

# **NEWSLETTER ISSUE NUMBER SIXTEEN**

CIPFA LOCAL AUTHORITY  
HOUSING PANEL

**September 2007**

Welcome to the sixteenth edition for finance practitioners and CIPFA members working in local authority housing. This newsletter has been prepared by CIPFA's Local Authority Housing Panel.

This edition includes an update on the recent Housing Policy changes, articles on the Self Financing Option for Housing and on the likely future of Supporting People grant, an article on Community Interest Companies, some items on forthcoming events and developments in CIPFA and an update on forthcoming PMPA events.

## HOUSING POLICY CHANGES

Since the previous edition of this newsletter, it has become very clear that with the change of Prime Minister, the policy outlook for local authority housing is in the process of significant change. Gordon Brown has promised to make affordable housing "*one of the great causes of our time*"; he has announced the intention that there should be 3 million more homes by 2020; he has raised the status of the Housing Minister Yvette Cooper; the government has published – in July, pretty quickly after the change of PM - a Green Paper: *Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable*. The Green Paper seeks views on the Government's proposals to increase the supply of housing, to provide well designed and greener homes that are supported by infrastructure and to provide more affordable homes to buy or rent.

Government proposals include:

- More homes – backed by more ambitious building targets, increased investment, and new ways of identifying and using land for development
- More social housing – ensuring that a decent home at an affordable price is for the many, not the few
- Building homes more quickly – by unblocking the planning system and releasing land for development
- More affordable homes – by increasing the options for low cost home ownership and more long term and affordable mortgage products and
- Greener homes – with high environmental standards and flagship developments leading the way.

Significantly for local government, the Green Paper proposes that local authorities will be given an increased role in the delivery of social housing and paves the way for them to access social housing grant to build new homes. It also suggests that local authorities should be able to retain rent and capital receipts from the new homes. The overall proposals in the Green Paper are backed by £8 billion investment from the Comprehensive Spending Review for 2008 to 2010-11. The Housing Minister pointed out that this is a £3 billion increase over the current spending period. Details of just how much Social Housing Grant might be available and under what sort of conditions are still awaited (at the time of writing) but the Green Paper suggests that local authorities seeking grant to build within the Housing Revenue Account will be subject to "rigorous criteria".

The Government has published no less than eight supporting documents alongside the Green Paper:

- Eco-towns prospectus – setting out a vision and specification for local authorities and developers, including an invitation to propose at least five new eco-towns
- Building a Greener Future: policy statement – strategy and timetable for achieving zero-carbon homes by 2016
- Building Regulations - Energy Efficiency Requirements for New Dwellings, a forward look at what the standards may be in 2010 and 2013
- Water Efficiency in New Buildings

- The future of the Code for Sustainable Homes – Making a rating mandatory
- Strategic Land Availability Assessment: Practice Guidance – to provide local planning authorities with advice on identifying land for housing and assessing deliverability; and
- Impact Assessment for Homes for the future
- Regulatory Impact Assessment for Building a Greener Future.

The Government has invited responses to its Green Paper by **15 October 2007**. The consultation document paper, together with all the supporting documents, can be downloaded from the Communities and Local Government website at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1511890>

CIPFA's Local Authority Housing Panel will be active in following these housing policy developments and all CIPFA responses, together with details of any relevant seminar events or publications, will be posted on the Housing Panel website as soon as they are completed. Visit the Panel website at: <http://www.cipfa.org.uk/panels/housing/index.cfm>

## THE SELF FINANCING OPTION FOR HOUSING

On 7th June 2006 Ruth Kelly announced the Communities and Local Government's intention to work with a small number of excellent local authorities(3) and local authorities with three-star ALMOs(3) to examine the costs and benefits of operating their Council Houses outside the national housing subsidy system. Some saw this as a possible lifeboat to help them negotiate the choppy waters that a national housing system creates.

