

AIMSce

Association of Independent Members of Standards Committees in England

Annual Report of the Directors for the Year ended 31 MARCH, 2008.

The Directors have pleasure in presenting this their second annual report. This report covers the period from 1 April, 2007 to 31 March, 2008. Post year end events are included for interest.

Administrative Information.

Formation.

The Association of Independent Members of Standards Committees in England, commonly known as “AIMSce”, is an organisation to provide peer group support to members, to champion their interest, to empower them in their role and function and to represent their interests.

The idea of the Association was under discussion from 13 February, 2005. The Association began at the meeting on 31 May, 2006 and adopted its Constitution at its Inaugural Meeting held on Monday 16 October, 2006 at the International Convention Centre, Birmingham.

Directors.

The following are the directors of the Association.

Chair:	Bruce Claxton
Vice Chair:	Peter Rowland
Director without portfolio:	Mike Wilkinson
	Robert Venables

They were appointed at the Annual General Meeting held on 7 January, 2008.

Also appointed on 7 January, 2008 were Andrew Ades and Anita Grosz; they resigned on 24th and 25th September, 2008 respectively.

Dennis Ball was appointed a director on 8 March 2007; he did not renew his subscription on 1 April, 2007 and his membership and appointment ceased on 1 October 2007 pursuant to clause 8.3 of the constitution.

Audit:

The Association has appointed Mr Roger Shepherd as its Independent Examiner. His report is attached at page 9.

Banking and Investments:

The Association banks with Lloyds TSB Bank plc where it also maintains a deposit account.

Registration with Inland Revenue:

The Association is not registered with the Inland Revenue.

Nature of the Association.

The Association is an unincorporated association. It is not a charity although its constitution is modelled on that of an unincorporated charitable association. The management and operation of the Association follow the general principles followed by charities in order to reflect transparency, good practice and a high standard of governance.

Aims and Objectives:

The aims and objectives of the Association are to promote effective and efficient administration of local government in England by the provision of advice and support to Independent Members of Standards Committees in England in the performance of their duties. Thus the Association needs:

- To be responsive to members' 'professional' needs.
- To have the role of Independents recognised in the standards regime as an equal alongside elected members, chief executives, monitoring officers and representatives from Town and Parish councils.
- To be representative of members' views.
- To provide levels of inputs to the local authority ethical cultures similar to those of other stakeholders.
- To provide a collective voice in consultative processes with Government and others.
- To provide a fertile platform to develop ideas not necessarily coming from other stakeholders.
- To recruit members from geographical areas still showing reluctance to form forums.

Independent Members of Standards Committees:

Independent Members of Standards Committees fulfil a statutory role and an extended role, as required under the terms of reference of the individual standards committee to which they are appointed:

- We help increase public confidence and provide a clear signal that the standards committees are fair.
- We create, or help create, a climate and culture of high standards of conduct.
- We persuade members of standards committees to view issues from an ethical perspective.
- We bring neutrality and see issues objectively.
- We bring a wider experience from outside local government because of our experience from a wide range of work environments and cultures.
- We drive the ethical agenda and look for probity in all activities of our authorities including those that may be more remote, such as partnering arrangements.
- We bring an air of professionalism to debate, scrutiny and analysis of contentious issues.

The benefits of membership of the Association are:

- The backing and support of an organisation specifically oriented for its members' needs, run by volunteer members, and thus harnessing the relevant expertise of its membership where appropriate.

- Through peer support, empowering members to fulfil their roles and functions.
- The availability and provision of advice and guidance on statutory duties and responsibilities.
- Having access to a register of members.
- Being able to exchange views, comments, and make recommendations.
- Receiving information through a regular Newsletter, including information sent in by members, and occasionally, when appropriate, on an ad hoc basis.
- Bringing to members the benefits of research.

Geographical spread of Membership.

The Membership as at 31 March 2008 comes from the following Counties and Cities in England: Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Birmingham, Cornwall, County Durham, Cumbria, Derbyshire, Devon, Dorset, East Sussex, Hampshire, Herefordshire, Hertfordshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Lancashire, Leicestershire, London, Manchester, Norfolk, Nottinghamshire, Rutland, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Suffolk, Surrey, West Sussex, West Midlands, Worcestershire, and Yorkshire.

The corporate plan is:

- To attract and maintain a membership of at least one from every relevant authority including every independent chair.
- To have the ability for members to find other members through our membership register.
- To hold three events each year:
A fringe meeting at the Annual Assembly of Standards Committees.
The Annual General Meeting, with a keynote speaker, and
A conference or training event.
- To facilitate training.
- To carry out surveys on issues of importance to our members.
- To develop a register of members who are able and available to provide Peer Support to other Independent Members of Standards Committees.
- To raise funds to meet start up and running costs.
- To acquire hardware and software to accomplish these plans efficiently and effectively.
- Through contact with our stakeholder bodies to prove ourselves to have a valid and additional voice to add to the debate in Government, the Standards Board for England, universities and all appropriate places in the local government scene and arena.
- To encourage and support regional forums (or branches) and to assist members or other Independent Members to set up forums (or branches) in geographical areas where none currently exist.
- To prepare and keep our accounts in accordance with established practice on the receipts and payments basis and subject to independent examination by an independent examiner on a no fees basis.

