



**IPSM E-BULLETIN**  
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**GUESS WHO I MET IN  
SANTIAGO CATHEDRAL?**

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The photograph on the front cover of this edition of E-Topics shows Past President Stephen Guile and three friends on a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, to visit the Shrine of the apostle St Peter the Great. Whilst they were there, they met former Prime Minister's wife and eminent QC Cherie Blair and attended the Pilgrims' Noon Mass with her in Santiago Cathedral. Please see the E-Topics Index at the end of this edition for information on where to read Stephen's full article on his pilgrimage.

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 18<sup>th</sup> edition of E-Topics. This, the spring 2008 edition of the IPSM's magazine contains several interesting articles, and I commend all of them to you. For the first time ever, a complete index of the contents of all editions of E-Topics and Topics from January 2005 to December 2007 is set out on the last 4 pages of this publication.

During the past three years, many helpful, useful and informative articles have appeared in E-Topics and Topics, most by Council members, but many by "guest" writers, such as Dr Paul Toyne (Director, Article 13) and Simon Pomfret (Managing Director of the Institute's Strategic Learning and Development Partners, Spirals Ltd.) Whilst some articles might since have been overtaken by events, as Government policy continues to unfold and new legislation is enacted, many others contain help and advice that is as useful and relevant today as the day it was written.

The Institute's web-site includes many of the older editions of E-Topics, which can be viewed by any visitor to our site. However, more recent editions are only available to IPSM members, so please let me know if you would like me to send you back-copies of E-Topics (by e-mail) or the full colour glossy magazine editions of Topics, of which I have several spares (by post.)

As you will see from the report on the IPSM's Governing Council, Council members are actively pursuing several issues of importance both in terms of the Institute's future direction and with regard to services for members. This includes the formulation of a Business Plan, a Communications Strategy and a Marketing Strategy. Council will also be giving consideration to further proposals for a Celebratory Dinner in Liverpool on either Friday 10<sup>th</sup> or Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> October – so watch this space!

If there are any issues that you feel Council should be reviewing or examining, please write to me and let me know. As far as the IPSM's Recruitment Strategy is concerned, I hope that you will be pleased to learn that as a result of the Institute's recent article and advertisement in Clerks & Councils Direct, there have been more than a dozen enquiries from Town Clerks regarding membership of the Institute, which so far have resulted in two new members – but I anticipate that there will be more very soon!

Derek Wolfe, FIPSM,  
President and Hon. Secretary

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## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

I am delighted to welcome the IPSM's newest members to the Institute. They are **Beatrice Addo** (Capital Works Officer, Housing Home Ownership Unit, London Borough of Southwark) **Michelle Ashinwo** (West London Private Sector Housing Co-Ordinator) Housing Strategy Team, London Borough of Hounslow) **Edward Reilly** (Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer, Sleaford Town Council) and **Geoffrey Symes** (Town Clerk, Kenilworth Town Council).

## **LOCAL COUNCILS' – THE GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER ON THE OTHER SIDE? (Part 3)**

This article represents the third chapter in my current local government career, since moving from “mainstream” local government in 1992, gaining the post of Town Clerk to Keynsham Town Council in October 2002. In leaving my then employer, Avon County Council, I made a transition from principal local authorities, the sphere in which I had worked since 1974, into the relatively unknown and (for me) uncharted “waters” of local councils. Local councils cover Community, Parish and Town Councils, and is a generic term, in much the same way that the term “principal councils” covers unitary, county, district and borough councils, including London Boroughs, Metropolitan Boroughs and the unique City of London Corporation, for whom I worked in the mid 1980’s.

“When were parts 1 and 2 published?” many of you may be asking disbelievingly. Well, the full answer can be found in the index published on the last four pages of this edition of the IPSM’s magazine. But the short answer is that I started this inquisitive examination of local councils, based on my many years experience working for them, in 2006. Somehow, I never got around to finishing the story, so now its time to make amends.

In 1999 and 2000, I was Town Clerk to Helston Town Council (in Cornwall) and was lucky enough to be a Cornish resident on the day of the only total eclipse of the sun likely to be visible from the British Isles for more than a century. Furthermore, totality could ONLY be experienced if you lived in Cornwall or South Devon on the appointed day, which was 11<sup>th</sup> August 1999. Sadly, on the day, much of Cornwall (including Helston and the Lizard peninsula) was covered in cloud, so I never did get to experience the full glory of the total eclipse. However, I digress. After 15 months in my post as Helston’s Town Clerk, I became restless, and started looking round for a new challenge. I applied for just two posts, Town Clerkships in Godalming and Warwick. I was invited to interview in both cases, duly securing the Godalming post against some other very strong candidates. I declined the Warwick post, and took up my duties in August 2000.