Local authority housing is a national programme, and the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy (HRA subsidy) system which provides revenue support for the housing stock (the bricks and mortar) reflects this. In reality, the subsidy works the other way around with many authorities in negative subsidy and so paying in to the national pot. Many authorities have moved from receiving subsidy to paying over subsidy and more will do so unless there are changes to the subsidy system. People may feel that it will move from a subsidy system into a tax system with the poor paying for the poorest.

The 6 authorities have concentrated on producing and revising 30 year business models that demonstrate if the proposals are sustainable, provide substantially more "bang for the buck" and also produce lasting benefits. The proposal in essence is simple in that those qualifying authorities that are in negative HRA subsidy will pay to CLG a discounted one-off payment to buy themselves out of the subsidy system and those in positive HRA subsidy will receive a discounted one-off payment from the CLG reflecting their subsidy entitlements/dues over the next 30 years. Removed from the subsidy system the councils will be able to run their Housing Revenue Account without its constraints and with greater certainty as they will not be relying on annual/3 yearly settlements.

In parallel a "Contact Group" made up from a wide range of people with housing and finance interests was established. It has been commenting on and advising on areas such as:

- Accounting issues and preparation of the business plans
- Treatment of the business plans
- Wider implications of / for self financing
- Risks
- Legal Issues
- Communications

The work on the idea to date has revealed the following benefits:

- Gives authorities more control to deliver the government's housing and other policy agendas.
- Longer term planning of asset management including maintenance programmes helping to produce more efficient and long term strategic decisions around issues such as the demolition and redevelopment of obsolete housing. In other words better asset management.
- Avoidance of short term fluctuations in revenue resulting from the annual subsidy determination, which frequently produced a budget variance of approximately 5% of total revenues (a substantial amount for a service with a tight budget).
- Avoidance of medium term fluctuations in revenue resulting from changes in national policy, such as the distribution of management and maintenance allowances.

However, the following potential concerns with the self-financing proposals have been identified:

- The amount of government resources for housing investment is limited, so any additional resources devoted to self-financing would have to come from within the existing housing envelope or compete with other policy areas such as transport.
- The advantages of self financing in terms of value for money would have to be demonstrated convincingly to justify any additional investment.
- For purposes of public expenditure control, housing revenues are treated in the same way as tax revenues, so additional borrowing is a public expenditure control issue in its own right, regardless of how it is financed.

The first of these concerns can only be addressed via the CSR07 negotiations and utilising the increasing number of HRAs that are moving out of subsidy thus generating more cash for re-investment back into housing. In respect of the second, the example of the cost benefits that ALMOs have been able to demonstrate in utilising their Decent Homes monies have ably demonstrated that VFM can be achieved with a more strategic and certain approach to housing management.

It is clear that if this proposal moves forward to a trial stage, and this is hinted at in the Green Paper, there will be a limited number of authorities that will be eligible to participate. Given that the pilot authorities have undertaken all the work to date at their own risk, it seems likely that they will be invited to take part in the trial. This could be 2008/09 financial year, but is more likely to be a year later thus meaning it probably will not be an option for the others to consider until 2010/11. The Housing Minister has made it very clear that there must be equity of treatment between those inside the subsidy system and those who choose to leave it. So authorities and ALMOs are going to face an interesting decision about whether to stay inside the dark, turbulent waters of the subsidy system that is probably going to change again, or do they cast off and take the opportunity to give themselves more certainty about a future time and thus enter calmer waters?

*Ken Lee (Chairman of CIPFA Local Authority Housing Panel and Finance Manager for Wigan and Leigh Homes Company. The views expressed are the personal views of the author.)*

#### SUPPORTING PEOPLE: THE GRANT IN FUTURE YEARS

Speaking at the CIPFA Housing Finance seminar workshop in July, John Kettlewell, independent consultant and CIPFA Housing Panel member, presented his thoughts on the likely future for the Supporting People grant. He suggested that the Supporting

People strategy was incomplete in that resourcing issues have not been fully dealt with, either in total or in distribution. Clearly we need to await the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007, but some aspects are already known, such as three year grants settlements and the replacement of the current grant system by a Supporting People Distribution Formula. But key questions remain: how quickly will the move be towards a Supporting People Distribution Formula and what exactly will be the impact of Local Area Agreements?