Funding:

The Association will endeavour to attract grants to assist in its funding; alternatively it will have to seek higher subscriptions from its members.

Review of the year:

As is common with many newly formed organisations, it has taken time to develop the services to members, expand the number of members, create relationships with stakeholder organisations and establish the necessary internal systems and procedures to administer the Association.

The Directors have endeavoured to keep our administrative costs low with meetings as infrequently as possible. Meetings have been held in London and Manchester; no room hire charges have been incurred.

Many members' concerns have been dealt with and some can be seen under "Frequently Asked Questions" on the Website. Some questions have been more complex and the preparation for the answers may well feature in training materials in due course.

The Association has been involved with two consultations namely:-

1. Through the Standards Board for England, the Government's Consultation document published on 22 January, 2007 regarding Guidance documents to be published after the Government had put into effect Orders and Regulations under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
2. The Government's consultation paper regarding Orders and Regulations under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

A meeting of the Regional Coordinators of Forums of Independent Members was held with The Standards Board for England on 30 July, 2007; several members and Directors of the Association attended.

The Association hosted a Fringe Event at the Annual assembly of Standards Committees in Birmingham on 15th October, 2007.

The Directors are very pleased to announce that on 10 July, 2007 the Association received a grant of £5000 for seed funding to cover setting up costs from the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust Ltd. The Main Objectives of the grant are:-

- a. Purchase computer hardware and software systems for directors to work as efficiently as possible;
- b. Basic research to establish a database of potential members, leaders/mayors, chief executives, monitoring officers and chairs of standards committees;
- c. Co-development of training programmes and involvement in the processes leading to the establishment of Best Practice for the role of our members.

The Grant completion date was set at 31 March, 2008 and the Report to the Trustees of The Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust Limited was submitted before the due date of 30 April, 2008.

Prior to and during the inaugural meeting (16 October 2006) there were pressures to amend the constitution; it was clear that no single solution would satisfy all. It was therefore agreed that a Study of the Constitution be carried out. The first phase of this study was nearing completion when new forms of corporate organisation were proposed by the government. It was considered

prudent to await the outcome of those proposals; the study will continue when appropriate. After the first stage is complete Members will be asked to choose one of the various model forms of constitution so that the next phase can proceed with a view to having a resolution to amend the constitution at the Annual General Meeting. The concluding section of the first phase of the study will explain the next steps right through to the resolution.

During the period the website has been further developed. At the time of the inaugural meeting it was in its infancy. It can be found at [http://: www.aimsce.org.uk](http://www.aimsce.org.uk). It has been and is continuing to be built up; in the medium term it will be taken over and managed by ourselves. There is now a members' section where you can review minutes and agendas and a list of other members (subject to restrictions for those who indicated in their application forms that they wished certain information to be restricted). More information will go into the members' only section from time to time. There is a question answering facility on the website. We welcome your thoughts about the website and any contributions you may wish to make to it.

Accounts:

The Association's Directors have chosen to adopt for accounting purposes the accounting procedures laid down by the Charities Act 1993. Detailed accounts have been prepared on the receipts and payments basis and the Directors consider that the audit requirement of section 43(2) of the Charities Act 1993 (the Act) does not apply.

The incoming resources were principally registration fees and subscriptions of £965. Prepayment of subscriptions for 2008/9 amounted to £100 and interest earned net of tax was £57 and a grant of £5000 for seed funding to cover setting up costs was received from the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust Ltd. Expenditure on Member Services totalled £1470, Capital expenditure of computer equipment cost £938 and other equipment including software and a text book cost £791. Travel expenses totalled £599 and telephone including broadband was £125. Some expenses had been incurred, but bills not received by 31st March 2008 but account has been taken of all liabilities at the balance sheet date. Depreciation of £172 has been charged.

Post Year events.

Orders and Regulations relating to the Conduct of Local Authority Members in England.

The Orders and Regulations were made 14th April, Laid before Parliament 17th April and Came into effect on 8th May 2008. The Title is 2008 No. 1085 Local Government, England and Wales; The Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008. They can be downloaded from http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2008/pdf/uksi_20081085_en.pdf

Standards Board for England Guidance.

The Standards Board for England has published the following titles of guidance for standards committees:-

The Role and Make-up of Standards Committees;
Local assessment of complaints guidance; and
Local assessment of complaints toolkit.