Before I attended for interview, I carried out quite a bit of research on Godalming and its Town Council. I was aware that the Guildford and Godalming area, in common with other parts of Surrey, such as Reigate, had the reputation of forming the so-called “stock-broker belt”, and I knew that housing wouldn’t be cheap, but as a single man at the time, this did not deter me! I like to think that I am a very open, ordinary down-to-Earth type of person, with no airs-and-graces about me. I much prefer an informal, friendly but respectful working environment, but soon found this Town Council’s “ambience” to be very different from that - far too formal for my liking. A few Councillors and staff seemed to resent my friendly, disarming and casual manner, and very soon a “rift” formed between myself and certain individuals, which I found disconcerting and disappointing. However, if I was “casual” in terms of my dealings with other staff and Councillors, that certainly wasn’t the case in terms of the way I carried out my various tasks and duties.

In the end, and much to my surprise and disappointment, it seemed as though certain individuals within the Council were determined to dislike me. When finally I sat down with leading Councillors to discuss the whole highly unsatisfactory situation, it soon became clear that there was an impasse. Councillors were at pains to stress that they had been impressed with my technical skills and the thorough and methodical way in which I carried out my work, but nevertheless felt that Godalming Town Council and I would have to part. Having signed a compromise agreement, obviously I cannot say anything about the terms I negotiated with the Council. Suffice it to say, though, that for the first time in my working life, my plans had come unstuck, and I felt a certain fear as I faced the

prospect of enforced unemployment. I also felt (wrongly, as it transpired later) that my career had been completely derailed, and that the damage was irreparable.

Luckily, after 5 months out of work, I secured another full-time post, but this time not in the local councils sector, nor even in local government. In March 2001, I found myself moving back to the city of my birth – London – when I was offered and accepted the post of Support Services Manager with Barnardo's, the children's charity, at their East London headquarters in Barkingside. Having worked in the voluntary sector for the first and only time in my life, I have acquired a huge respect for all who work in the Third Sector. Barnardo's may be part of the voluntary sector, but it was anything but amateur! I have only ever worked for one local authority that I considered to be more professional than Barnardo's – but this series is about my time in the local councils sector, so I must return to my reminiscences of Barnardo's at a later date! Much as I enjoyed working for Barnardo's, I was keen to return to local council administration. One year later, in February 2002, I took up the post of Town Clerk to Portland Town Council, on the enchanting Isle and Royal Manor of Portland, in Dorset.

(This series continues with Part 4 in the summer 2008 editions of Topics and E-Topics)

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## **MEET NEW COUNCIL MEMBER MAURICE CONDIE**

In reality, Maurice is not such a new member of the Institute's Council, having first been co-opted to fill one of two casual vacancies in October 2006. Since then, Council has met 7 times, and Maurice has already shown great commitment to the Institute and it's Council by managing to attend 6 of those 7 meetings.

Attending Council meetings cannot be easy, bearing in mind that he lives and works in the North-East of England, whilst most IPSM Council meetings take place in London, the Midlands and South-West England. Maurice is the Chief Executive of Byker Bridge Housing Association, a position he has held since 1988. He joined the Housing Association when it had just 6 members of staff, providing accommodation and other services to 40 people. BBHA now employs more than 100 full-time staff, providing services to in excess of 1,000 homeless and vulnerable people, making it the largest provider of its kind in the North-East.



Maurice takes a keen interest in service provision issues, having been appointed as the Vice-Chair of the Newcastle Local Strategic Partnership Board, as well as being a Board member of the National Housing Federation. In addition, he chairs several National and Regional NHF Committees, as well as serving on the Boards of several national and regional statutory, voluntary and charitable organisations. Most (but not all) of these organisations work in the housing, homelessness and urban regeneration fields.

Finally, Maurice is a Fellow of the Institute of Directors, plus a member (since June 1998) of the Institute of Public Sector Management. Rumour has it that he is also a more than competent musician! Maurice himself, though, is modest about his musical talents. He suggests that members judge his ability for themselves, by visiting one or more of the following internet links:-

<http://mauricecondie.webeden.co.uk/>

<http://www.condieandtolfrey.webeden.co.uk/>

<http://uk.youtube.com/profile?user=MauriceCondie>

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## **MAPLE GOLD REVISITED**

Regular readers of Topics and E-Topics will hopefully recall that two years ago, in the spring 2006 editions of Topics and E-Topics, we featured and reported on the ambitious exploits of one of our international members, a person who, by dint of her continued striving for new goals and fresh achievements, must surely be considered one of the Institute's most successful members of all-time, following its establishment in 1982. Maryanne Fong is a public sector researcher, hailing from Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada, and joining the Institute as recently as November 2002. In addition to the usual BA, MBA and MSc qualifications that typify many high-flyers and would-be high-flyers, she has also completed her Doctorate. Her achievements include being the recipient of the American Medal of Honour (USA), recipient of the Leading Scientists of the World Award (Series 2005) International Biographical Centre, based in Cambridge, UK, and recipient of the Great Minds of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Award, American Biographical Institute, based in North Carolina, USA.