A lot of work will be needed over the next 18 months or so. With regard to capital, the issues include:

- Insufficient investment in housing for vulnerable people
- A lot of sheltered housing needs remodelling
- Does there need to be separate bidding for investment in vulnerable needs housing?
- More information is required on the needs of vulnerable people
- Then strategies can focus on how needs can be met
- Close working between organisations is required to ensure non-housing stakeholders also have an interest in the needs of the vulnerable
- It will be important to overcome "NIMBYism"

Issues for budgeting and accounting include:

- HRA services can still be accounted for in the HRA supported by supporting people contributions
- General Fund – housing authorities: mandatory divisions of service for supporting people on welfare services
- County fund – county councils: mandatory division of service for supporting people on welfare; do not aggregate within the Social Services SEA
- All supporting people authorities: occasional or enabling expenditure in the Social Services SEA.

Finance professionals responsible for budgeting and accounting should bear in mind the need to strike a balance. Too many cost centres could make aggregation difficult but too few cost centres may not provide enough analysis. The coding structure should allow for the main client groups used in DCLG statistics, e.g. homeless, and learning difficulties, elderly. They need to be split between block gross and subsidy and if block subsidy, provider payments should be coded so that gross cost and assumed client income can be kept separate. Administration costs should be kept separate.

Budgeting needs to take into account the value of the programme and the Admin grant and changes. Budgets must reflect strategy. Monitoring issues include timetable, responsibility and ownership; profiling corrective actions and virements; whether costs are controllable or uncontrollable; actuals to date plus commitments or accruals; links to activity data, and reconciliations to financial ledger income separately accounted for. Double counting across Supporting People, the HRA and Social Services needs to be watched out for.

Income generally provides a small contribution to Supporting People but there are nevertheless issues to watch out for. Short-term services are exempt. Existing users could passport it but this protection is ended with the completion of service reviews. People on Housing Benefit shouldn't pay the Supporting People charge provided as service is strategically relevant, of good quality and value for money. Others can request financial assessment. There will be no more top-up fees by providers. Authorities can usefully check whether more can be done to raise charges but will need to bear in mind the administrative issues of income recovery.

Turning to the outlook for Supporting People, John suggested that while Supporting People is at present ring fenced (one-way), for it to work it needs to be part of the wider range of services, each contributing resources. There should be linkages with capital

resources. Future grant allocations and the phasing of change will impact on Supporting People as will the pressures to deliver the service. We now need to move on and consider in particular:

- The efficiency agenda and VFM
- The impact on providers
- How partnership working can be taken forward
- How customers can have greater control over their lives
- How Supporting People can continue to work under Local Authority Agreements

#### COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANIES: AN ARTICLE BY ADRIAN WAITE

Cynics have been confounded as numerous 'Community Interest Companies' have been registered since part two of the Companies (Audit, Investigations and Community Enterprise) Act 2004 was passed and the Community Interest Company Regulations 2005 came into force on 1st July 2005. The hundredth Community Interest Company – 'Social Enterprise London' was registered on 27th January 2006 and by March 2007 a total of 845 Community Interest Companies had been registered in Great Britain. Of these, 694 were new registrations and 151 were conversions of existing companies. In April 2007 it also became possible to register a Community Interest Company in Northern Ireland.

Community Interest Companies are commercial companies that operate for the good of society in general or a specific section of the community. Any surpluses are used for the benefit of that community rather than the directors or shareholders. They can be a company limited by guarantee or shares or a public limited company. In practice most are companies limited by guarantee – 603 of the total of 845 in March 2007.

