayers' money wisely? Did it meet the test of the 'three Es', that is, spending public money effectively, efficiently and economically? In order to tackle this subject, I shall draw on my experience with Northern Ireland issues at PAC, since the return of direct rule in October 2002.

We can be very critical where we see poor performance and I know that Accounting Officers will sometimes accuse us of being intimidating or only interested in point scoring. It is, of course, an essential part of our role to ensure that where things have gone wrong, lessons are being learned but I also believe we give credit where credit is due.

Great Britain

I think it is fair to say that Whitehall departments provide us with a regular workload of fairly spectacular problems, some of which are highlighted below.

The Ministry of Defence spent £3 billion for 67 new Apache helicopters, but half of them have been sitting in storage in a shed for several years because the MOD forgot to train enough pilots in time. They also spent £259 million on eight new Chinook helicopters which can't fly if it is cloudy.

We saw a report on a farmer who received subsidies under the Arable Area Payments Scheme and also under the Fibre Flax Scheme for what turned out to



Richard Bacon MP

be the same piece of land. He also received subsidies for territory which, long after the payments had been made and using the grid references he had actually supplied, were discovered – entirely accidentally – to be in the North Sea between Scotland and Denmark; and on the mainland of Greenland and Iceland.

The Home Office national probation service information systems strategy had seven project directors in seven years, five of whom knew nothing about project management.

Then there was the fiasco at the Passport Office, where people couldn't get a passport in time to go on holiday, the separate fiasco at the Criminal Records Bureau which left schools and nurseries unable to hire people because the background checks couldn't be processed. And of course, there are the infamous problems with the Child Support Agency and with tax credits.

Therefore, I wouldn't want you to run away with the idea that Northern Ireland is unique in getting things wrong. The government manages to mess things up quite spectacularly in the rest of the United Kingdom too!

Northern Ireland

Nonetheless, when it comes to our Northern Ireland casework, I cannot disguise the fact that the reports which we have considered have regularly turned up major issues of concern. This does frustrate the Committee, since we see Northern Ireland as a region which is relatively well funded by the taxpayer which, because of its small size and potentially coherent public sector, should be an exemplar for joined up government and be capable of achieving excellence in its administration.

I am well aware that we don't take the full spectrum of the Northern Ireland Audit Office's (NIAO) output. Some of those reports deal with good practice such as the report into 'Modernising Construction Procurement'. Such reports are not unimportant - it is right that the application and development of best practice should be encouraged and highlighted. However, the added value that PAC can give to such reports is limited, particularly given the restrictions we have on time spent on Northern Ireland issues. As a result of these restrictions, we have only had the opportunity to deal with ten NIAO Reports since return to Direct Rule in October 2002 and I am going to comment on a selection of these.

The use of operating theatres

During 2004, the Committee decided to come over to Northern Ireland to hold two sessions on 'The Use of Operating Theatres' and the 'Navan Centre'. This decision was taken in order to send out a clear message to the local taxpayer that someone is continuing to monitor the expenditure in the local public sector in the absence of devolution. Operating Theatres was very much the main hearing that day.

I remember the Accounting Officer telling us that the theatres operated on a five day seven hour shift system. However, this compares unfavourably with England and Wales where many of the theatres were available for much longer. Our concerns must be seen in the context of waiting lists and waiting times for hospital treatment. These were by far, and still are, the highest in the United Kingdom. This is despite Northern Ireland having the highest per capita spend of any region in the United Kingdom. Even within the timescales when they were available,

we found that theatres were idle almost 40% of the time and, in some cases more than this.

There was also a high incidence of last minute cancellations of operations and indicators of poor management and control. I was flabbergasted to learn that the reasons for this included the persistent taking of annual leave at the last minute by some consultants. As a result, no time was left for redeployment of scheduled anaesthetic cover and resulted in a waste of resources. It should have been obvious to any lay person that, with appropriate planning, organisation, and proper management, many cancellations could and should have been avoided.

We had concluded at that time that there was no convincing explanation as to why Northern Ireland, with one of the highest levels of funding in the United Kingdom, did not get the same return on the use of its operating theatres as other parts of the United Kingdom.

The Jobskills Programme

We described Jobskills as one of the worst-run programmes we had ever seen – a scheme which had cost the taxpayer over £500 million.

There was a quite astonishing catalogue of failures and control weaknesses, all of which we thought pointed to a disturbing level of complacency within the Department. And while I readily acknowledge that the Department has to deal with some very difficult groups of young people, this certainly did not explain the widespread shortcomings in supervision and control that existed.

It was clear that Jobskills had not received the senior management attention that it deserved. One of the most damning aspects of the Department's handling was the extent to which a number of the most fundamental weaknesses – such as poor quality training and high levels of early leaving from the scheme - persisted over many years. And yet, we saw little evidence of the Department having tackled these problems with any great vigour, prior to the Comptroller and Auditor General's review. This suggests to me that there was a lack of internal challenge within the Department to improve this programme.

At half a billion pounds, the funding provided to this programme was, by any standards, enormous. Given the serious and ongoing concerns about the quality of training, the poor performance of a number of training providers, the limited employment impact of the programme and the substantial 'skills mismatch' between Jobskills and the needs of Northern Ireland economy, we could only conclude that it provided poor value for money.

I note that, in the wake of our examination, Jobskills is to be axed! My point is that it should not have taken a PAC session to achieve this. I do not think that anywhere else in the United Kingdom, a programme as important as this but with these profound failings would have been allowed to drift on for as long as this did without drastic remedial action being taken.

Emerging Business Trust

In our most recent evidence session on Northern Ireland matters, we examined witnesses from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) on how the Department, and its Local Enterprise Development Unit (LEDU), had overseen the setting-up, funding and operation of the Emerging Business Trust (EBT). Our examination found this to be one of the most blatant examples of conflict of interest we had ever seen. The extent of the conflicts and the fact that they went unchallenged for so long is really quite astonishing.

