

AIMSce

Association of Independent Members of Standards Committees in England

Annual Report of the Directors for the Year ended 31 MARCH, 2009.

The Directors have pleasure in presenting this their third annual report. This report covers the period from 1 April, 2008 to 31 March, 2009. Significant post year end events are included for interest.

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 and to empower them in their role.

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 were the directors of the Association during the year:-

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

They were re-appointed at the Annual General Meeting held on 26th November, 2008.

Consequent to the local government reorganization in Shropshire, Peter Rowland has not been appointed to the standards committee of the successor authority and has therefore resigned with effect from 1st April, 2009. The remaining directors thank him for all his hard work and contribution over the years and wish him well in his other activities.

Audit:

The Association has appointed Mr Roger Shepherd as its Independent Examiner. His report is attached at page 8.

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 accord with 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 2009 comes from the following areas in England: Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Birmingham, Cambridgeshire, Cheshire, Cornwall, County Durham, Cumbria, Derbyshire, Devon, Dorset, East Sussex, Essex, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Herefordshire, Hertfordshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, London, Manchester, Norfolk, Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, Somerset, 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:

The Directors have endeavoured to keep our administrative costs low with meetings as infrequently as possible. Meetings have been held in London and Manchester; room hire charges have been kept as low as possible.

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. Department of Communities and Local Government has issued another Consultation Paper – "Communities in control: real people, real power Codes of conduct for local authority members and employees".
2. Consultation regarding "Standing for Office: Time-Off Entitlements".

The Association published ten newsletters; Monthly up to and including December 2008 and then again in February 2009. This two monthly practice follows the consensus of members attending the annual general meeting which was not later discouraged by the membership as a whole.

The Association published its findings to its limited remuneration survey and sent a summary to the Chief Executives/Head of Paid Service at relevant authorities. Many responded and have caused their authorities to review the remuneration of Independent members of Standards Committees and also their indemnity arrangements.

A publicity and recruitment drive was initiated. Letters were sent to the local authority press and to the Chair of each Standards Committee. The membership continued to increase. There were 98 members at the end of the year, including 45 new members. There will always be members leaving because their terms of office end.

Two meetings of the Regional Coordinators of Forums of Independent Members were held with The Standards Board for England on 17 July, 2008 and 10 March 2009; several members and Directors of the Association attended.

The Association hosted its third consecutive Fringe Event at the Annual Assembly of Standards Committees in Birmingham on 13th October, 2008. The Paper – "The leadership & Skills of the Independent Chair" - given by Mike Wilkinson to a full house was well received as evidenced by the delegate feedback received by the Standards Board for England.

A training survey was conducted through the newsletters and the results circulated similarly.

Through the newsletters the Association notified members of the commencement of the new orders and Regulations; likewise the introduction of Guidance from the Standards Board for England. Similarly it included good practice articles such as "Simple errors lead to successful appeals; lessons to be learnt" and "Pre-Assessment Process – list of criteria to consider".

The Study of the Constitution was discontinued when it became apparent that the costs of the alternatives were disproportionate with the potential benefits appropriate. When the need arises a resolution to amend the constitution will be proposed at future General Meetings

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The website has been further developed. 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 a member or members. 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 £1,425. Prepayment of subscriptions for 2009/10 amounted to £880, interest earned net of tax was £29 and the cost of rail travel for a guest speaker to a regional Forum meeting was reimbursed £66.

Resources Expended on Member Services totalled £1,313, there was no capital expenditure, Travel expenses totalled £659 and telephone including broadband was £696. Some expenses had been incurred, but bills not received by 31st March 2009 but account has been taken of all liabilities at the balance sheet date. Depreciation of £237 has been charged.

Post Year events:

Eighth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees:

The Eighth Annual Assembly of Standards Committees organised by the Standards Board for England is taking place in Birmingham on 12 and 13 October, 2009. 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 fourth consecutive year invited the Association to host a Fringe Event. Your Committee accepted this invitation; it will also be exhibiting at its exhibition stand. Bruce Claxton will give a paper – “Into focus – the Development of Independent Members “. This will be focusing on the responsibilities and training of Independent Members. Why are Independents required? How do they achieve leadership and assist in the development of the broader ethical agenda, within the structure and functioning of Local Authorities. How do they relate to the officers and elected Members.

