

CIPFA NORTH WEST SOCIETY AUDIT, RISK AND GOVERNANCE GROUP



CIPFA North West's newly renamed **Audit, Risk and Governance Group** held its inaugural event on Friday 30 September. This first annual Autumn Seminar brought together some of the themes of previous Audit Advisory Group events, and was priced at just £50 in order to be competitively priced in these financially challenging times.

Almost 90 delegates attended Woodlands Conference Centre in the glorious late September sunshine, to listen to a range of speakers covering good practice in auditing, governance and fraud investigations.

Despite some last minute programme changes, the event was a clear success, and stimulated thought and discussion throughout.

Chris Dickens, a Senior Manager from PwC, commenced the day on behalf of his colleague Jane Forbes. Chris drew upon his experiences working in internal audit across the public sector, and gave his thoughts on some of the lessons learned, emerging issues and assurance mapping. Clearly a thought provoking session judging by the number of questions from the floor.

Chris was followed by a second programme change. The Views from an Audit Committee Chair was replaced at the last minute with a group discussion session, facilitated by David Partington from Audit North West. This session focussed upon the challenges facing audit teams at the moment, and how (or whether) they are doing things differently or more efficiently. Every internal audit team has fewer resources than in previous years, however the risks facing our organisations are greater, and the discussion concentrated on how to resolve this conflict. Table groups fed back their thoughts, and again there was a good level of discussion, which no doubt continued in to the first coffee break.

Rob Grey, a training consultant from Bond Solon, delivered his session on the roles, ethics and responsibilities of investigations in his own, unique style. Having given table groups different elements of a scenario to work through, he then cross-examined "volunteers" in the witness box. This approach, while entertaining for the observers, was also informative in that it drew out some of the pitfalls which may await us when investigating a potential fraud.

Karen Lowe, a Senior Manager from Mazars, then gave an up-date on the Fraud Act. Those that attended the Weekend School earlier this year will recall that Karen delivered an informative, yet light-hearted session on the Fraud Act at that event, however the Act had not come in to place and there was little national guidance available at the time. This up-date enabled Karen to refer to recent cases in order to underline and expand upon the message previously delivered.

Lunch allowed for some informal networking which is always invaluable at these events, and was followed by Linda Everard, the Head of Internal Audit from Southend-on-Sea. Linda and her team won this year's Cliff Nicholson Award for Innovation in Internal Audit, and she delivered an interesting session on providing assurance across partnerships and organisations where multiple agencies are involved. This is something that we all will be facing (if we don't already) and it was useful to hear how another organisation has tackled this potentially thorny issue, and succeeded.

**CIPFA NORTH WEST SOCIETY
AUDIT, RISK AND GOVERNANCE GROUP**



A very late change to the programme meant that, in the absence of Richard Davies from AXA Insurance, the last session of the day fell to "Smith and Jones". This joint session commenced with Derrick Jones, from KPMG, covering the role of the Responsible Officer within academy schools, including the some of the confusion that has arisen in relation to this role. The baton was then passed to Judith Smith, a Senior Auditor at Bolton Council, to talk about her (and her authority's) experiences in offering support to the Responsible Officer, including the challenges and issues faced.

Overall a successful event, in terms of both numbers and feedback, made by the input from delegates and the willingness of the speakers to give up their time to present at the event, so the thanks of the Group go to Chris, Rob, Karen, Linda, Derrick and Judith for contributing to such a success.

And now we look forward to the next event, the Annual Conference - which is to replace the Weekend School - will be held in March next year. We look forward to seeing you again then.