LEDU was one of the founders of EBT and it provided substantial public money to the company. But it not only allowed its own Deputy Chair to be appointed as an EBT Board Member, neither it, nor the Department, raised any objection when her accountancy practice was appointed, without an open competition, to manage the company.

Normal public sector rules in competitive tendering were set aside. This accountancy practice eventually received £1.4 million in management fees from EBT – in my questioning I established that this was around a quarter of the total public money made available to the company for small business regeneration in depressed areas.

Unfortunately, the conflicts of interest did not stop

there. The Deputy Chair and her husband had shares and other business interests in a number of companies supported by EBT. These blatant conflicts of interest were compounded by an extraordinary series of lapses including a failure to conduct an appraisal of the business case for the Loan Fund. LEDU failed to ensure that its funding commitments to EBT were properly authorised and failed to draw up effective letters of offer.

The extent of the conflicts of interest in this case, the failure to deal with them and the unusually wide range of the control failures obviously raises the question as to whether there was collusion by former LEDU staff. The Department said its investigation found no evidence of collusion. If this is the case, the only conclusion we can draw is that LEDU's senior management, its Board and the Department were thoroughly incompetent and demonstrated a complete lack of commitment to the promotion of proper standards in public life.

Our report into this case has recently been published. We recognise that the Permanent Secretary has some sensible proposals for improvement. The problem is that a case like this shakes Parliament's and the public's confidence in standards of governance in the region. Northern Ireland cannot afford another scandal of this nature. Indeed, to restore confidence you really need to be 'whiter than white' and aim for excellence in your governance arrangements.

Conclusion

So what conclusion can I draw from PAC experiences of Northern Ireland departments? I am not going to say that NI standards are generally worse across the board than the rest of the United Kingdom. However, I must say that in some of the problem areas that we have investigated, we have been concerned that problems were allowed to accumulate on the scale that they did, for as long as they did. There may be much that is good in local administration, but when things are bad, they seem to be far below what we expect. As a member of PAC, I am worried that citizens and taxpayers here may not be receiving the service we expect to see elsewhere in the United Kingdom. The overall message must be, in all the areas that we have looked at, that there is enormous scope to improve.

PUBLIC SERVICES IN THE DARK AGE

John Seddon is an occupational psychologist and management thinker who has pioneered the application of systems thinking - following Toyota - to service organisations. In this article, John believes public sector reform is not working and lays the blame on Government Ministers and their agents.

'Modern management' - a flawed system

'Modern management' began at the turn of the last century with the first mass production system. Henry Ford famously halved the cost of car production and doubled the wages of his work force. His approach to mass production was to separate decision-making from work, it was to 'command' and 'control' the work and the workers. Naturally his innovation was hailed as a breakthrough and the principles he employed became standard management practice throughout the 20th century. 'Command and control' is now synonymous with 'modern management'. These ideas are with us today in our most modern organisation form - the call centre - and they bring with them the same problems of worker alienation and industrial strife as we once witnessed in manufacturing; for while Henry Ford's system was a great leap forward, it had - and has - profound weaknesses.

The separation of decision-making from work is a form of demarcation that guarantees sub-optimisation. It was Deming who first pointed to the weaknesses when, as long ago as the 1950s, he taught a different philosophy when working with Japanese manufacturers. Today we can see the results in the different ways that western and Japanese car manufacturers work. The western model is: make large batches of cars, store them in car parks, incentivise people to buy them. The main management control in the factories is the monetary value of production. Managers produce to meet the budgeted requirement. The Japanese model is: take an order, make the car and supply it. The main management control is the flow of production. The

object of the Japanese system is to reduce the time between order and delivery; managers produce against demand. The result: lower costs, higher quality and higher worker morale, for the worker is central to the system, not a pawn within it.

The Japanese system - exemplified by Toyota - integrates decision-making with work. Because the focus is on managing workflow, it is vital that those who do the work develop and use measures and controls that manage and improve the way the work works.

Central to command and control management is the idea of targets. Management, separated from work, use measures that are abstracted from work to make decisions and set targets. The cost of an activity, for example, tells you nothing about the flow of work. To act on cost measures can damage flow and cause costs to rise; to act on flow, by contrast, always lessens cost. In our private sector organisations, the dysfunctional consequences of budgetary targets are well known. In long-established organisations, the sub-optimisation caused by this way of working is almost invisible because the institution has built structures and methods that on the one hand accommodate the weakness and on the other set out to ameliorate them through controls. In our newer private sector organisations, no such systems exist and the consequences are palpable.

Targets detract from service delivery

The imposition of targets in the public sector represents a bureaucracy of specifications, monitoring and reporting. We now have a plethora of internal and external structures feeding this; it is all waste. It consumes resources that do nothing to serve the purpose of the enterprises. Worse, it demoralises the people who have to maintain it; it is the most incredible thing and it has been wrought on our public sector organisations by our Government, and in the name of modernisation.

The cause of demoralisation is not limited to feeding the bureaucracy. When people know they are going to be judged and, moreover, incentivised by the meeting of targets, they use their ingenuity to do whatever it takes to be seen to meet them. This can mean cheating - distorting or misreporting data. Knowing this and believing they have no choice fuels the disaffection of public sector workers. Can you imagine what it does to people: knowing that you have cheated but feeling it was the only thing you could do? When the evidence of cheating becomes apparent, Ministers and their agents repeat their beliefs in the value of targets, claim the number of cheats to be small, blame them and seek to route them out. Ministers and their agents instil fear amongst the demoralised. The architects of the problem fail to appreciate their culpability, the primary cause is systemic; the problems are ubiquitous because they are designed in.

There is little doubt our public sector management needed and needs improving. But what has been done to help them? Targets say nothing about method. The various Government-promulgated initiatives - ISO 9000, The Excellence Model, Investors in People, Charter Mark - all have the same general method: assess yourself against the model and take action to 'close the gaps'. But are any of these models based on knowledge of what works? There is none, which is why these models have not borne fruit in terms of public sector improvement.