There is an 'Office of the Regulator of Community Interest Companies' and requirements for Community Interest Companies in addition to the general company law. These include a need to file an annual community interest company report along with the usual accounts. This will be on public record and will describe how the Community Interest Company has met its objectives. The Regulator has three main functions:

- To decide whether an organisation is eligible to become, or continue to be, a community interest company;
- The investigation of complaints; and
- Enforcement action, if necessary.

Registering a Community Interest Company is similar to registering any other company with the Registrar of Companies. One difference is the need to apply to the regulator for confirmation that the company is eligible for Community Interest Company status. A Community Interest Company's Memorandum and Articles of Association also need to contain specific provisions provided for by prescribed regulations.

The application to Companies House needs to be accompanied by a "Community Interest Statement" in a form prescribed by the regulator and signed by the first directors. Community Interest Companies need to use the initials "CIC", or the words "Community Interest Company" in their title, although in the case of Public Limited Companies it reads "Community Interest Public Limited Company" or "Community Interest PLC".

An organisation which is a Community Interest Company cannot also be a charity. Community Interest Companies are less regulated than charities. Even if a Community Interest Company has charitable objects it will still not be a charity.

Community Interest Companies operate within an 'asset lock' whereby assets of the company must be retained and used for community purposes consistent with the company's objectives or transferred to another asset locked organisation such as a

Community Interest Company or charity. The transfer of any assets from a Community Interest Company must otherwise be at market value.

In his annual report for 2006/07, John Hanlon, the Regulator of Community Interest Companies, said:

"The statutory asset lock, I believe, should be an important consideration when both central and local government are awarding contracts, or providing start-up finance and other assistance in the communities they serve. The CIC asset lock ensures that the assets, and any surpluses the CIC generate, is applied to benefit the community, not to generate funds for personal profit. As far as other bodies are concerned, the asset lock should provide reassurance to them also.

"The concept of a CIC, which is incorporated as a private company limited by shares, is one which has challenged a number of funders. I am pleased to say that once the central features of such a CIC are explained i.e. capital appreciation on shares, and a dividend which has a cap to ensure the lion's share of any profits goes to benefit the community, grant funders have become increasingly supportive of CICs, and are providing start-up funds.

"As more and more people become aware of the CIC form, and the flexibility it can offer, as they work to benefit the communities they are passionate about, I am convinced that CICs will continue to be a growing force for good in communities across the United Kingdom.

"I have said I do not see any no-go areas for CICs. Successful CICs will be a liberating force for people in this country and abroad. We will see CICs lead the way in the provision of services to communities, by communities, for communities. As more people see what the CIC form can offer their communities, this good will grow.

"There is still a real buzz of excitement when we see applications which have the vision to change people's lives for the better and real enthusiasm among the staff for what CICs can do for people and communities."

Rt. Hon. Alun Michael MP, Minister of State for Industry and the Regions, said:

"The Community Interest Company is an attractive legal vehicle for those operating social enterprises across the country. I am particularly delighted about the high proportion of new start-up businesses choosing this model. This demonstrates that the Community Interest Company structure is meeting the needs of new entrepreneurs looking to use their business for social good."

Community Interest Companies operate in many market sectors, the main ones at March 2007 being: Social and Personal Services (291); Real Estate, Renting and Business (174); Education (170); and Health & Social Work (126).

A survey of Community Interest Companies carried out by the regulator in 2006 showed that 48% of them had been established to demonstrate community benefit and 15% had been established because the structure was suitable. 52% of Community Interest Companies felt that their status presented them with an opportunity to access increased funding.

Community Interest Companies are seen as a way of unlocking entrepreneurial potential and directing it towards social and community goals. A Community Interest Company enjoys the freedoms and flexibilities of a private company but has to demonstrate a real commitment to social goals. The test will not be how many Community Interest

Companies register, but how many are still trading in the future. To date almost all the Community Interest Companies that have been established are still trading.

