



# REGIONAL NEWS (ISSUE 3)

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Here at CIPFA North East we would love to hear from you with comments, queries and suggestions, please get in touch via the contact links throughout this newsletter.

## SECTION 1 - Welcome from the President



Dear members

This the third edition of newsletter - the first two have been received very positively. Thank you for your feedback.

Well let me think, has much happened since the last newsletter in March? .....oh yes, the World has changed completely.

We have all become experts at working from home, Microsoft Teams and we now use many news words and phrases in our daily conversations, for example -

- Home isolation
- Social distancing; and
- Furlough.....to name but a few

We have all faced a number of challenges. This newsletter brings together an update of how some of us are facing the challenges in the difficult time we are still experiencing, whether it be ways of working, challenging ourselves or partying like Angela Waring!

Please feel free to join in and let us know how you are coping with the current situation. If we receive enough responses (including photos of impromptu workstation areas) we will publish a special newsletter to share with everyone.

The Secret Accountant has again made a contribution - who is this person?

### COVID-19 - An offer of help

CIPFA North East are committed to safeguarding the health and welfare of our colleagues. We cover an area from the Tees Valley to Berwick-upon-Tweed, the most northerly English town.

In the coming weeks and months, if you need to self-isolate we are here to help. This could involve

collecting groceries, prescriptions, speaking on the phone or posting mail. Please get in touch if you require any assistance by emailing [regnea.president@cipfa.org](mailto:regnea.president@cipfa.org)

Equally if you are fit, well and able to volunteer we'd love to hear from you. Again, we can be contacted on the above email address.

Thanks again for taking the time to read this newsletter.

We will continue to post each e-newsletter on our website, Facebook page and Twitter.

**Jim Dafter**  
President

## SECTION 2 - UPCOMING EVENTS



### CIPFA in the North East - Events Update

It is the unfortunate circumstances brought about by Covid-19 that we have had to cancel all our face to face events we had planned for 2020, this now includes our Annual Conference which was due to be held in November.

Work is underway to seek opportunities to bring you CPD events virtually, so please bear with us at this challenging time and we will update you on this in the coming months.

Work is beginning to develop our 2021 Events schedule, we hope there will be an opportunity to deliver some of our events in person, but rest assured we will be following Government guidance and will only do this if it is safe to do so.

### Inspiring Women virtual

Following on from our successful Inspiring Women event in January, we're planning some webinars to inspire once again. The events will be short bite sized interactive sessions and details will be posted on our website and social media soon.

If you have any ideas or would like to get involved and inspire other members, get in contact with [Judith.savage@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:Judith.savage@newcastle.gov.uk)

[Keep up to date with CIPFA events in the North East](#)

## SECTION 3 - CIPFA UPDATES

In case you have missed them [CIPFA](#) have published the following items recently, check them out there is some interesting stuff here:

- [Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21](#)
- [The business case for diversity and inclusion](#)
- [What Gets Measured Gets Managed: Measuring Strategic Value](#)
- [Integrated Reporting Application Note: Business Models in the Public Sector](#)

And many more in the [CIPFA Thinks](#) and [CIPFA Speaks](#) part of the website

For those that subscribe to the Technical Information Service ([TIS Online](#)) there has been a range of new releases, such as;

- [Ex Gratia payments for Goods and Services supplied free](#)

- [Introduction of Charges for Houses](#)
- [COVID 19 and Internal Audit](#)

As well as lively discussions on the forums covering VAT, Fraud and Capitalisation of development costs.

There is also a range of excellent support on the website for dealing with COVID 19 issues, see Responding to COVID-19: insight, support and guidance

- [Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting](#)
- [2019/20 Cash Flow Statement Toolkit](#)
- [Financial Management Code](#)

.....[and many more](#)

## SECTION 4 - LOOKING BACK OVER THE LAST 6 MONTHS / LOCKDOWN

This time last year we had no idea what 2020 had in store for us. The UK was put into lockdown on 23 March 2020 in an unprecedented step to attempt to limit the spread of coronavirus. Boris Johnson instructed us to

**STAY HOME**

**PROTECT THE NHS**

**SAVE LIVES**

Boris along with his colleagues became a daily fixture in most households, as we all tuned in to what was going on in the UK and around the world. Although community spirit began to show again, the Queen addressed the nation, there were street parties celebrating VE day, everything felt very British.