Frustrated at the lack of progress, Ministers have brought the locus of control further to the centre. Through legislation, instructions, guidance and incentives, they now dictate many aspects of public sector organisation design with disastrous consequences. To take just one example: the drive to improve access to services has meant Government money for call centres. With the establishment of a call centre, part of what was a poor service is moved to a separate location and provided with electronic means to contact those with whom it had once been connected.

When you study the telephone calls going in to these call centres, you find the vast majority are what I call 'failure demand' - calls caused by a failure to do something or do something right for a customer. To pick up a call is not the same as solving a problem or providing a service. The costs of providing the

service rise as another function is now involved and the communications between what are now called 'front' and 'back' offices exacerbate service delivery. The net result is worse service and higher cost. Yet these organisations achieve compliance with Government dictats. In the revised inspection regime, the more you do as you are told the less you get paid attention to - you 'earn' the right to 'light touch' inspection.

Government, obsessed with the command and control philosophy, has dictated the design of many of our services, placed value on using information technology and obliged many organisations to out-source or in other ways pass their work to others. While the evidence mounts that it is not working, Ministers repeat and intensify their efforts, they try to do the wrong thing righter. It would be better if they asked what is the right thing to do.

Improvement from within

It could have been and still could be so different. If Government understood the profundity of what had happened in Japanese manufacturing, they might appreciate the value of a radically different set of ideas. Taichi Ohno, creator of the Toyota Production System taught it is best when assessing an organisation to look 'in', to study the work. It is of little value to assess oneself against others or against a model, or against a target, for the means for improvement lie within. It is question of knowing how to look. The right measures can help people 'see'.

When measures are derived from flow rather than an arbitrary source, they help those who do the work - managers and workers alike - question the way the work works. Taichi Ohno showed how designing work by flow rather than function helps those who do it to learn how to remove everything from the work except the value work - the thing you are providing to the customer. These are simple ideas to apply in our public services and they result in fast change, for little is 'made'. Those who work in our public services need help with method not bludgeoning with arbitrary and uninformed edicts. Our public bodies live in a dark age. It is time Ministers got out of management.

John Seddon is a keynote speaker at the CIPFA Northern Ireland Conference 2006.

BRANCH NEWS

Annual luncheon

Over 140 CIPFA members and guests, including CIPFA Chief Executive Steve Freer, enjoyed the fifth Annual Luncheon hosted by the Chair of the Northern Ireland Branch, Heather Cousins, on 2 March 2006. In the splendid surroundings of Belfast Castle, on a cold but bright spring-like day, the Luncheon was addressed by Kathy Colgan, Director of Strategy and Operations Practice with Deloitte. Kathy gave an informative, and at times humorous, insight into London's bid for the 2012 Olympic Games.



Kathy Colgan, Deloitte, Julia Hughes, Brightwater and Heather Cousins, Chair CIPFA Northern Ireland

Kathy outlined the scale of the task for the organising committee, working in partnership with central and local government and other public bodies.

Heather Cousins thanked Brightwater Selection who sponsored the event.



Guests enjoying the 2006 Annual Lunch

Top educationalists debate the future

There are very few educationalists, public servants and parents throughout Northern Ireland who will not be affected by the legislation to end academic selection and determine admission to secondary education based on pupil profiles, just part of fundamental changes to education.

As a contribution to this important debate, CIPFA Northern Ireland brought together a panel of top educationalists that provided a range of mature and meaningful views on the direction of post-primary education at a special forum that was held in February in the Spires Centre, Belfast. Over 50 delegates from a variety of educational backgrounds attended the event.

The successful 'Question Time' format of the event enabled leading commentators and delegates to debate their views under the chairmanship of BBC broadcaster Wendy Austin.



Wilfred Mulryne, former Principal of Methodist College, Chris Woodhead, former Chief Inspector of Schools, Wendy Austin, Michael Wardlow, Chief Executive of NICIE, Heather Cousins and Tony Gallagher, Queen's University.

Lunchtime briefings

The first of the 2006 Lunchtime briefings was held on 9 March when David Gavaghan, Chief Executive of the Strategic Investment Board, gave an insight into the work of the Board over the last three years and outlined its future plans.

At the second lunchtime event on 4 May 2006 in Belfast City Hall, over 80 senior executives from a variety of organisations heard John Compton of PricewaterhouseCoopers provide an insight into the frightening pace of change in Northern Ireland's public services, setting into context the Review of Public Administration and its likely impact on the local economy.

The event was also the occasion of awarding membership to Patricia Blair of the Northern Ireland Audit Office, one of CIPFA's most recently qualified accountants in Northern Ireland.



John Compton from PricewaterhouseCoopers

Effective Financial Management was the topic for the Lunchtime event held on 9 June 2006 in Castlereagh Borough Council's offices. At this event, Heather Cousins, Director of Finance and Planning in the Social Security Agency and colleague Alison Hanna, outlined best practice policy and implementation of CIPFA's Financial Management Model.

To book a place on future Lunchtime events, please contact Anna Egner on 028 9026 6777 or via e-mail at anna.egner@cipfa.org

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the CIPFA Northern Ireland Branch took place on Thursday 4 May 2006 in Belfast City Hall. As well as the election of the Branch Committee for 2006/07, Mark McBride of Belfast City Council was elected Chairman, Michael Carson of the Northern Ireland Audit Office was elected Vice-Chairman and Michele Woods and Jonathan Adams were re-elected Branch Secretary and Treasurer respectively.

A copy of the annual report of the CIPFA Northern Ireland Branch activities is available at www.cipfa.org/regions/ni_annual_report_2005.doc



Heather Cousins with Patricia Blair (centre), NIAO and CIPFA President Diane Colley (right)



Heather Cousins (left) hands over the Chairman's chain of office to Mark McBride, assisted by CIPFA President Diane Colley

National Student Forum representative

Alan Bennett, trainee auditor with the Northern Ireland Audit Office, has joined the National Student Forum (NSF). Uniquely within the accountancy professional, the NSF has a representative on CIPFA's Council thereby giving a voice to students at all levels on policy matters.



