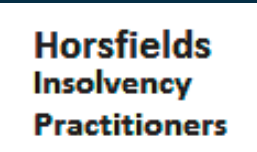


Lancashire & Cheshire Association Newsletter

Spring 2013

Our sponsors



The Association and Executive Committee wish to thank our sponsors for their continuing support during 2013/14

Annual Dinner Dance



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Final call for the Lancashire & Cheshire Association Dinner Dance, the social event of the year is nearly upon us.

The event is been held at the excellent Lancaster House Hotel in Lancaster on the 23rd March 2013.

Tickets are £ 30 per head and can be booked via our Assistant Treasurer Duncan Baxter: duncan.baxter@destin.co.uk

Accommodation should be booked directly with the hotel, see: www.lancasterhousehotel.hotel-details.com/

Your Association Events

12th March 2013	Sundry Debtor Seminar	Haigh Hall, Wigan
23rd March 2013	Annual Dinner Dance	Lancaster House Hotel
12th April 2013	Annual General Meeting	Jacobs, Birkenhead
23rd April 2013	Spring Members Lunch	Liverpool
24th April 2013	NNDR Seminar	Haigh Hall, Wigan

More events to follow

Further information on these events can be found on your Association’s website:

<http://www.irrvassociations.org.uk/index.asp?Ald=3>

Catching up with our Association President

The time since our last newsletter has flown by; the collations governments' localism agenda is certainly keeping many of us busy. As we get ready to implement the many changes Localised Support for Council Tax, Changes to the Social Fund, Under Occupancy for RSL's (Bedroom Tax), Personal Independence Payments. These changes are certainly going put a strain on many claimants' finances as well as Local Authority Staff dealing with initial fall out.

The Association has not been idle during this period, we've hosted a successful Recovery Seminar at Haigh Hall, organised by Paul Kelly and Peter Haywood; this looked at many areas including Balancing Revenues Collection with Excellence in Social Inclusion and The Realisation of Assets. Thanks to our speakers Dr. Steve Everson the Director General of CIVEA, John Lee of Horsfields, Andrew Roe of Charles Roe Auctioneers, Mark Barry of Avarto , Rossendale's' Martin Gaunt and the Executives own Peter Haywood from Burnley.



We followed this with a really well attended free evening seminar hosted by South Ribble Borough Council; Rupert Dewhirst provided the attendees an extremely informative (Scary) insight into the Future of Local Government Finance.

I wish to personally thank our speakers and event organisers, without their support it would be impossible to put on our events. I would also thank those who attended these seminars, as without attendees they would be a bit pointless.

As part of both the National Institutes agenda and our own desire to offer added value to our members we are instigating a new charging policy for our future events. This mean we will be offering significant discounts to IRRV members for all our seminars in future. This starts with the excellent Sundry Debtor seminar in mid-March where IRRV members are receiving a 50% discount. As an executive we will continue to develop the concept of adding value to your membership of the Institute.

On the social side as Association President I attended the East Midlands dinner dance in Chesterfield. I wish to congratulate and thank them on a very successful and enjoyable evening. Many thanks to Andrew Solley and his executive for their kind invitation.

The Christmas lunch proved to be another enjoyable event, as President this was the first time I have attended the social event of the year, meeting up at Doctor Duncan's close to Lime Street station in Liverpool followed by a "meat fest" at Viva Brazil I had a really good afternoon catching up with some our recently and not so recently retired colleagues. It's great to see so many of our retired members in such fine form. Thanks to Linda Price for organising this event.

I'm also looking forward to our own Dinner Dance which is just a couple of weeks away at Lancaster House Hotel.

Members are welcome to send feedback/suggestions directly to myself at mfisher@southribble.gov.uk

Get Involved with your Association

Our AGM will be held on the 12th April 2013 at Jacobs Offices in Birkenhead. We are always keen to see new members getting involved in the Institute and Local Association.

What does getting involved mean. The following list is not exhaustive and we are always open to new ideas, it gives an indication of the commitment and the benefits of getting involved.

- ♦ Attendance at Exec meetings 5 times a year 4.30pm to 6.30pm at Worsley'/Haigh Hall
- ♦ Contribution to development of Association programme
- ♦ Contribution to email debate
- ♦ Willingness to speak at an Association event
- ♦ Helping with arrangements for association dinner
- ♦ Attendance at AGM
- ♦ Opportunities to attend national Conferences as representative of the Association
- ♦ Encouragement of others to join the Institute
- ♦ Future progression to an Officer role in the Association

If you are interested in getting involved contact the Association Secretary, Adrian Webster:
awebster@warrington.gov.uk

Spring Lunch

Thursday 23rd April is our Spring Lunch.

We meet at Doctor Duncan's St John's Lane, Liverpool at 12 noon.

Lunch is booked at Viva Brazil, Castle Street, Liverpool.

All are welcome to book your place kindly contact linda.price@destin.co.uk



Former President Retires

Dave Cornes former Lancashire & Cheshire Association President has recently announced his intention to retire from his role as Director at Jacobs. The Associations Executive wishes pass on it good wishes to Dave for a long and happy retirement and also to thank him for his work and support of the institute throughout his career in both Local Government and the private section.

Bill Shaw Award

The association makes recognition each year of two much loved and revered former members of the executive. This recognition takes the form of awarding a prize to the best student from the Lancashire & Cheshire Association region in each of the exam sittings. The June prize is named after Bill Shaw and the December prize after Alf Alker. Details of Bill's and Alf's contribution to the IRRV can be found on the association website.