The Year Ahead:

The Third Annual General Meeting is to be held on 11 November 2009 at 1:30 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 £706, (£896 - 2008). Other Directors have incurred out of pocket expenditure on behalf of the Association amounting to: Peter Rowland £47, (£57 - 2008); Mike Wilkinson £162, (£Nil - 2008) and Robert Venables £Nil, (£15- 2008).

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 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.

Mike Wilkinson,
Director without portfolio.

Date: 3rd September, 2009.

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 2009, which are set out on pages 9 to 11.

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: 10th September, 2009

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Association of Independent Members of Standards Committees in England.
Accounts for the year ended 31 March, 2009.

	NOTES	2008/9	2007/8
		General Funds	General Funds
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES			
Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31 March, 2009.			
Incoming Resources		£	£
Fees, Subscriptions, Grants and Bank Interest Received Net.			
Registration Fees and Subscriptions		1425	965
Prepayment of Subscriptions		880	100
Deposit Account Interest Received Net	1(c)	29	57
Refund of Travel Costs		66	-
Grant Received	6	-	5,000
Total Incoming Resources		2,400	6,122
Resources Expended			
Membership Services.			
	1(g)		
Newsletters & Consultations by post		202	171
Membership Certificates and correspondence by post.		126	61
Newsletters and correspondence by e-mail		449	409
Conference		318	400
Web Site		-	-
Surveys/Database		218	429
		1,313	1,470
Expenditure on Publicity, Fund Raising, Management and Administration.			
Capital Expenditure at cost		-	938
Equipment (Software, Text book, and office equipment)		-	792
Travel Expenses		586	446
Mileage		73	153
Subsistence		94	29
Telephone and Broadband		695	125
Bank Charges		20	15
Repayment of Loan from Director		-	10
Total Resources Expended		2,781	3,978
(Shortfall)/Surplus of Receipts over Payments		(381)	2,144

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Association of Independent Members of Standards Committees in England.
Accounts for the year ended 31 March, 2009.

	NOTES	2008/9 General Funds	2007/8 General Funds
BALANCE SHEET at 31 March, 2009			
Fixed Assets			
Computer equipment	4	529	766
Current Assets			
Cash funds			
Lloyds TSB Bank plc			
Current Account		917	42
Deposit Account		1,139	2,395
Total Current Assets		2,056	2,437
Current Liabilities			
Creditors			
Web Site	1(d)	500	500
Directors' Expenses	3	88	193
Room Hire		-	29
Total Current Liabilities		588	722
Current Assets less Current Liabilities		1,468	1,715
Total Assets less Total Liabilities		1,997	2,481
Funds			
General Fund	5	1,997	2,481

Signed:

Bruce Claxton, Chairman.

Mike Wilkinson,
Director without portfolio.

Date: 3rd September, 2009.

Association of Independent Members of Standards Committees in England
Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2009.

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.

(g) Stationery, Postage, Copying and Consumables

Stationery, Postage, Copying and Consumables are included in Membership services in the receipts and payments accounts.

2. Loans:

At the balance sheet date, no loans were outstanding.

3. Payments to or from Connected Persons:

The Association has reimbursed Peter Rowland £47 (£57 - 2008); Mike Wilkinson £162 (£ Nil - 2008); Robert Venables £ Nil (£15 - 2008) and Bruce Claxton £706 (£896 - 2008); 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 2009.

4. Fixed Assets:

Item	Cost	Depreciation	Net Book Value
	£	£	£
Computer System	938	409	529

5. General Fund:

Balance at 1 April 2008	2,481
Shortfall of receipts over payments for the year	(381)
Depreciation charged	(237)
Decrease in current liabilities	134
Balance at 31 March 2009	1,997

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.