Alan's involvement in the NSF will facilitate dissemination of information to students in Northern Ireland, as well as provide an opportunity to share experiences of the qualification to a national network.

Conference speakers

Greg Dyke

Greg has an international reputation for his success in the broadcasting business and is a world class conference speaker. In this session, Greg will share his success of leading organisational change.

Gareth Hall

Gareth is Chief Executive of the newly created Department of Enterprise and Innovation Networks in Wales. He will share his experience of the Welsh review of public administration, which saw the merger of three public bodies responsible for enterprise and tourism.

Jonathan Porritt CBE

Jonathan is co-founder and Programme Director of Forum for the Future, and a writer, broadcaster and commentator on sustainable development. He was formerly Director of Friends of the Earth and co-Chair of the Green Party, of which he is still a member.

Kriss Akabusi MBE

Kriss is one of Britain's most recognised and respected motivational speakers and media personalities. Famous for his achievements in Athletics, Kriss will bring his own infectious personality to his high tempo presentation.

Tony Culley-Foster

Tony is an internationally respected businessman, salesman, educator, athlete and motivational speaker. He will share his extensive European, American and Far East experience on how to successfully deliver government services, through dynamic private public partnerships.'

John Seddon

A controversial but informed writer and commentator on management thinking, John will critically appraise target setting in the public services in his presentation entitled 'Death to Targets'.

Jane Earl

As Director of the Assets Recovery Agency, Jane has harnessed leadership skills to successfully develop the organisation since its inception some four years ago.

Sarah Isted

Building on her extensive experience in the health and local government sectors, Sarah will speak about her work with the Audit Commission to develop their guide on world class financial management.

Dr Carol Craig

Carol is Chief Executive of the Centre for Confidence and Well-Being which was set up in Glasgow at the beginning of 2005. Carol will outline how organisations achieve successful work/life balance.

Conference 2006 will also address topical issues affecting public services in Northern Ireland, with speakers such as:

Katharine Bryan

Katharine is Chief Executive of the Water Service in Northern Ireland. In this session, Katharine will outline the benefits of outsourcing billing and customer services.

Andrew Hamilton

As Deputy Permanent Secretary in DHSS&PS, Andrew will evaluate the NHS modernisation and reform agenda.

Dr Tracy Long

Tracy is an expert in governance and accountability will provide guidance on assessing the effectiveness of Boards.

David Clement OBE

David will transport delegates back to 1974 to identify lessons to be learned from the last major public administration shake-up.

John Smith

John is Director of Finance in the NHS Business Services Authority. In this session, John will address the financial and governance implications involved in merging five large health bodies into a single entity - a process that NHS BSA has just gone through.

Dr John Potter

An inspirational speaker and an expert on negotiation skills, John will illustrate how to use influence to achieve success.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2006

Finance Recruitment Specialists

Conference Programme

Thursday 28 September 2006

9.30 am **Conference Welcome**

Caroline Gardner, CIPFA President
Mark McBride, Chair, CIPFA
Northern Ireland Branch

(a) **Successfully Leading a New Organisation**
Jane Earl

(b) **Assessing Effective Performance in a Changing Environment**
Andrew Hamilton

3.15 pm Tea/Coffee

9.45 am **Dare to be Different! Delivering Public Services in a Changing World**

Greg Dyke

3.45 pm **Achieving World Class Financial Management**

Sarah Isted

11.00 am **Successful Re-organisation of Public Services**

Gareth Hall

4.15 pm **International Best Practice in Public Private Partnerships**

Tony Culley-Foster

11.30 am Tea/Coffee

5.00 pm Close of Day 1

12.00 pm **Conference Tracks**

Friday 29 September 2006

(a) **Effective Change Management Learning from 1974**
David Clement

9.15 am Registration (Tea/Coffee)

9.30 am **Successful Sustainable Development and Reporting**

Merging Public Bodies: Governance and Finance Issues
John Smith

Jonathan Porritt

10.30 am **Conference Tracks**

(b) **Outsourcing Financial Services**
Katharine Bryan

(a) **Ensuring Board Effectiveness**
Dr Tracy Long

(c) **Influencing and Negotiating to Success**
John Potter

(b) **Building Confidence at Work**
Dr Carol Craig

12.45 pm Lunch

11.15 am Tea/Coffee

2.00 pm **Death to Targets**

John Seddon

11.45 am **Successful Focus, Innovation and Teamwork!**

Kriss Akabusi

2.45 pm **Conference Tracks**

1.00 pm Lunch and Conference Close

PROFILE OF NUALA O'LOAN

Continuing our series featuring leaders of public services in Northern Ireland, Steve Mungavin talks to Nuala O'Loan about her experience over the last six years as Police Ombudsman.

What does the Police Ombudsman's office do?

Primarily, we run a police complaints service. Ours is a service that people need to know about and which is accessible and responsive to the needs of the public. When we investigate complaints, we need to ensure our approach is robust and effective so that we can provide evidence-based recommendations. We also analyse outcomes of complaints so that we can inform and improve the policy and practice of policing.

To give some idea of the scale of our work, in the last complete year we received a total of 2,885 complaints from the public involving 4,206 allegations. In addition, there were four matters that I decided to investigate in the public interest and 72 matters that the Chief Constable referred to me for investigation.

It is important to note a significant change in the nature of allegations being recorded and investigated. Four years ago, over 50% of the allegations were in relation to oppressive behaviour covering allegations such as assault, intimidation or harassment by the police. Last year, these types of complaints fell sharply to 36% of the total. Now, most complaints received relate to allegations that the police did not carry out their duty or that they did it poorly.

Compared to 2000, when we had to set up the office and had to implement the legislation, we are now well established and the public has a greater understanding about our role. In a survey conducted in 2005, nearly 90% of respondents said they had heard of the Police Ombudsman's Office and the vast majority knew we were independent of the police.