Anyone wishing to form a Community Interest Company or to convert an existing company into a Community Interest company can download application forms from [www.companieshouse.gov.uk](http://www.companieshouse.gov.uk) or [www.cicregulator.gov.uk](http://www.cicregulator.gov.uk).

*Adrian Waite. Adrian is Managing Director of Adrian Waite (Independent Consultancy Services) Limited and a member of CIPFA's Local Authority Housing Panel*

## FORTHCOMING CIPFA SEMINARS

### **Further Developments in Local Authority Finance**

An updating seminar event is planned for late 2007, probably December, after the announcement of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007. Details, as soon as they are available, will be posted on the Panel website at:

<http://www.cipfa.org.uk/panels/housing/index.cfm>

### **Further Developments in RSLs Finance – 19 October 2007, London**

This briefing is designed to update RSL finance staff on the latest regulatory developments and new initiatives within the social housing arena. Through plenary presentations and interactive workshop sessions, our noted speakers will outline the developments and provide guidance on the financial implications for social housing providers.

It will cover:

- An economic overview of the RSLs environment
- Revised treasury guidance
- Benchmarking
- External audit
- Inspection and regulation

There will also be an opportunity to attend two practical workshop sessions that address pertinent areas of housing finance management

- Resident involvement
- Procurement
- Asset management
- Pensions

To register a place or to find out more, please visit the CIPFA online Shop at:

<http://secure.cipfa.org.uk/cgi-bin/CIPFA.storefront/> or call Trudy Baker on 020 75435 765

### **Implementing Value for Money in the Social Housing Sector**

A series of certificated events where housing professionals talk candidly about their own experiences of implementing VfM - what worked well? What was disastrous? What could have been tackled better with hindsight? Delegates will have an opportunity to select

from a variety of approaches/models and templates to support the implementation of VfM in their own service area or organisation.

18 September Manchester  
19 September Birmingham  
20 September York  
26 September London

### **Open Book Accounting & Social Housing Services**

This Masterclass will review the potential of Open Book Accountancy and its application in the sector – why has this been so difficult to achieve and what precisely are the risks associated with this type of practice?

05 November London  
07 November Manchester  
13 November York  
14 November Birmingham

Contact Details for the two above series of events are:

Ms Natalie Lewis, Business Administrator  
[Natalie.Lewis@ipf.co.uk](mailto:Natalie.Lewis@ipf.co.uk)  
0208 667 8560

### **SUPPORTING PEOPLE – A NEW HOUSING PUBLICATION**

*Supporting People: The Essential Guide for Finance Practitioners (Fully Revised Fourth Edition 2007) (2007) (Available as book or as CD Rom)* can now be ordered. CIPFA's *Supporting People* guide provides comprehensive finance coverage for this important and constantly changing programme. Written by independent consultant and former City of Westminster Finance Director, Paul Cook, for CIPFA's Housing Panel, this major revision for 2007 embraces:

- The new opportunities to use Supporting People resources flexibly in local area agreements.
- Progress on DCLG's national strategy for Supporting People.
- The funding settlement for 2007-08.
- Guidance on the revised programme grant conditions for 2007-08 and updated statutory guidance.
- Freedoms and flexibilities now clarified by DCLG under the CPA.
- Supporting People and services to clients with learning disabilities.
- Supporting People and individual budgets.
- Supporting People authorities now expected to monitor and prevent the charging of top-up fees by providers.
- Revised Supporting People key lines of enquiry and the future of inspection arrangements.
- Analysis of the 2006 Commission for Social Care Inspection's review of Supporting People.
- Supporting People efficiency gains reported by authorities.

All the financial provisions are explained in clear tables, and there is extensive cross-referencing to legislation, regulations and DCLG guidance. Tables also include expert commentary on Supporting People in practice.

Complete with a revised glossary and bibliography, *Supporting People: the Essential Guide for Finance Practitioners* is aimed at keeping Supporting People managers and finance leads in command of the finances for the programme, whilst enabling them to plan ahead strategically.

