

# CIPFA in the North West

*Institute Council Member – Shaer Halewood*



Well it was my first ‘proper’ Council meeting on 12 October. Granted I had been to one in July but this one was the first one with a full agenda of business. The 7.30am train was very agreeable for the 11am start – a later start than in previous years to cater for us northerners travelling on the day – and despite only one man on his phone in the quiet carriage, (pet hate, the clue is in the name) it was a great journey down. Of course in true Walter Mitty style I got off at the wrong tube stop but righted myself to arrive with 5 minutes to spare.

It was busy, there were lots there and dare I say a tad daunting for the first couple of minutes. I soon spotted lots of friendly faces though and I sat on a table with two other new Members so I was in good company. Andy Burns opened the meeting and introduced Director of Local Government Sean Nolan who led a debate on ‘Challenging times for Senior Officers’.

Sean sited three major issues facing the public sector for the future – Austerity, Governance and Equality and asked whether we agreed with these and if so, what could we do to mitigate them. His thoughts were that we had positives in the form of the young, local leaders and growth. It sparked a lively debate with some good challenge across all Council members and the responses will be taken back and considered in CIPFA’s future policy thinking.

Andy Burns then highlighted the main points from the Council Board held in June which discussed the review and progress of the Advisory Services, C.Co, the financial performance; and the work that John Matheson had led on the International Strategy. The Board noted progress on 5 priority markets – Learning and Delivery Partnerships – Public Affairs and Sponsorship – Business Services – Sales & Marketing – Organisational Development. Following that, Rob Whiteman provided his update which were summary highlights and new developments on Policy Voice – Students & Members – Services & Products – Organisation.

The next session was a presentation from Gillian Fawcett, Head of Governments Faculty and past President John Matheson on the Global Strategy for which Council were asked for comments. The strategy describes the Institutes position as an International organisation with a UK hub. The strategy had been compiled by the Global taskforce, chaired by John, and is underpinned by seven key principles. Watch out for it on the website once it’s published.

Tom Lewis presented a paper on Council members’ formal relationship with CIPFA Regions where it was reinforced that regions should have amended their constitution so that Council members automatically become members of the regional branch. The North West certainly did that at its AGM in March and I asked whether Council members had found that they had been welcomed at their regional branches and given an opportunity to Contribute. Many hadn’t yet been and one member had not received any contact from the branch so the response was mixed. Our own regional meeting was the following day so we’d have to wait and see how it went in the North West.

Feedback was presented from Drew Cullen on the National Conference that was held in Manchester in July with another great turnout once again and some really valuable feedback from delegates. The 2018 dates have been set at 10 – 12 July with a provisional venue as Bournemouth – which is great for me as I've never been, so I'll be sure to pack my flip flops and swimming costume 😊

Finally we had an update on the Ethics work programme which included a revision to the Statement on Professional Practice coming for 2018, following a revision to the Code of Ethics from the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) which CIPFA is a member of.

There are also proposals to reintroduce the Ethics Sounding Board which is a group of CIPFA volunteers who are available for impartial advice if any CIPFA member or student has a particular dilemma and they need someone to chat it through. The webpage is also being updated to include real case studies of ethical dilemmas to help members and students ponder over the outcomes. This is a subject that I'm very close to being a member of the Ethics Working Group as we have worked hard to ensure a support mechanism is available to Members and Students if they find themselves in these situations.

The afternoon was Audit Committee for me and my very first one. On the committee with me are, among others, Ken Finch (Chair), Leslie Milne and Rosanne Nulty who I all know very well so I was in excellent company and was looking forward to it.

It certainly was a full agenda with internal audit reports to review and comment on, Policies to review and approve, the risk strategy and strategic risk register to review and the audit work programme to consider. It was a good meeting with lots of debate, as members we were quite challenging to the officers – in a positive way, of course – but that's what we're there for!

**And finally.....**So if you follow me on twitter (who wouldn't?) you will already have seen my amazing new CIPFA Member badge. People can't really grasp how I get so excited by these things but I just love a new bit of merch, especially if it can get you anywhere in the building at Mansell Street. Next time I think I'll arrive earlier and test it out. One day I'm going to assemble all my CIPFA merch together and see how much I've got. I bet some of it is even collectable now – but just hold on their Neddy, there's no way I'm selling it. I'm keeping it for ever and leaving it in my will to my colleague from the North East, Judith Savages' new baby boy George. I'm sure he'll be delighted (well he will if he's anything like his mum) 😊



Shaer

**Our regional webpages are:**

**Twitter** – search twitter.com/CIPFANW

**LinkedIn** – search for the Group CIPFA North West

**Facebook** – search for the Group CIPFA North West

**CIPFA Website** - <http://www.cipfa.org/members/regions/north-west>