Nuala O'Loan

The public increasingly believes we operate impartially. In the 2005 survey, 78% of respondents were confident that we deal with complaints in an impartial way, up from 61% in 2002.

What is your relationship like with the Police Service of Northern Ireland?

At the start, there was huge suspicion from police officers about the role of the Police Ombudsman's office. I would have liked to have seen more being done to explain the legislation to police officers and what we were seeking to do. It is generally recognised that the task of securing the confidence of police officers is considerable. We are determined to do all that we can to develop their understanding of the functions of the office and I have taken every opportunity to meet and engage with police officers. This engagement takes a variety of formats - we have participated in PSNI training at various levels, held conferences, seminars and attended regular briefings. It is always difficult when investigating allegations of wrongdoing. I would describe our relationship with the police as robust but cordial and our professional approach makes it work effectively. The length of

time that it can take to carry out investigations, due to reluctance by the police to provide materials for evidence, can be very frustrating. Delays in providing materials by the police are caused because they feel we should not have right to access, rather than because they deliberately want to stall an investigation or don't see it as a priority. I have statutory powers to obtain materials and have come very close at times to using those powers.

How do you ensure high quality of investigation?

We have a quality assurance programme that aims to ensure that our processes are right, whether our thinking is clear and whether the staff clearly understand how the processes work. We monitor our performance such as how long it takes to complete an investigation and the delays in investigations.

We also survey complainants after investigations by sending out a questionnaire and obtaining feedback about our service. Generally, the returns we receive are very positive. Although our investigations might make recommendations that do not meet all parties' expectations, we find that people want to be heard and also to understand what happened. Customer satisfaction is not just about prosecuting police officers, but about satisfying an understanding of what happened and being treated in a fair way.

Our investigations have resulted in over 200 disciplinary actions and 30 prosecutions of police officers, but generally we make recommendations about training and development or changes in policy and practice. We get feedback from the police on our recommendations to gauge the outcomes.

What are the governance arrangements for the Police Ombudsman's Office?

Legally, the Police Ombudsman's office is a Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Northern Ireland Office and I am the Corporation Sole, i.e. the Board, accountable to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

I submit an annual report to the Secretary of State as well as produce reports on special investigations or on other matters that I think needs his attention.

Such reports are also submitted to the Chief Constable and the Policing Board. We can also produce reports that are laid before Parliament, for example recently I worked on a report into the fatal shooting of a young man in Ballinderry.

I also meet with the Secretary of State on a quarterly basis to brief him on current issues.

I am not the Accounting Officer, which is the responsibility of the Chief Executive. We have a management statement that clearly sets out the governance arrangements including roles and responsibilities. As Accounting Officer, the Chief Executive meets with NIO officials quarterly to go through our financial performance comparing it with the plan.

Also, I regard our Audit Committee as being very important. It checks the internal systems and controls as well our financial statements. We have a senior management team consisting of the Chief Executive and Directors, which is the decision-making body of the Police Ombudsman's office. I have power to make final decisions or to change decisions, which in practice is unlikely as the executive staff decisions are well informed and their advice is sound.

How does your relationship with the Chief Executive work in practice?

We have a relationship that works well. As a Corporation Sole, our relationship does not really compare with a traditional Board. The Chief Executive has a duty to advise me on all matters relating to the exercise of my functions including investigations, good practice etc. The Chief Executive will also advise me of decisions that have been taken in his role as Accounting Officer.

What skills are required for the job?

I think it is necessary to have a combination of legal skills and a high degree of interpersonal skills because of the interactive nature of the job. I come into contact with people who can be hostile, fearful or bereaved so it is necessary to be able to deal with different situations. The nature of the work also

requires decision-making skills and of course management skills to ensure resources are effectively used.

What is your working day like?

As I carry out a variety of tasks, I don't think there is a typical day. For example, at the moment I am finalising a report that has been drafted for me by an investigator. It is time consuming studying police policies and procedures, looking at what has been written about the evidence, seeing whether the recommendation is consistent with the evidence and considering what to say to the public.

There is no time limit on when the public can make a complaint and the earliest case we investigated occurred in 1969. In exceptional cases and particularly in historical cases, I meet with complainants. These are sometimes meetings at which people test whether they can engage with the office at all. The complaints come from a variety of sources including families of police officers, military personnel and prison officers. The allegations are usually that police participated in murder, or that they allowed it to happen, or that they did not investigate it properly because they did not want the murderer to be brought to account.

I do a lot of work on the policy side of the office, meeting people and politicians, outlining the work of the office and listening to their concerns. I meet with officials from a wide range of bodies whose function is relevant to our work, such as the Equality Commission and the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

I also carry out a lot of public presentations on our work and meet police officers, which is very important to us.

I am responsible for making decisions on prosecutions and disciplinary action against police officers that may be required following an investigation. In our last complete year, the vast majority of cases were closed following enquiries, investigations or by informal resolution. However 86 cases, 3% of the total number of complaints, were referred to the Chief Constable with relevant disciplinary recommendations. Seven cases were referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions recommending criminal prosecution.

How do you deal effectively with the media?

We welcome and engage with the media as much as we can but there are some things by law that we are not allowed to disclose and we try to explain when something falls into that category. We do try to explain to the media some of the more complex cases that we deal with. We have only called four press conferences to date but we brief the media on certain issues and have approached them to explain the outcome, which makes them better informed for any questions they wish to ask. We try to keep an open relationship with the media, more than some other public bodies, because it is important that the public knows how the office functions.

How do you cope with controversy surrounding the job?

My function is to make the office open and accountable to everyone. I have a duty of care for police officers as well as the public. Given the sensitive nature of our work, the best thing I can do is to provide a greater understanding of the role of the office.

What is your greatest challenge?

There are a number of challenges - the biggest is to ensure that our systems of investigation are strong enough to maintain levels of public confidence in what we do. I also want to build greater understanding within the police about our role. We also have to deal with historic cases and sometimes it is a difficult balance using our resources dealing with current and historic cases. For example, if there is serious civil disturbance and the police fire live rounds or baton rounds, there are usually complaints. This means we need to gather evidence and investigate allegations fairly quickly so other work is put on hold.