For further details, visit the CIPFA website where you will also be able to order online at: <http://secure.cipfa.org.uk/cgi-bin/CIPFA.storefront/>

#### FREE CHARITIES NEWSLETTER

Readers are invited to subscribe to a free newsletter, produced by CIPFA's Charities Panel. The newsletter is written by finance practitioners working in the Charity Sector.

CIPFA's Charities Panel is interested in:

- Finance and policy issues relating to Charities and the wider Voluntary and Community sector
- The development, promotion and maintenance of best practice, standards and guidelines and the production and dissemination, including signposting of relevant advice and material for members and employers
- Responding to Government, professional bodies' and other bodies' consultation/discussion papers and exposure drafts
- The establishment of positive and productive professional relationships with Government, Government Departments and Agencies, the national audit bodies and professional practitioners, regulators and other Charity umbrella bodies

To receive the latest and future issues, and access previous issues, please email: [james.richards@cipfa.org](mailto:james.richards@cipfa.org) or visit <http://www.cipfa.org.uk/> and click on "CIPFA E-Newsletters"

#### CAN IPF HELP YOU? HRA VALIDATION CHECK AND SUBSIDY ANALYSIS 2008-09

The Base Data Return form for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) subsidy for 2008-09 is now available from CLG.

IPF are offering you the opportunity to sign up to their HRA Subsidy Data validation service. Available for just £250 + VAT, IPF will compare data from your current questionnaire to last year's return before you submit to CLG. This will alert you to any significant variations, allowing you to check that any changes are genuine and not the result of a false entry on your Base Data Return. In the past, such errors have cost individual authorities significant loss of subsidy. If the figures are correct, then you will be able to anticipate the impact of the variation on your anticipated subsidy receipt for 2008-09. Additionally (and as you will see below), IPF can help you with this analysis too.

Last year IPF developed an analysis model to assist with the difficult process of interpreting what the HRA Subsidy Determination means for local authorities. This analysis, which was very well received, was developed to help authorities better understand how the various elements of their subsidy were constructed and most importantly, how this compared over time and with other authorities.

IPF will be offering a similar service this year, although to increase its usefulness to authorities, this will now be made available very shortly after the provisional 2008-09 announcement with an update when the final determination is known. Examples of their analysis for 2007-08 are available at [www.cipfastats.net](http://www.cipfastats.net).

IPF will be making our analysis available for £500 + VAT, but as a **special offer** to early subscribers, this will also include the above validation check as part of the overall price. An order form is available to download from the website above.

In addition, IPF is also able to offer a number of other services to assist authorities in planning for and managing their HRA, which they would be happy to discuss.

For further information on any aspect of the above, please contact [policy@ipf.co.uk](mailto:policy@ipf.co.uk).

## THE PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND POLICY ASSOCIATION (PMPA)

### PMPA AUTUMN/WINTER PROGRAMME 2007/2008

#### PMPA Free Evening Lectures

3rd October "Can Local Government Save the Planet?"

Speaker: Warren Hatter, Formerly of the New Local Government Network and Forum for the Future

Chair: Ed Cox, Director of Policy and Public Affairs, Local Government Information Unit

It is time for the next step in modernising local authorities. Practice may still be patchy, and national policy may be hesitant, but the arguments about the vital need for local placeshaping and the pragmatic use of markets for service delivery have been won. And now there is a new game in town, that we have to win. In light of the Stern Review and IPCC report, local decision-makers are acknowledging the need for the future state to enable low-carbon living. Even though many do not know yet what actions they need to take, they are willing to discuss, for the first time, what it really means to live within natural limits. What does this mean in practice?

November 2007 (Date to be Confirmed) "The Act of Union: The next 300 years."

Speaker: Professor Robert Hazell, Professor of Government and the Constitution, University College London.