We were all on the Coronacoaster (the ups and downs of your mood during the pandemic. You're loving lockdown one minute but suddenly weepy with anxiety the next). There was Locktail hour, where you drank Quarantinis and the North East made headlines for their [Isolation Disco](#). In this section we thought it would be fun to see what the CIPFA North East Executive team have been up to during these months. If you would like to share anything about your lockdown experience please send it to [northeast@cipfa.org](mailto:northeast@cipfa.org)

**My Lockdown Story by Angela Waring**

I entered lockdown in a state of disbelief, having been sent home to work at the end of March, it soon became apparent this wasn't going to be easy. Living with my husband and four children and no study to lock myself away in, it wasn't long before I felt my stress levels rising. Overnight I'd lost the childcare support provided by my Mam and become teacher to my secondary school aged children and all the while I had responsibilities to my employer to assist in the delivery of year end accounts.... with no allowances to the deadlines. I'm in no doubt my situation is one many of you can relate to and I'm not alone in the struggle to juggle more than usual in more normal times.

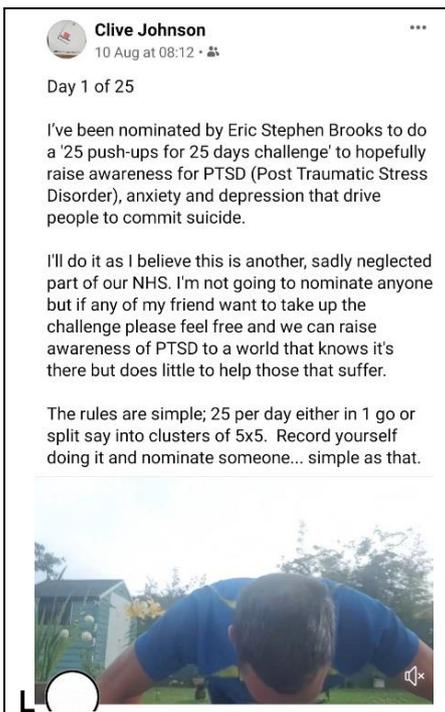
During all of this of course the benefit of more quality time with my husband and family was priceless and the virtual pub my sister-in-law formed for us was just brilliant. The virtual pub via video chat become a weekly themed event, my sister-in-law even went as far as making membership cards for us.



I know for so many of us virtual communication has been so crucial. For me the most important lesson I take from these experiences is how short life is and it's the memories we make along the way that make the journey so worthwhile... I'm taking a renewed level of resilience and a lot of happy memories with me from this challenging time.

**LOCKDOWN CHALLENGE**

Clive Johnson used some of his time to raise awareness for **PTSD** (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), this is an anxiety disorder which tends to be overlooked. Please read his own words on facebook. Clive did not nominate anyone personally to join him but many of his friends joined in and took up the challenge to raise awareness. You can find more information about the disorder at [ptsd.uk](http://ptsd.uk)



Keeping us all amused with his daily updates, he did very well for a man of his maturity! Well done Clive.



Clive did point out if he gets nominated for any other challenges, he is donating to CALM, a men's mental health charity so he never has to do anything like this again! No idea why he did a great job.

This is Judith Savage working at home with a toddler! A very productive young George here.

Judith was reflecting on some of the more humorous things she has heard whilst working in finance and thought it would be fun for us to all share ours with each other, we have all heard a few:

Judith's memorable quotes are:  
 "I divvn't de finance ah dee chips" (school catering manager)

and

"we swabbed this carpet last week and it tested positive for MRSA"

(in a hospital meeting room as my feet were resting on it, thankfully I'd left the handbag in the office).

When Kevin Johnston worked at Hartlepool BC, the CFO there had his own office and on the wall in the office was a poster that said "Everyone brings joy to this office, some when they arrive, others when they leave". 😊

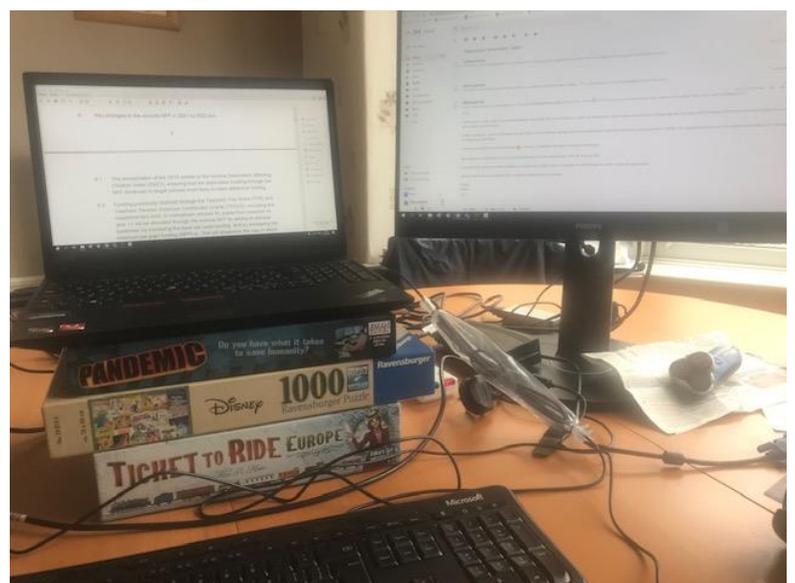
Bruce Parvin has a tale about a Briefing Paper he once wrote for Councillors following the publication of the provisional revenue settlement grant figures. "I reported an £8 million increase in public expenditure..... only I missed the 'l' out of public..... and there wasn't a spellchecker in the world that would have helped me!" ... haha

Bruce has kindly shared this picture showing us the joys of home working and his impromptu screen raiser!