To remind you, Maryanne was born and raised in Hong Kong. Despite her unremarkable upbringing within a typical family, she developed keenness and a desire to excel, a quality that has borne much fruit since moving to Canada. Yet despite her thirst for excellence, Maryanne has many mainly hobbies, including reading, the creative arts and crafts, calligraphy (both right and left hand writing in different languages) and learning other languages, as well as playing the piano, electronic organ, folk guitar and the Gu-Zheng (Chinese harp). Nevertheless, not one to allow the relatively sedentary nature of her work and many of her hobbies to predominate, Maryanne is a keen leisure-cyclist, happy to swap her desk for an unhurried tour of some of Ontario's leafier suburbs and parks, revelling in the sunshine and fresh air of a still relatively sparsely populated country. When I told Maryanne that I was planning to write another article in Topics / E-Topics, featuring her latest achievements, she replied:-

"Mr President, it's very delightful to learn that you are going to write an article about my modest achievements in the upcoming Spring Issue of E-Topics. I am hoping to do some PR work to help introduce the IPSM to other leading professional bodies and organisations of which I am a Fellow, Member or Associate Member, with the aim of forging more business and cultural links; also encouraging exchanges of views and ideas between public and private sector management organisations."

"As always, I am grateful to my professors, parents & good friends who are my inspiration. They have taught me a little secret of success: "Practise discipline and you

will see your efforts & hard work pay off over time.” I know that I have much to learn from you, Mr President, who writes so well; also much to learn from the IPSM about public sector management. Indeed, I take great pride being a Fellow of the Institute.”

“For your information, I was accepted to be a Member of the International Institute of Risk & Safety Management (UK) on 14 September 2007. I am committed to Continuous professional development and training; I take pride in being a Fellow of the IPSM. My latest awards and appointments are as follows:-

Deputy Governor of ABIRA (USA); Marquis Who's Who(USA); International Who's Who Historical Society Member & International Who's Who of Professionals(USA); Hon.DG (UK) AdvBus(UK) HonDG (USA) BA(USA) MBA (USA) MSc(UK) Doctoral Candidate (UK) Researcher(Canada)”

“I have recently been chosen to be inducted into the American Hall of Fame (USA), and have very recently been elected into membership by the prestigious International Who's Who Historical Society (Washington, DC, USA) and my biography has been selected for publication in the upcoming edition of the International Who's Who of Professionals.”

“Thank you for your kind attention and wishing IPSM continued success.”

“Kindest regards,  
Sincerely,  
Maryanne TP Fong,”

“International Who's Who Historical Society (USA) Biography & Member, Marquis Who's Who (USA) Biography; Deputy Governor of the American Biographical Research Association (USA); Hon Director General for the Americas of the International Biographical Centre, Cambridge, UK”

For your information (and inspiration!), Maryanne's complete Curriculum Vitae reads:-

Professional Qualifications & Designations:

C.PROF.BTM(UK) Companion Grade equivalent to the Doctorate Degree Level  
F.IOD(UK), F.Inst.SMM(UK), FRSH(UK), F.IHPE(UK), F.Inst.TT(UK),  
F.I.MANF(UK),F.IDM(IDM CPD Award) Fellow Grade, M.CMI(UK) M.Inst.LM(UK),  
M.RIPHH(UK), M.CILT(UK), M>CGI(UK), M.APM(UK), M.Inst.CM(UK), IP SM(UK),  
M.Inst.AM(UK) M.IMS(UK), M.AEA(UK), M.IISE(UK), M.IOSH(UK), IPFM(UK),  
ACEA(UK), AAFC(UK), M.IITD(Ireland),M.CIM(UK),CPM(UK), AIMM(Australia),  
A.AITD(Australia),AHCIMA(UK), A.ILAM(UK), AMIPR(UK), AMIWO(UK)  
CEI(USA), CEC(USA), CAQS(USA) Member Grade.