#### Spring 2008 Modern Democracy Lecture Series

28th January 2008: "Beyond Liberty"

Speaker: Nick Clegg, Member of Parliament and contributor to the recent IPPR publication entitled "Beyond Liberty" on the subject of "progressive liberalism and modern justice".

February 2008: "Tomorrow's Councillors"

Speaker: Dame Jane Roberts, Chair of the Councillors Commission.

March/April 2008 "Constitutional Reform"

Speaker: Rt Hon Kenneth Clarke QC MP

PMPA evening lectures are open to members and non-members and take place at CIPFA, 3 Robert Street, London WC2N 6RL at 5:45pm unless otherwise specified. Places are allocated on a first come, first served basis and PMPA members have priority. Book online at [www.pmpa.co.uk](http://www.pmpa.co.uk) or by emailing [info.pmpa@cipfa.org](mailto:info.pmpa@cipfa.org)

#### PMPA/BT "Vision at Lunch" Free Lunchtime Seminars

11 October "A rainbow alliance of possibilities or dulled to the grey of average? Partnership working in Practice" Speaker: Dr Andy Gill, Outcomes UK

There is increasing interest in the use of an outcomes-based approach in improving public services. Drawing on his experience of managing the nationally recognized Portsmouth Children's Trust, Andy will describe how the adoption of an outcomes approach can revitalize, strengthen and create partnerships that work.

27 November "Leading and managing change to deliver progress in the public sector" Speaker to be confirmed.

PMPA lunchtime events are limited numbers and only open to PMPA members. They take place at BT Innovation Centre, Queen Anne's Gate. 12:00pm – 2:30pm. To request a place at a BT/PMPA lunchtime seminar please email [info.pmpa@cipfa.org](mailto:info.pmpa@cipfa.org)

## PMPA PUBLICATIONS

Managing Stakeholders in the Public Sector (Publication September 2007)

Merlin Stone, Ashley Semmens and Neil Woodcock, WCL

This report will investigate some private and public sector ideas about customer and stakeholder management, and identify whether these ideas add value to the current debate about policy formulation and implementation. In particular, it will seek to answer the question as to whether treating organisations and individuals within them as stakeholders helps or hinders the policy delivery process.

Watchdogs Straining at the Leash (Publication Autumn 2007)

This report is based on a debate on internationalising the accountability profession, organised by the Public Management and Policy Association (PMPA) and CIPFA, and hosted by the National Audit Office (NAO) on 26th March 2007. Fifty-plus senior figures from all parts of the UK public audit and accountancy profession met to hear presentations from David M. Walker, Comptroller General of the United States, Caroline Mawhood; Assistant Auditor General, NAO and Chair of the Public Sector Committee of the European Federation of Accountants, Robert W. Black, Auditor General for Scotland, Jeremy Colman, Auditor General for Wales, Steve Bundred, Chief Executive of the Audit Commission, and John Dowdall, Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland. The event was chaired by Sir John Bourn, the UK Comptroller and Auditor General.

PMPA reports are free to PMPA members, £10 for non-members. Further details available at <http://www.pmpa.co.uk/publications.cfm>

## THE HOUSING PANEL

CIPFA's Local Authority Housing Panel meets three times a year and is responsible for all financial management and policy issues that affect housing finance. The Panel:

- develops Institute responses to Government, professional bodies' and other bodies' consultation / discussion papers and exposure drafts
- develops, promotes and maintains best practice, standards and guidelines
- produces and disseminates relevant advice and material for members and employers in local authority housing
- establishes positive and productive professional relationships with Government, government departments and agencies, the national audit bodies, professional regulators and other bodies falling within the Panel's defined areas of responsibility.

Further information about the Panel's activities, publications, seminar events and any vacancies is available on the panel website at: <http://www.cipfa.org.uk/panels/housing> or from Julian Smith by emailing [julian.smith@cipfa.org](mailto:julian.smith@cipfa.org) Tel: 020 75435795.