These can be found through the link <http://www.standardsboard.gov.uk> , select guidance and

standards committees and down load.

Members may be interested to read on page 15 of the “Role and Make-up of Standards Committees” that our Association is mentioned as a resource that can provide support.

Following our submission to the Standards Board for England we received a response from Alex Kroon, Senior Policy Adviser which included the following. “.....We found your comments very constructive and we have taken a majority of them on board and built them into the guidance. There were a couple of suggestions that I would like to respond to though.”

“You recommend that we advise members should not receive allowances whilst suspended. This is a position we agree with and recently clarified in an edition of our Bulletin newsletter. However, we will clarify further in the guidance.”

“In your response you suggest the guidance contain a list of organizations/bodies that offer the services of trained mediators. This is an issue we have looked at in the past and I appreciate the advantages it could bring. In the past the Standards Board has been reluctant to offer this information as we could be seen to be endorsing certain firms over others and it raises other issues, such as do we have a criteria for deciding which firms are appropriate to recommend or a ‘benchmark’ to classify trained mediators, such as the membership of a professional body? However, this is still under consideration and we will note AIMSce’s view when making a decision before the guidance is published”.

“Thank you for taking the time to comment on the guidance. The next step for us is to comment on the consultation paper and then finalise the guidance once we have sight of the final regulations. You ask in your covering letter if AIMSce could in the future receive the guidance when it is more developed. Unfortunately, due to the government’s timetable on implementing the regulations and, as we understand it, their intention to hand over the assessment of complaints to local authorities in April, we will not have the time within our guidance production schedule to have another round of consultation with the reference group. I appreciate that this is not ideal but in the interests of having guidance available to local authorities as soon as possible after the regulations are implemented we are operating a tight timetable. In the event that the regulations are delayed or the assessment function is not handed over to local authorities on 1 April we may reconsider the timetable for the guidance and build in a further round of consultation. I will of course keep you posted if this is the case.”

The Standards Board for England called for another meeting of the **Regional Coordinators of Forums of Independent Members** which was held in Manchester on 17 July, 2008: Several of the Directors and members were involved.

Seventh Annual Assembly of Standards Committees

The Seventh Annual Assembly of Standards Committees organised by the Standards Board for England is taking place in Birmingham on 13 and 14 October, 2008. It is an important part of the Calendar for those involved with the work of Standards Committees. The Standards Board for England has for the third consecutive year invited the Association to host a Fringe Event. Your Committee accepted this invitation.

The Year Ahead:

The Second Annual General Meeting is to be held on 26 November 2008 at 2:00 pm at Islington Town Hall.

Activities and Interests of the Directors:

The Directors give their time freely. None of the Directors or their near relatives has received any pecuniary benefit from the Association. Bruce Claxton incurred out of pocket expenditure on behalf of the Association amounting to £282; (2006/7 £614); he also made an interest free loan of £10 to open the bank account: this was paid off during the year. Other Directors have incurred out of pocket expenditure on behalf of the Association amounting to:- Peter Rowland £57, (2006/7 £104); Mike Wilkinson NIL; (2006/7 £380) and Robert Venables £15.00.

Retirement and Election of Directors:

The Constitution provides for the Directors to be appointed each and every year at the Annual General Meeting of the Association.

The following retire at the Annual General Meeting:

R. B. Claxton, P. Rowland, and M. Wilkinson, and R. Venables

They are all eligible and offer themselves for re-election.

The Directors would like to thank all those who have made a contribution either through their membership dues or assistance in one way or another.

Signed by:-

Bruce Claxton,
Chairman.

Peter Rowland,
Vice Chair.

Date: 13 October, 2008.

Association Address: Dane Lodge,
Main Road,
Newbridge,
Isle of Wight. PO41 0TR.

Bankers: Lloyds TSB Bank plc,
22 St Thomas's Square,
Newport,
Isle of Wight. PO30 1SQ.

Independent Examiner: Mr Roger Shepherd,
Roslin Barn,
Chillerton,
Newport,
Isle of Wight. PO30 3HG.

Independent Examiner's Report to the Directors of The Association of Independent Members of Standards Committees in England.

I report on the accounts of the Association for the year ended 31 March 2008, which are set out on pages 10 to 12.

Respective responsibilities of Directors and Examiner.

As the Association's Directors you have chosen to adopt for accounting purposes the accounting procedures laid down by the Charities Act 1993. You are responsible for the preparation of the accounts; you consider that the audit requirement of section 43(2) of the Charities Act 1993 (the Act) does not apply. It is my responsibility to state, on the basis of procedures specified in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 43(7)(b) of the Act, whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report.

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general principles given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Association and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as Directors concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent examiner's statement.

