

CIPFA South East Regional President's Annual Report for 2020

Presented to the 2021 Regional Annual General Meeting on 22 April 2021

I would like to start by thanking all of you for joining us for our AGM online and your continued support through these unprecedented and challenging times. We, alongside the rest of the country, have tried to adapt to ensure that we utilise opportunities to deliver events in innovative and creative ways so we can continue to support our members in the region and deliver high quality events.

In my fourth and final year of representing you as Regional President I am pleased to report that the CIPFA South East Regional Council has continued to deliver, despite the ongoing pandemic, a broad programme of regular online events that were designed to be inclusive for all our regional members and students. Supplementing John's work on directing and resourcing this programme was a network of volunteers across the region who helped publicise these virtual events locally and therefore contributed to their success.

We were able to deliver only three live events before the pandemic restrictions began in late March – a CPD evening in January, hosted by PA Consulting in Victoria, which explored sustainable investment strategies and opportunities to develop a circular economy, in February a workshop and exhibition stand during the annual NHS FSD Conference in Newmarket and in March our Annual Wessex Day Conference, hosted by Hampshire CC in Winchester. Our East Sussex Hub Group held their planned July meeting virtually. All other hub groups agreed that a whole region virtual programme would be a good substitute for the usual live events – but nobody really expected the pandemic restrictions to continue for so long!

Our AGM in April 2020 and our ongoing events programme was delivered virtually based on a series of themes agreed by Regional Council in May for the duration of the pandemic restrictions. Initially we used Grant Thornton and CCLA host webinar facilities until we invested in our regional Zoom Meetings platform in early autumn, to enable more delegate participation during our virtual events. Our themes included financial resilience and the developing implementation of the Financial Management Code, reshaping risk strategies, climate emergency issues, international relationships, Brexit, and workplace wellbeing. The autumn virtual events were well received and our continuing virtual programme for 2021 will continue to explore the ongoing issues around these themes as well as newly topical ones.

Whilst I was sadly unable to attend the virtual Public Finance Live event (formerly the CIPFA Conference) this year due to a family bereavement, several of our regional members were able to do so and found it interesting and enjoyable. Whilst we were disappointed not to be able to host the regional stand during the conference this year we look forward as a region (Covid-19 permitting) to welcoming colleagues from across the CIPFA network on 7/8 July 2021 at Public Finance Live in London.

Other planned events cancelled this year were our Day Conferences in Kent and East Anglia, our Newly Qualified Members' Certificate Presentation Ceremonies, the annual Students' Network pub quiz, the annual autumn Residential Conference at the University of Reading, speed mentoring sessions and our Annual Regional Dinner in November. We intend to explore options for the return of all of these as soon as the pandemic restrictions will allow.

Our retired members group has sadly not been able to undertake any events this year as a result of the pandemic, but we hope this can restart in late 2021 as restrictions ease.

Our Regional Students Network was not able to deliver any live events this year but concentrated on putting students in touch with each other virtually.

The CIPFA Regional Forum was held virtually this year where representatives from most of the UK's CIPFA regions attended and we remain pleased and appreciative of the continuing collaboration and support across the regions.

I would like to thank all our regional volunteers including members of the South East Council for all their hard work and dedication in these challenging times. As with every year, I would strongly plea and urge you to volunteer and to help keep our region operating, we have been reliant on many of the same people for a few years now, some of whom have indicated their intention to stand down over the next couple of years. We need to secure the future of the region by ensuring we have an adequate succession plan.

We remain especially grateful to those sponsors who have supported our events for several years, plus several others who have sponsored or supported us for the first time this year – either with funding, virtual hosting or providing speakers: They are Grant Thornton, Zurich Municipal, CCLA, CIPFA, CIPFA-Penna, RP Martin, IMPOWER, 31Ten Consulting and PA Consulting Group. I should also like to extend thanks to all the CIPFA HQ staff who have delivered support to our remote regional activities during the year.

As this will be my final report as President, I would like to thank you all for your support over the past four years. It has been my pleasure to meet and represent so many of you whether in person or online and I would like to wish our new President Kathryn Long the best of luck.

Finally, I hope that you and your families remain safe during these unprecedented times and we look forward to hopefully seeing you (in person or virtually) later in 2021 and beyond at some of our regional and national events.

Amy Crowson
Regional President
CIPFA South East
April 2021