We also have to look forward and build on our robust strategic planning process that has served us well since we started. We get everyone in the office involved in our forward thinking and formally review progress every six months. Staff recognise the value of this process and buy in to it - I think it matters that they are involved.

QUALITY COUNTS

In his ongoing series on good practice project management, Clive Billenness considers the issues surrounding achieving quality during the life of a project.

One of the complaints I hear most frequently about projects is that they failed to deliver what was expected. Hardly a month goes by without a headline somewhere about another project, which has met with some form of disaster at vast cost to the public purse. But can these problems be avoided? Is it possible to deliver a 'quality product'?

Firstly, one must consider what is meant by 'quality'. Standard ISO 8402 defines it as "the totality of characteristics of an entity which bear on its ability to satisfy stated and implied needs".

Within that statement lies the first challenge and the cause of many project problems - assumptions by users that a particular requirement will be met by a system even though it has not been explicitly stated anywhere. The PRINCE2™ method cautions against permitting implied needs to remain undefined and offers a 'quality path'. This is entirely integrated into all other elements of project management and, if complied with, will lead to a set of deliverables which meet the stated needs of the users. A second challenge then arises to ensure that those stated needs properly reflect the actual requirements of the business.

There is a truism about quality management that organisations which put off quality issues until later either never do them at all, or find that the cost of implementation rises exponentially with time. Given that most projects suffer from pressures over time, cost and scope, quite often testing is either compressed or skipped altogether, or concessions are made hastily in order to announce that a system has been delivered on time. An example of this was the implementation of a new financial system, where all the users' passwords were stored in a file, which could be read by anyone with a word processing programme because of a problem with encryption.

The problem could not be fixed in time to meet an announced delivery date. It is highly unlikely that



Clive Billenness

when the Project Board first approved the specification for the system, it agreed that passwords for a critical system could be stored so that anyone in the organisation could read them. The situation arose because issues around encryption were not detected and acted upon early enough.

The first component of quality is a quality system - a set of procedures, processes and organisational structures to implement quality management. These typically include the definition of specification, testing and acceptance procedures to be adopted, reporting and escalation arrangements and giving one or more people day-to-day responsibility for quality assurance.

The role of quality assurance is to check that the quality system is being complied with. This is a different role to the actual testing of products and must be independent of those responsible for delivering items within the project.

The Project Board, which is ultimately responsible for ensuring that all deliverables within a project meet its quality criteria, will wish to receive regular reports from quality assurance to confirm that the quality system is being complied with.

The next component is quality planning, which actually sets out how quality processes and

procedures will be implemented within the project. It defines the who's, when's and where's of quality activities. In order to do this, however, it is vital that the users' quality expectations of the deliverables are established and documented from the outset. I have emphasised 'documentation' because, in the heat of project implementation or when under pressure, it is not unknown for users to amend their quality requirements, usually upwards, and then complain vociferously if these are not met. While it may be perfectly reasonable to require a higher level of quality from a deliverable than originally specified, it is important that this be recognised as a change and treated as such (I will deal with change control in a future article).

The most effective way of documenting quality requirements is via the PRINCE2™ technique of product-based planning (PBP). Unique to PRINCE, PBP is used to define each 'product' or deliverable that will be produced throughout the life of the project, including interim deliverables which exist only to contribute to the final project outcome - e.g. temporary file stores used during data migration. Within the definition of these products, project stakeholders are able to define their quality criteria. In many cases, the end-users will be the only members of the project who will have a clear understanding of the quality criteria required for the business environment within which it will be used. For example: functionality, accuracy, practicability, security, comparability, reliability, maintainability, flexibility, clarity, comparison with another (possibly existing) product, cost and implementation date.

There may also be standard quality criteria which the organisation applies to all products in the areas of encryption, networking and software compatibility. If users are not experienced in creating specifications, it can be useful to invite those responsible for defining products to complete a checklist which uses the above criteria, showing a nil return where they do not have a specific requirement, to reduce the risk of something being overlooked.

Once quality criteria have been defined, it is necessary to verify that these have been delivered. In all cases, this will involve some form of testing. NASA's '100 Top Tips for Project Managers' says: "Experience may be fine but testing is better.

Knowing something will work never takes the place of proving that it will". It is therefore necessary to create a testing strategy - more who's, how's and when's related to the individual criteria.

There are two forms of test - objective and subjective.

In objective testing, the result will be a definitive yes or no answer - e.g. "Did it process one million records in 1 hour?".

Subjective testing involves either judgement or opinion - e.g. "Was it user-friendly?". This form of testing often uses a technique known as 'quality review' - a structured activity performed by a group of stakeholders under the direction of a Chairperson.

The assumption I have made up to this point is that everything which is delivered will fully meet the quality criteria. In reality, this is not always the case. During testing, non-compliances (referred to as 'off-specifications' or 'off-specs') will be encountered.

There are two responses to an off-spec - either resolution within the tolerances permitted for the project or referral to the Project Board. The Project Board then has two options: either to agree to accept the product despite the off-spec - known as a concession - or to consider how to take the project forward (or even cancel it) based on its current status taking into account the off-spec. At this point, issues relating to the timescales and phasing of different options will need to be considered and a revised project plan produced if necessary.

Ultimately, no deliverable should be accepted into service unless the Project Board is satisfied that:

- quality criteria have been defined for each product
- it has either met those quality criteria or
- any failure to meet them has been considered by the Board and acted upon.

In my next article, I will consider in more detail the consequences of Option 3 - "What to do when things go wrong".

MANAGING INFORMATION

In this article, Philip Bain General Manager of DMG Services in Northern Ireland, emphasises the need for organisations to have a robust document retention and security policy.