Achievements & International Awards:

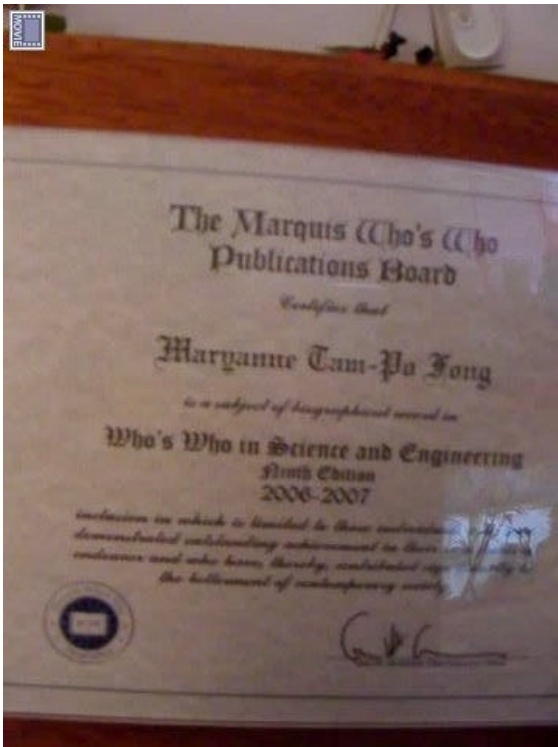
IBC Hall of Fame Induction, Cambridge, UK  
Recipient of the Leading Scientists of the World Award (Series 2005)  
Recipient of the Great Minds of the 21st Century Award(USA)  
Recipient of the American Medal of Honor, USA  
Recipient of the International Peace Prize, USA  
Elected to the International Order of Merit, UK  
Recipient of the Woman of the Year 2006 Award, USA  
Recipient of the 2000 Outstanding Intellectuals of the 21st Century Award, UK  
Appointed Lifetime Senator of the World Nations Congress, WNC, USA  
Premiere Who's Who Biography, USA  
Selected by the Director General of IBC, Cambridge, England for appointment as his

Personal Adviser within the field of Business Management & Appointed Hon Director General of the IBC, UK  
Recipient of the World Congress of Arts, Sciences and Communications Lifetime Achievement Award, UK  
Marquis Who's Who Biography, USA ( Biography selected for publication in the Marquis Who's Who in Science & Engineering)

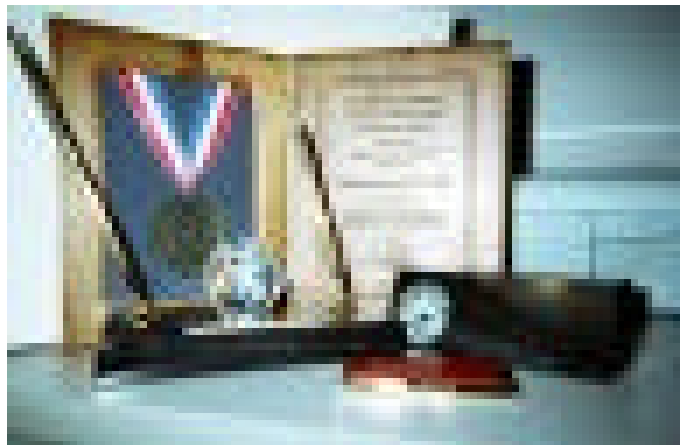
Academic Memberships:

Alum & Lifelong Member of Stanford University, California, USA  
Alum of the University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, USA  
Alum of the University of Wales, Swansea & Cardiff, Wales, UK  
Alum of Oklahoma City University, OK City, Oklahoma, USA  
Alum of the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, USA

Language Skills: English, Chinese( Cantonese & Mandarin), French, Spanish, German, Italian & Japanese.



Below – Lifetime Achievement Award (UK)



Left - Marquis "Who's Who" Certificate (USA)

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# ACHIEVING EFFICIENCIES & VALUE FOR MONEY - IN THEORY AND IN COPELAND

As part of the Comprehensive Spending Review the government has concluded that all public sector organisations will need to make significant efficiency gains if their objectives are to be achieved within constrained budgets. They have therefore set a target of at least 3% cashable efficiency gains a year. The intention is to maximise the resources available to improve frontline services and fund new priorities. The government suggests that one way of making efficiency gains is to use e-technology to increase the efficiency of staff. They are also seeking the release of £30billion from fixed asset disposals between 2004/05 and 2010/11.

It is important to note the difference between 'efficiency gains' and 'savings'. 'Savings' are something with which most people in local authorities will be familiar. If you spend less on a service you have made a 'saving' regardless of the effect that the 'saving' has had on the level of service. 'Efficiency' and 'Value for Money' is about increasing the relationship between outputs/outcomes and costs/inputs. So, if you make a 'saving' and maintain the level of service you have become more efficient and if you spend the same and provide a better service you have also become more efficient. In the first example you have a 'cashable efficiency gain' and in the second instance you have a 'non-cashable efficiency gain'.

The audit commission considers that 'value for money' has three elements: Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness:

'Economy' is about how much you spend. If you write housing strategies and you want to achieve maximum 'economy' you would simply employ fewer people and spend less. However, this would make it more difficult to produce a good housing strategy.