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 41 of the Act; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and to comply with the accounting requirements of the Act
 have not been met; or
- (2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Roger C. Shepherd,
 Roslin Barn,
 Chillerton,
 Newport,
 Isle of Wight. PO30 3HG.

Date: , 2008

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Association of Independent Members of Standards Committees in England.
Accounts for the year ended 31 March, 2008.

	NOTES 2007/8	2006/7
	General	General
	Funds	Funds
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES		
Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31 March, 2008.		
Incoming Resources	£	£
Fees, Subscriptions, Grants and Bank Interest Received Net.		
Registration Fees and Subscriptions	965	1,450
Prepayment of Subscriptions	100	30
Deposit Account Interest Received Net	1(c) 57	3
Loan from Director	2 -	10
Grant Received	5,000	-
Total Incoming Resources	6,122	1,493
 Resources Expended		
Membership Services		
Inaugural Meeting	-	65
Newsletters & Consultations by post	171	40
Membership Certificates and correspondence by post.	61	-
Newsletters and correspondence by e-mail	409	-
Conference	400	-
Web Site	-	-
Database	429	-
13 October, 2008.	1470	105
 Expenditure on Publicity, Fund Raising, Management and Administration.		
Stationery, Postage, Copying and Consumables (included in Membership services)	-	410
Capital Expenditure at cost	938	100
Equipment (Software, Text book, and office equipment)	792	77
Travel Expenses	446	408
Mileage	153	46
Subsistence	29	54
Telephone and Broadband	125	-
Bank Charges	15	-
Repayment of Loan from Director	2 10	-
Total Resources Expended	3,978	1,200
Excess/(Shortfall) of Receipts over Payments	2,144	293

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Association of Independent Members of Standards Committees in England.
Accounts for the year ended 31 March, 2008.

	NOTES	2007/8 General Funds	2006/7 General Funds
BALANCE SHEET at 31 March, 2008			
Fixed Assets			
Computer equipment	4	766	100
Current Assets			
Cash funds			
Lloyds TSB Bank plc			
Current Account		42	125
Deposit Account		2,395	168
Total Current Assets		2,437	293
Current Liabilities			
Creditors			
Web Site	1(d)	500	500
Stationery		-	80
Directors Expenses	3	193	614
Room Hire		29	7
Loans			
Repayment due in 2007/8		-	10
Total Current Liabilities		722	1,211
Current Assets less Current Liabilities		1,715	(918)
Total Assets less Total Liabilities		2,481	(818)
Funds			
General Fund	5	2,481	(818)

Signed:

Bruce Claxton, Chairman.

Peter Rowland, Vice Chairman.

Date: 13 October, 2008.

Association of Independent Members of Standards Committees in England
Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2008.

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS:

1. Accounting Policies.

(a) Basis of Preparation

The financial statements have been prepared on the receipts and payments basis under the historical cost convention; they comply with the requirements of the Charities Act 1993 s.42(3).

(b) Funds

The Funds represent the accumulated incoming resources of joining fees and subscriptions of members less payments for expenditure incurred.

(c) Deposit Account Interest

Interest receivable from deposits is included in 'Incoming Resources' and includes only those amounts received up to the balance sheet date net of appropriate taxation.

(d) Outstanding Liabilities

Where contracts have been entered into, all outstanding costs representing work carried out prior to the balance sheet date are included in Current Liabilities.

(e) Value Added Tax.

The Association incurs VAT on certain items of expenditure, which it is unable to recover. Any such VAT is written off in the accounts, and is included in the corresponding category of expenditure.

(f) Depreciation

Expenditure on Fixed Assets with a purchase price exceeding £50 is been capitalised and is included in the Balance Sheet. Depreciation is applied to the cost of the assets on the straight-line basis at the rate of 25% per annum, levied monthly.

2. Loans

At the balance sheet date, no loans were outstanding.

3. Payments to or from Connected Persons:

The Association has reimbursed Peter Rowland £57 (2007 - £104): Mike Wilkinson £ Nil (2007 - £380) and Robert Venables £15 (2007 – Nil) and Bruce Claxton £896 (2007 - £614); for travel expenditure to meetings of the Association and for the repayment of expenses incurred in the administration of the Association in the year ended 31 March 2008. The loan of £10 to the Association made in 2007 was repaid in the year ended 31 March 2008.

4. Fixed Assets

Date	Item	Cost £	Depreciation £	Net Book Value £
	Computer System		938	172 766

5. General Fund.

The balance at 1 April 2007	(818)
Surplus of receipts over payments for the year	2,144
Items transferred to fixed assets	838
Depreciation charged	(172)
(Increase)/decrease in current liabilities	<u>489</u>
Balance at 31 March 2008	2,481

6. Grant.

On 10 July, 2007 the Association received a grant of £5000 for seed funding to cover setting up costs from the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust Ltd.