Background

The increasing trend towards outsourcing non-core activities to achieve cost and efficiency benefits combined with the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), Data Protection Act and tightening of corporate governance have all combined to ensure that record management should be at the top of organisations' priorities. The record management sector has never experienced such levels of sustained growth. For example:

- corporate governance guidelines require that systems of controls are in place to ensure accurate and secure records are kept
- FOI requires not just a willingness to release information, but an archiving system compatible with easy location of records
- the Data Protection Act applies to paper records. Every organisation must look at the security measures they have in place surrounding the storage and management of personal information relating to employees, customers, competitors, suppliers and any other individual with whom it interacts.

Whilst paper records remain vital, the integration of bar coded tracking of hard copy filing with scanning and hosting solutions have become more widely available.

Risk

Generally, the emphasis has been on physical security of the prime storage location rather than the need to track files and have proper systems in place



Up to your ears in paper?

to ensure that their whereabouts are known. The need for security does not end there. As many organisations have found, to their cost, proper disposal of documents requires supervised on-site destruction.

Apart from the commercial imperatives of ensuring that information is available, the consequences of poor tracking and disposal can have serious legal and reputational consequences.

All records specific to an organisation are potentially equally sensitive: customer contracts, HR files, financial records such as payroll files and minutes of Board meetings. Organisations need to be aware of the risk of exposure with regard to documents that they dispose of. Research has shown that, on average, there is enough information in three bin bags to create one false identity.

Organisations risk significant exposure if they are found to be non-compliant with the Data Protection Act. Individuals can request access to personal information, either manual or electronic. If the organisation cannot locate this information, they may find themselves subject to a complaint being lodged with the Information Commissioner.

Organisations seen not to take appropriate care with records can suffer significant damage to reputation. Organisations typically spend enormous amounts of money on items such as alarms, surveillance equipment, guards, training, investigators, computer safeguards, etc. In today's environment, there is a need to add good records management to that list, as careless regard for company information can cost an organisation its reputation.

We have seen organisations have major contracts terminated because they have been unable to trace important contract documents. Many organisations think that a business disaster will never happen to them and that you cannot plan for the unseen. Good records management helps to ensure that an organisation is prepared for business continuity when a disaster happens.

Very often we hear of documents being leaked to the media, private records illegally dumped or maybe information being stolen. If an organisation fails to implement good records management, they are exposing themselves to risk of confidential information falling into the hands of the wrong person, for example confidential health records or tendering documentation in a major procurement.

Document management policy

A good document management policy ensures that an organisation eliminates these risks, while also maintaining fundamental business continuity planning. If the policy is implemented correctly, it will ensure that the company is prepared for any incident that may cause disruption to their business regarding the secure storage and management of their most important asset - information.

Document retention policies are essential to maintaining document security but, according to recent research undertaken by Filestores, 42% of organisations in Northern Ireland do not have a document retention policy in place and 18% of respondents were unsure if one actually exists in their organisation.

When the retention period has passed for a document, a company is obliged by law to dispose of their records securely. Confidential on-site shredding

can guarantee the secure destruction of company records. A document retention policy requires comprehensive guidelines, which endorses the organisation's principles on document management. Implementing a document retention policy demonstrates that the organisation is striving for best practice and adhering to any legal or regulatory obligations. It also represents to employees and third parties the values that the organisation places on document management.

Below are guidelines to help develop an effective document retention policy:

- if there is no business reason or legal obligation to retain a document, it can be destroyed. Retention of documents should be for legitimate business purposes only
- senior management should distribute the completed document retention policy statement to all staff in the organisation. This reinforces the importance that the organisation places on document management and also represents the organisation's official procedures regarding their document management policies
- a document retention policy must be properly supervised. Ensure that all staff are aware of the existence of the policy, accompanied by easily accessible written guidelines on how to apply it. Training for the proper application of the guidelines should be provided periodically
- a document retention policy must contain guidelines on what documents should be destroyed and also the destruction process that the relevant document must undergo
- every precaution must be taken to ensure that the exposure of confidential documents is prevented. Ensure that the documents are stored in a secure place
- a lawyer should review the document retention policy. This is to ensure that the organisation's policy complies with legal requirements.

Implementation of a document retention policy ensures that the organisation is being pro-active and responsible in the area of document management.

CIPFA SEMINARS

European funding seminar

CIPFA Northern Ireland is running a one-day seminar with a range of expert speakers who will provide a strategic overview of the future shape of EU funded programmes from international and local perspectives as well as an analysis of future funding opportunities for Northern Ireland. The seminar will also provide a critical appraisal of the exercise of financial control experienced in the past and the lessons learned.

Keynote speakers include:

- Ronnie Hall, Acting Director General for EU Regional Policy
- Pat Colgan, Chief Executive of Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)
- Bill Pauley, Head of European Division in DFP Central Finance Group
- Seamus McAleavey, Chief Executive of NICVA
- Colm Larkin, independent European Affairs Adviser
- Martin Pitt, Partner in PricewaterhouseCoopers

The seminar will be held on 12 September 2006 in the Stormont Hotel, Belfast. The cost of attending this important event is £195 (plus VAT) or £125 (plus VAT) for delegates from the voluntary sector. For further information and/or a booking form, please contact Emily Brown on 028 9026 6774 or via e-mail at emily.brown@cipfa.org

'Team Players in Finance' Conference

The inaugural CIPFA conference aimed at operational finance and related staff and their supervisors will be held on 17 November 2006 in Belfast. The conference programme, that has been developed with leading finance practitioners, provides a balance of technical finance and related

topics together with general organisational and team-based presentations by speakers such as Saira Khan, high profile author and public speaker who was runner-up in the first 'Apprentice' television programme.

For more information, please contact Suzanne Jones on 028 9026 1656 or via e-mail at suzanne.jones@cipfa.org

Executive PAs learn good practice

Nearly 200 of the top Personal Assistants from a range of public and private bodies in Northern Ireland attended the annual CIPFA Northern Ireland Executive PA Conference on 26 April 2006. The conference was chaired by leading BBC broadcaster Wendy Austin and was hosted by the Hastings Hotel group in the delightful surroundings of the Culloden Hotel. The theme of this year's Conference was 'In Form to be Informed ...Using Information Effectively'.