'Efficiency' is about what outputs you achieve in relation to your inputs. If the same team of housing strategists carry out more research and produce a better strategy they could be said to have become more 'efficient'. One way of judging this could be the extent to which the housing strategies meet the 'fit for purpose' criteria.

'Effectiveness' is about whether the outputs (housing strategies) achieve the desired outcomes. This could be judged by looking at whether the housing needs that have been identified are being addressed. For example, is more affordable housing being made available, are there fewer homeless people, is the condition of local authority, housing association and private stock being improved and are tenants and residents more satisfied with life in their neighbourhoods?

'Value for Money' is about addressing economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The audit commission has defined 'excellence' in Value for Money as:

*"A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users, is highly cost-effective and fully contributes to the achievement of wider outcomes for the community."*

In my view the key to success in delivering 'value for money' is to focus on what represents 'value for money' for the customer rather than on what represents 'value for money' for the organisation. This means finding out what the customers' needs and wishes are and considering how to provide products that are relevant to addressing those needs and wishes, are of a high quality and are delivered as cost effectively as possible. Only when this has been established should attention be turned to considering how the organisation should organise itself and how it should purchase the goods and services that it requires. If this is done without a prior consideration of 'value for money' for customers there is a danger that it simply becomes a sterile exercise in trying to reduce

staff numbers or to buy goods and services more cheaply. The consideration of 'value for money' for customers is likely to result in a change in the nature and level of services provided and the way in which they are delivered.

Having done this attention should be turned to how to deliver relevant, quality services in a cost effective manner. In the case of most public services most costs are staff costs and there is therefore a need to recognise that 'value for money' strategy will usually involve considering human resource issues. There are perhaps three main aspects to this:

First, embedding a 'value for money' culture. The recent audit commission study of 'value for money' in housing associations – 'better buys' – found that developing the right culture among staff is more important in securing 'value for money' gains than selecting the right procurement options. All staff need to see 'value for money' as part of their own role rather than something that senior management will initiate. This also means that management should welcome suggestions from their staff to improve 'value for money'.

Second, 'value for money' should be seen as more than finding ways of procuring goods more cheaply. If staff costs are the major cost then 'time management', 'performance management' and investment in staff through staff development and training are critical to achieving 'value for money'.

Third, it must be recognised that in many cases improved 'value for money' will result in fewer staff being required in some areas and that sensitive human resources issues will therefore arise. This has been the case, for example, at Chorley Borough Council where the 'value for money' strategy has resulted in the loss of 100 staff. Donna Hall, Chief Executive of Chorley Borough Council is quoted in the 'Local Government Chronicle' as saying:

*"The vast majority of local authorities' budgets are staff costs and you have to get that down. You can tinker round the edges, but at the end of the day, you have to take people out of the organisation... People know that in any organisation, there are people that are underperforming... If they did not have the skills and the capabilities that we needed, they were made redundant."*

However, it is also important as part of a 'value for money' strategy to strengthen priority services and this can involve increasing staff numbers.

An example of this approach to 'value for money' is that which I took as Finance Director of Copeland Borough Council. The Finance Department provided accountancy, audit, exchequer, revenues and benefits services. Upon my appointment I consulted internal and external customers on their future needs and their current experience of the services that they received and also considered evidence on costs, performance and customer satisfaction. Having done this I shared the evidence that I had gathered with my staff, elected Members and the Chief Officer Management Team and developed a 'value for money strategy'.

I found that the accountancy section was well regarded and cost effective but considered to be 'remote' by internal customers including Directors and Business Unit Managers. I therefore created small devolved accountancy teams in each of the Council's three main departments headed by an accountant with dual responsibility to myself and the service director. This led to an improvement in the service provided by the accountants who were able to make a more significant contribution to the success of the services that they supported.

The Revenues service was found to be a high cost service in relation to that of similar authorities with a relatively low level of performance. I therefore reduced the cost of the

service, principally by deleting some middle management posts and ending the use of temporary staff. Clear targets were set for the collection of revenues and procedures clearly documented. Significant savings were achieved that were used to fund service developments in other areas of the department and to provide a net saving to the authority to invest in improvements in other 'front line' services. Improved performance in Council Tax collection also enabled the authority to reduce its share of Council Tax in two consecutive years.

The Exchequer service was found to be well regarded, low cost and performed well so no significant changes were made.