Bonus point to anyone who spots how appropriate the top game in the pile is!



We would love to hear more of these, please send them to [northeast@cipfa.org](mailto:northeast@cipfa.org)



## CIPFA North East AGM July 2020

We weren't able to hold our usual AGM as planned in March however we reconvened virtually in July alongside some insightful pre-recorded interviews from Patrick Melia, Chief Executive, Sunderland City Council and John Fenwick, Director of Resources, Nexus about the challenges their organisations have faced during the Covid pandemic and the road to recovery.

You can catch these interviews at the following links:

John Fenwick: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyndj5OVBQU>

Patrick Melia: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVzPoiLd\\_64](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVzPoiLd_64)



## SECTION 5 - STUDENTS

If you're a CIPFA student working, living or studying in the North East, we want to hear from you and how we can support you through the qualification. CIPFA events are a great way to network with other students and members, and our CPD events can be a useful complement to your studies. Let us know what kind of events you would like to see by emailing us at [northeast@cipfa.org](mailto:northeast@cipfa.org)

<https://www.cipfa.org/members/regions/north-east/students>

## SECTION 6 - SECRET ACCOUNTANT

## An Exceptional Year

*Secret Accountant - An Exceptional Year*

When penning my previous article in February, little did I know what was to come. Suddenly all of the talk of year end accruals, timetables and “signing off” the accounts paled into insignificance as public services faced a situation the likes of which I have not seen in my twenty (ok then thirty-odd) years in public service. We’ve seen viruses before ...such as the norovirus, even the Millennium Bug, each of which was extremely disruptive in different ways but nothing comes close to the devastating impact of covid-19. Over three quarter of a million deaths, and rising, sporting, cultural and business calendars obliterated across the world, and let’s be honest, the economic consequences locally, nationally and worldwide remain undefinable and incomprehensible, no matter how good you are with Excel!

New ways of working took on a whole new impetus as we were largely dismissed from the work place as we know it. Home working and video conferencing became the new norm, and we watched intrigued, by the prospect of a glance into a colleague’s home. Never before have I had to worry about whether my shirt clashed with the “dining room come office” wallpaper.

Public Services in the main responded well to the challenges, both those who continued to do “the day job”, and those who were redeployed into new services to support communities against covid-19.

We saluted our key workers working within those sectors considered critical for society, this was the cause of some merriment in our household as our teenage son took a temporary role in a local supermarket, and reveled in his new critical worker status, something not yet achieved by his parents!

In such circumstances let’s not lose sight of the financial implications in both the short and long term and some of the short-term measures considered necessary. While a range of measures to support both employers, employees and the self-employed were understandable given lockdown restrictions, the subsequent clamor of “eating out to help out” seems slightly at odds with the observed links between obesity and covid-19.

The long-term economic issues cannot truly be assessed as no-one truly knows how long that covid-19 tunnel is and we don’t know whether that’s daylight, or an onrushing (but sparsely populated) train coming towards us. Let us also spare a thought for our financial colleagues, the much maligned actuary, who not only seek to forecast long term economic growth but also life expectancy over the new few decades, good luck with that!

If there was one thing that we can reflect on it was perhaps the resilience and responsiveness of services and of public and private sectors working together in a variety of forms, whether it was to develop Nightingale hospitals, or transforming production lines to produce hand sanitiser and ventilators. Perhaps if all forms of government now realise the importance of the mutual symbiotic relationship between the 2 sectors, we may be able to emerge from the shadow cast by covid-19. And at least it took our minds off Brexit!

Website: <https://www.cipfa.org/members/regions/north-east>

Email address: [northeast@cipfa.org](mailto:northeast@cipfa.org)

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At the risk of sounding like a broken record, I/we take the opportunity to remind us all that this virus hasn't gone away. By every measure, there has been a marked uptick in the spread of COVID-19 this week and with winter ahead there is a risk of a further worsening situation.

COVID-19 remains deadly and whilst at present it appears to be a younger age group that is being infected, the risk of course is that this will transmit to older family members and friends.

So please do remember **Hands, Face, Space**.

- Wash your hands regularly;
- Wear a face mask where required; and
- Keep a socially distant space from others.

**Stay safe, stay well, stay connected**