Steve Hare, Chief Executive of the Shared Service Centre for Training and Development, addresses the Executive PA conference.

Creating Successful Promotional Materials

After successfully training over 80 participants in the last 12 months, Jane K. Cleland, CIPFA's New York based associate trainer, returns on the 21 & 22 November 2006 to deliver another workshop on creating successful promotional materials. For more information and/or a booking please contact Anna Egner via e-mail at anna.egner@cipfa.org

CIPFA MEMBER PROFILE

Kathryn Thomson returned to Northern Ireland just over 12 months ago to take up the post of Director of Finance and Business Planning with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. In this feature, Kathryn outlines her experience of working in Great Britain and her hopes for the future of the Tourist Board.

What attracted you to the job in the Tourist Board?

One of the benefits of being a finance professional is that you have opportunities to work in a variety of sectors - the principles of finance work are largely the same, irrespective of where you work. I love Northern Ireland and have never had any problem promoting it to anyone I meet, so when I saw the post advertised I was immediately attracted to it.

Over the last year, I have been on a steep learning curve familiarising myself with the tourism sector and the main issues affecting the industry.

I think it is important for accountants and corporate staff to be able to really understand the services they support so as to add value to the organisation. I feel that I have achieved this over the last year.

What do you enjoy about your job?

Tourism is a really interesting area to work in, particularly in Northern Ireland where there has been significant growth in recent years which is very much set to continue. I work with a great team of people which is very important to me.

I enjoy the variety of work, I have a wide portfolio of responsibilities that includes finance, procurement, information technology, policy, business planning, risk management and corporate communications. I enjoy being able to have the freedom to make improvements within my area of responsibility that will add value to the Tourist Board.



Kathryn Thomson

When did you decide to become an accountant?

It is not something that I ever really planned. In fact, when I was at university in Edinburgh doing a Business Studies and Accountancy degree, I dropped the accountancy part and I completed a single honours in Business Studies only.

It was only when I got my first job, which was with PricewaterhouseCoopers in London, that I fell into the accountancy world and had the opportunity to train professionally.

Why embark on the CIPFA qualification?

I was always interested in working in the public sector, so CIPFA seemed the natural choice although my fellow trainees at PWC were surprised. I found it such a practical and relevant qualification that, even though I didn't fully realise at the time, it provided essential and wide-ranging skills to work in public finance. I spent six years with PWC, two in London and four in Glasgow and then decided it was time for a change. The CIPFA qualification, coupled with useful experience of working with a range of public

bodies, provided me with an opportunity to join the NHS when I was appointed Financial Analyst in the Greater Glasgow Health Board. I really enjoyed that job as it provided me with a range of responsibilities in a large dynamic organisation and the opportunity to be involved in strategic decision-making within the largest health economy in Scotland. I was involved in large capital projects as well as rationalisation and efficiency programmes to help ensure value for money.

Working in a sector the size of the NHS in Scotland provided me with a ready made network of fellow professionals that I could rely on to share good finance practice. Because the Tourist Board is a relatively smaller and discrete organisation, I now rely on the network of CIPFA members to meet finance professionals and to keep abreast of current issues and how to address them.

What is the role of the Tourist Board?

The Tourist Board has a key role to play as the strategic leader for tourism in Northern Ireland and to drive forward the delivery of the Strategic Framework for Action (SFA) for tourism by all partners. There are a lot of stakeholders in the tourism industry and the SFA provides the focal point for the way forward and outlines the programmes that each stakeholder is responsible for delivering.

Key partners include Tourism Ireland with responsibility for the overseas marketing of Ireland, Regional Tourism Partnerships with responsibility for product development, visitor servicing and marketing at a regional level, Invest NI, the tourism industry, local authorities, government agencies and the private sector.

One of the key roles of the Tourist Board is to drive the delivery of the five Signature Projects identified to give Northern Ireland differentiation and stand out in the increasingly competitive global market place and be the key products around which the economy can grow and prosper.

In addition, the Tourist Board has responsibility for the promotion of Northern Ireland on the island of Ireland and marketing development and packaging of our product for selling on a local and international basis.

How much does the Tourist Board spend each year?

Our annual budget is approximately £13m, of which about half is spent on promotions, marketing and tourism services and half on administration. We specifically ring-fence £1.5m as financial assistance to third parties for projects that will enhance local attractions and visitor's experience. Governance, accountability, robust internal control systems and achieving value for money are all fundamental in effective financial management.

What are the main challenges facing the Tourist Board?

At a corporate level, tourism represents one of the biggest growth potentials for the Northern Ireland economy. We need to ensure that we capitalise on this opportunity. With the opening up of new holiday destinations, for example in eastern Europe, and the opportunities afforded by low cost air travel, we need to develop our product to ensure differentiation and to compete on an global stage. To do this, we need to secure funding to make the really big projects happen. For example, development of the Titanic for its anniversary in 2012 will require cross-government and private sector commitment, cooperation and determination to succeed.

I need to ensure that we have the right balance between internal controls, excellent governance and accountability for public funds with the need for a commercially focused business that is responsive to needs of the market place. The fact that we have a strong interface with the tourism industry and yet operate within a government regime with the inherent bureaucracy can be challenging. At times, you have to be patient working in public services.

My ongoing professional development with CIPFA, by attending the annual conference and update events, helps me to keep abreast of current issues affecting public services here.

I also recently completed the Institute of Director's Diploma in Company Direction programme, which has really helped to strengthen my leadership capability and ability to manage significant change - I would recommend the programme to budding chief executives and directors in the public services.

Spell out your future...



... with Brightwater

Accountancy - Temporary & Contract

Stephanie Mulholland s.mulholland@brightwaterNI.com

Accountancy - Industry & Commerce

Ronan Savage r.savage@brightwaterNI.com