The Benefits service provided a poor service. For example, very few claims were settled within the target of fourteen days. It was also seen as being remote from its customers being based centrally in a comparatively rural area (some claimants had a round trip of over seventy miles to see a benefits officer!) and there were concerns about low levels of benefit claims and the effectiveness of work in handling fraud and overpayments. However, expenditure on benefits administration was low. I therefore increased the numbers of staff employed, devolved benefits officers into four existing neighbourhood offices and one new neighbourhood office, appointed a Fraud Officer and an Overpayments Officer, launched a benefits take up campaign and set targets for the turn-around of claims. Performance, customer satisfaction and the take-up of benefits increased, while the savings achieved by the Fraud Officer and Overpayments Officer exceeded the cost of their salaries. The increased take up of benefits obviously benefited the claimants concerned but also brought additional resources into an area of economic and social deprivation.

The Internal Audit section was part of the accountancy team and small but had potential. I therefore took it out of the accountancy team and established it as a separate Business Unit with the Head of Audit having the enhanced status of a Business Unit Manager. I created a new post of 'Value for Money Auditor' following which the internal audit service was able to propose 'value for money' gains that exceeded its own costs. With the advent of 'Best Value' the service was able to expand its remit to address performance management and continuous improvement. I also strengthened the central accountancy team with the appointment of a Technical Accountant who assisted me with lobbying for increased resources for the authority with significant success. Our capital programme expanded to over £20million a year.

This 'value for money' strategy therefore involved a focus on what the internal and external customers required and how to deliver that, investment of additional resources in improving services and in 'back office' services that could contribute to the 'value for money' agenda, analysis of costs and performance and achieving savings that contributed to the development of other 'front line' services. However, it was focused on delivering relevant, quality services at an appropriate cost rather than simply on achieving savings.

However, it was important to gain staff commitment to the strategy. Some middle managers in the department were opposed to this approach and difficult to 'win over'. The trade unions were opposed to this approach and I well remember them demonstrating outside the Council offices with placards reading 'No to Customer Care'. Some of the Members were also opposed to this approach. However, I was lucky to have the support of the then Chief Executive and Leader of the Council and the 'value for money' strategy was implemented.

Gaining acceptance of the changes among the staff was difficult. A lot of effort was put into staff consultation, staff training, improving staff development schemes and staff

briefing. Some staff, including managers, left the department feeling that a customer-centred and 'value for money' approach was not something that they could support. However, others welcomed the new approach and at an away day for the departmental management team it was decided (not at my suggestion!) to adopt an objective of being the 'best finance department in England' – an ambition that would not even have been considered a few years before!

'AWICS' is assisting local authorities with the development of value for money strategies and with training staff in 'value for money' issues. It is being increasingly recognised that there is a need to 'embed' 'value for money' throughout organisations through changing the culture. The Audit Commission has found that this is even more important than selecting appropriate methods of procurement.

We are also holding a series of regional seminars on 'Achieving Efficiencies and Value for Money in Social Housing'. The speakers are Adrian Waite, Stephen Harriott and Janet Williams of the Audit Commission. Further details can be found on our website at: [www.awics.co.uk/regionalseminars/housingvfmcourse.asp](http://www.awics.co.uk/regionalseminars/housingvfmcourse.asp).

*Adrian Waite*

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## **COMPUTING ADVICE – STAYING SAFE FROM HACKERS, INTRUDERS AND VIRUSES**

There is a considerable range of software packages, both free & paid for, available on the market, designed to safeguard your computer from unauthorised activity and debilitating viruses.

A Firewall will stop an intruder from accessing your computer. If you use Windows XP or Vista, or have a broadband modem, then you may already be protected.

Anti-Virus programs protect your computer against viruses already downloaded, and from new viruses being downloaded. Such software is particularly effective if the "automatic update" function is turned on, affording protection from the latest virus threats as soon as you go online. Further, you should scan your machine weekly as a matter of routine.

Anti-Spyware protects you from stealth advertisements, spy ware and cookies installed without your knowledge and without your permission when you surf the Internet.

Other safeguarding programmes, (such as Mailwasher, for example) act as intermediaries between the mail server and the e-mail client (program) on your PC. I use Mailwasher all the time for 6 email accounts. Nothing is ever downloaded on to my PC via email unless I give it express permission first. Mailwasher enables me to do this with ease, although there are other programs that provide a similar function.

My advice is to use all the different types of software protection available, and to trust nobody who sends you e-mails containing attachments, as often even your closest colleagues and friends will not themselves be aware that they have a virus or similar problem on their PC's – at least, not until it is too late! Believe nothing that comes to you over the Internet. Keep your anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewall software up to date, scan your machine weekly, and ensure maximum security at all times.

Martin Harvey,  
Council Member and IPSM Webmaster.

## **THE IPSM'S ON-LINE MEMBERS' ONLY** **DISCUSSION FORUM**

Not every IPSM member has joined this Forum yet, and for those who have, there has been no activity on the Forum since the end of November last year!

Essentially, the message surely must be: 'Use it or lose it'. The Forum was set up after quite a bit of \*\_voluntary\*\_ effort and it is really disappointing to see how little interest our members have in a service that was created specifically for them.