The winner of this year's Bill Shaw award is [Charlotte Langley](#) formerly of Cheshire East Council; Charlotte has recently left local government and our area to move to Herefordshire. We would like to congratulate her on her exam success and wish her well in in her new life.

A Landmark IRRV Conference for our Association



The 2012 Annual IRRV Conference held at Telford turned out to be a memorable conference for the Lancashire and Cheshire Association.

President of the Institute Roger Messenger opened the conference with a call to recruit new members, a theme which was re-iterated later by the Chief Executive David Magor. The conference was well attended with the number of delegates increasing on the previous year and a slight increase in the number of exhibitors, despite the financial difficulties that are currently being experienced.

These difficulties were highlighted by a regular at the Annual Conference, Tony Travers of the London School of Economics who pointed out that we were just 18 months into a period of 'austerity' which was expected to last until 2020 or beyond. He explained that Local Government is having to take a larger share of the reductions than Central Government, where a number of departments are protected from the cuts to an extent.

The Chief Executive of the Valuation Tribunal Service, Tony Masella, spoke to the conference on Council Tax Support appeals which the VTS will be responsible for from April 2013. However, he bemoaned the lack of any legislation surrounding the appeals process and likened it to the infamous Donald Rumsfeld speech that referred to 'known unknowns'.

The second day of the conference was dominated by three Parliamentarians – Lord Lytton; Stephen Timms MP the Shadow Employment Minister, and Lord Freud the Minister for Welfare Reform. Stephen Timms informed delegates that the Labour Party was in principal in favour of Universal Credit, although he stressed that there were difficulties with the implementation of the scheme, particularly with IT, timescales and the cost of implementation.

Lord Freud stressed the benefits of Universal Credit and informed delegates that they were needed to ensure that there was a welfare system in place that met the needs of customers alongside an effective support system.

The Performance Awards evening proved to be exceptional for the Lancashire and Cheshire Association with four of the nine gold awards being won by authorities from the region:

- ◆ Association of Greater Manchester Authorities for Excellence in Social Inclusion
- ◆ Pendle Council in association with Liberata UK for Excellence in Partnership Working
- ◆ Stockport Council for Benefits Team of the Year
- ◆ Cheshire West and Chester Council for Revenues Team of the Year

There were also silver and bronze awards for Rossendales, Knowsley Council and Avaro with Sefton Council. The evening finale was the handing over of the IRRV Presidency from Roger Messenger to our own Junior Vice President Dave Chapman, who spoke briefly but passionately when he said that achieving the Presidency of the IRRV was the pinnacle of his career.

Overall, the conference was a great success both for the IRRV as a whole as well as for the Lancashire and Cheshire Association, with congratulations and best wishes for the year ahead to Dave.

With all the Government cuts etc would I consider working in the Private Sector?

I'm aware from talking to many colleagues that there are unprecedented numbers having a rethink about their career paths. Some of the reasons are to do with the on going cuts to Local Authority funding, feeling unappreciated, detrimental impact on salaries, pensions and general terms and conditions and changing service delivery models. The introduction of Universal Credit is forcing Benefits staff and Managers to think about what they will do next (although I think this will continue to drag out so another few years left yet).

As someone who worked in Local Government public sector for 27 years and made the decision to move to the Private Sector 4 years ago I feel I can give a balanced view of the differences.

I have been lucky to work for some excellent, forward thinking Councils but have also experienced working for the "behind the times/stuck in their ways Councils".

I felt that I had achieved all I could in my field of Benefits, Revenues and Customer Services in the public sector and wondered what it would like working in the same field but in the private sector.

As someone confident in my ability due to my track record I was still apprehensive as to whether I would cut the mustard in the private sector as I had heard scary stories. These stories just had the effect of making me want to take on the challenge.

The timing was key as I had enjoyed 5 years working for Chester City Council, and as someone who doesn't suffer fools gladly in particular up the line I learnt a lot from some inspirational leaders at Director/Managing Director levels. There was a new unitary council being set up and I was proud of working for Chester City Council right up to the last day of its existence before talking on my new challenge as Head of Customer Centric Services for arvato Public Sector Services leading around 300 staff in the Benefits, Revenues and Customer Services Department for the partnership with Sefton MBC.

My approach to my job role at my level has always been to do what is necessary to achieve my objectives and if this means working 30 hours one week and 60 hours the next then so be it. I am not the type of person who enjoys working in the same place 9 to 5 from, day to day, week to week, year to year – that would be the worst job in the world to me.

Working in the private Sector has given me the chance to work with other private sector companies, set out teaming agreements and joint financial models so that each company is maximising profit from any joint venture.

I've worked on bids to secure more work and am particularly proud of building successful benefits partnership with Derby City Council.

I have a great rapport with Sefton MBC's Client Manager and we both work hard together (and never fall out if we have differences) to improve services to the public in Sefton.

I enjoy working with arvato colleagues, peers across other sites – Chesterfield, East Riding and Slough. We have an excellent support network and appreciate each others unique skills.

My day job is still running a large, busy Department and the focus at the moment like many others is managing the impact of the Welfare Reform Changes.

For those of you thinking about a career move my advice would be if you are good at what you do, are committed and will do what it takes to deliver your objectives then you will be a success in the private sector.

Would I return to the Public Sector? At the moment I would answer that No but as I previously said there are excellent Public Sector organisations out there and I don't believe the private sector is the answer to everything – there is good and bad in both so choosing the right private sector organisation with similar values to your own is key.

If anyone wants a conversation with me to help inform their future career paths then please feel free to contact me on 07771 374048.

Craig Geens, IRRV (Hons)
Head of Customer Centric Services
arvato Public Sector Services Limited