If you want to help rescue this potential white elephant, then please EITHER express an interest in joining (by emailing us on [info@ipsm.org.uk](mailto:info@ipsm.org.uk) ) OR by using your membership of the Forum to good effect.

Regards,

Martin Harvey  
IPSM Webmaster and Council Member

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## **SPIRALS' FORTHCOMING TRAINING COURSES**

Spirals, the Institute's strategic learning & development partners, have drastically revamped its open programme to make it a lot more comprehensive. The following are the courses being run in the spring, together with details of Spirals recently announced NVQ 4-level Diploma in Management qualification. Please direct your enquiries regarding any of Spirals courses / qualifications to David Elverson who can be reached on the telephone number / fax number / e-mail address set out below.

All of the courses will be held in the Cambridge area and IPSM members are obviously entitled to the same discount as before (20%). However, prices have come down to £245 for a one day course, so IPSM members can attend for just £196. The spring programme of Spirals Open Courses is as follows:-

Getting Organised – Making the Most Effective Use of Your Time                      Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> May

Powerful Presentations    Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> May

Delivering Successful Projects    Monday 9<sup>th</sup> June & Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> June

Process Mapping    Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> June

IPSM members interested in any of the above courses should contact us for further details. In a fortnight's time we will have a brochure describing all of the courses, available as a PDF document for displaying on the IPSM website, if that would be helpful.

David Elverson, MSc MCIM, Commercial Director, Spirals Ltd.

Tel: 01953 602505 Fax: 01953 605800

Email: [david@spiralsplus.com](mailto:david@spiralsplus.com) Website: [www.spiralsplus.co.uk](http://www.spiralsplus.co.uk)

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## **AWICS SEMINARS – FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

Hello,

I am writing to remind you know that we are holding our 2008 series of seminars on 'All You Want to Know about Local Authority Finance' at various venues in England between May and June 2008. These will provide delegates with an introduction and overview on local authority finance.

Places are still available at our London, Carlisle and Nottingham venues. The delegate fee at £250 in London and £220 at the other venues (plus value added tax) represents good value for money and individual members of the Institute of Public Sector Management are entitled to a 10% discount.

Do you think that a working knowledge of local authority finance would put you and your colleagues in a position of advantage?

Whether you are in a London Borough, Metropolitan, Unitary, County or District Council or a Government Office or otherwise involved in local government; whether you are an Elected Member, Non-Financial Manager, or even a member of the Finance Team, you could benefit from one of our courses at which you will learn:

“All You Want To Know About Local Authority Finance”

What the Course includes:

- General Fund Expenditure and Income
- Local Government Finance settlement 2008/09
- Revenue Support Grant, Business Rates, Budgets and Council Tax, Specific Grants
- Financial Management
- Capital Expenditure and how it is financed
- Prudential Borrowing
- Capital Receipts
- Treasury Management
- Asset Management
- Private Finance Initiative
- Education Finance
- Social Services Finance
- Transport Finance
- Housing Revenue Account
- Superannuation Fund
- Collection Fund

- Local Area Agreements, Local Strategic Partnerships, Area Based Grant
- Comprehensive Spending Review 2007
- Gershon and the Efficiency Agenda
- Inspection and Use of Resources
- Supplementary Business Rate, Income Generation

The course is accompanied by a very useful book entitled:

“All You Want To Know About Local Authority Finance 2008”

Many people have already benefited from this course.

#### Remaining Venues and Dates

- London: Euston Square Hotel – 4th June 2008
- Carlisle: Crosby Lodge Hotel - 12th June 2008
- Nottingham: Westminster Hotel – 25th June 2008

If you would like more information or would like to make a booking, please visit our website at:

[www.awics.co.uk/regionalseminars/lqfinancecourse.asp](http://www.awics.co.uk/regionalseminars/lqfinancecourse.asp)

Or contact us directly by replying to this email or telephoning 017683-52347 or 52165.

We offer a range of regional seminars of relevance to public services. Details of all regional seminars are posted on our website at

[www.awics.co.uk/regionalseminars/index.asp](http://www.awics.co.uk/regionalseminars/index.asp) .

Yours sincerely,

Adrian Waite

'AWICS' is an ethical management consultancy, providing support principally to those who provide public services. We offer 'Independence, Integrity and Value'.

For more information about 'AWICS' please visit our websites at [www.awics.co.uk](http://www.awics.co.uk) and [www.awics.eu](http://www.awics.eu)

Or contact us at:

AWICS Limited, Appleby Business Centre, Bridge Street, Appleby in Westmorland, Cumbria. CA16 6QH. Tel: 017683-52347 or 52165. Fax: 017683-54005. E-mail: [Adrian.waite@awics.co.uk](mailto:Adrian.waite@awics.co.uk)

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## THE IPISM'S GOVERNING COUNCIL – RECENT & CURRENT ISSUES

The IPISM's governing body, its Council, meets at least quarterly. It currently comprises 10 IPISM members, 9 of whom were elected to serve the Institute and its members for 2008 at the last AGM held on 9<sup>th</sup> November in London. The Council's current representatives are **Derek Wolfe** (President & Hon. Secretary) (Devon – Local Government); **Adrian Waite** (Vice-President) (Cumbria – Public & Third Sector Consultant); **Maurice Condie** (Hon. Treasurer) (Tyne & Wear – Housing Association); **Stephen Guile** (Immediate Past President) (Somerset – National Health Service); **Julie Price** (Suffolk – Local Government); **Martin Harvey** (Webmaster) (Powys - Retired); **Peter Nourse** (Somerset – Public Sector Interim Manager); **Pravin Shah** (London - Local Government); **Robin Raily** (South Yorkshire – Local Government) and **Rodger Lawrence** (Birmingham – Public Sector Interim Manager).

At its 24<sup>th</sup> January meeting in London, Council members gave in-depth consideration to a report prepared by Adrian Waite proposing a formal Communications & Marketing Strategy for the organisation. The Strategy sought to identify the most effective ways for the Institute to communicate with its members, as well as external organisations. Part of this incorporated the need for the IPISM to market itself and the services it provides to prospective and other potential members. On the basis of the Council's discussions, Adrian was asked to prepare an actual draft Strategy, for examination at our May meeting, with a view to implementing any agreed strategy shortly after.

Separately from the above, Robin submitted his report concerning the need for the IPISM to prepare and implement a proper Business Plan. Following detailed consideration, Robin was requested to formulate a draft business plan, based on comments made at the meeting, as well as further feedback promised by those attending. Council members also examined a draft Code of Conduct, in tandem with proposals for the publication of a members handbook or E-handbook. The draft Code was generally well received, with the exception of a section on the declaration and handling of interests, where it was felt that the draft code needed to be more precise regarding any disciplinary measures that might be taken in the event that members deliberately withheld information concerning any potentially conflicting interests they might hold. It was agreed to revisit this whole subject in May.

Other issues discussed at the last Council meeting included:-

- (a) the possible introduction of an NVQ level 5 IPISM Advanced Management Qualification Course, in tandem with Spirals Ltd;
- (b) recruitment opportunities amongst Town, Parish and Community Clerks, resulting from dissatisfaction with the recently established Institute of Local Council Management;
- (c) the inquorate 2008 EGM;
- (d) the IPISM's draft budget for 2008-09;
- (e) a third-quarter budget monitoring report for 2007-08;
- (f) a report on new members and subscription income received in 2007;
- (g) IPISM policy on dealing with members subscription arrears;
- (h) Possible IPISM participation at professional development and recruitment fairs.

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- Annual General Mtg. & Training Seminar 2005** Topics No 5 – Autumn 2005  
Topics No 6 – Winter 2005-06
- Annual General Meeting & Development Event 2006**  
Topics No 9 – Autumn 2006
- Annual General Meeting & Development Event 2006 – What You Missed**  
(Derek Wolfe)      Topics No11 – Winter 2006-07
- Annual General Meeting 2007 (Derek Wolfe)** Topics No 15 – Special Edition  
**(A G M Reconvened)**      Topics No 16 – Autumn 2007
- Annual Report to Members** (Derek Wolfe)      Topics No 16 – Autumn 2007
- Arms Length Management Organisations – Freedoms, Flexibilities and the Future**  
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- Articles of Association (for the IPSM)**      Topics No 12 – Spring 2007
- AWICS – The Ethical Management Consultancy**  
(Adrian Waite)      Topics No17 – Winter 2007-08
- Building a Licence to Operate: A Partnership Approach**  
(Dr Paul Toyne)      Topics No 2 – April/May 2005
- Comprehensive Spending Review**  
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- Computing Advice – Staying Safe from Hackers, Intruders and Viruses**  
(Martin Harvey)      Topics No 3 – Summer 2005
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- Election Observation in Macedonia**  
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- Empowering Local Communities – The Value and Cost of Voluntary  
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**Homes for the Future – More Affordable, More Sustainable**

(Adrian Waite)

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**How Corporate Social Responsibility Can Help Manage Risk**

(Dr Paul Toyne)

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**IPSM Annual Accounts 2004-05**

(Mark Haslam, Sons & Co.)

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**IPSM Annual Accounts 2005-06**

(Mark Haslam, Sons & Co.)

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(Derek Wolfe)

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DBW/lmw/31<sup>st</sup> March 2008