

Turning the page



As the New Year starts it is time to take a fresh look at some of the things we do. But it is no use making resolutions if we haven't considered their effects carefully and be willing to implement them firmly. This applies as well in the way the Association is run as it does in our personal lives, and for this reason the primary subject at this year's Planning Weekend this month will be the governance of the ACT.

Changing the governance of a body like the ACT, with its delicate balance of influence between members, committees, principal officers and the secretariat, is never going to be easy. Changing it and getting it right is even more difficult. But it is probably true that we need to change since the present structure of relationships, authorities and responsibilities were set up, in broadly their present form, at least 15 years ago. This was at a time when the membership was smaller, no electronic communications existed, competition was less and our distinctive roles as both a professional body and trade association had yet to emerge fully. We need to improve our speed of response to competitive pressures, recognise more fully the developing global opportunities and meet the needs of our members more effectively.

When our current governance structure was set up the secretariat was much smaller and the financial status of the Association uncertain. Owing to the unstinting efforts of our founding members, and those later members who have given so much time serving on committees and Council, we have built an association that is thriving. But possibly it is doing so in spite of, rather than because of, our governance.

Council and committee chairmen will be pondering the value of alterations to our governance structure over the next few months. We will also be looking at how other associations manage themselves to see what we may learn from their development and problems. If any member has views on the way in which the Association should be governed and ideas on the allocation of authorities and responsibilities, I would be pleased to receive them.

By now all our members should have received a copy of the ACT's Annual Report for 1999 – 2000. This shows a further upward movement in our reserves to £1.48m, or about £480 per member. Council is aware of the need to justify this figure in terms of our risks to future revenue and our capital expenditure plans. We will be looking at this issue closely in the run up to the annual budget presentation to Council in March. However, it is worth noting that we are developing plans for the very substantial expenditure needed to revise the syllabus of some of our education products and move them onto our website.

Our offices here in Ocean House are getting rather cramped as a result of the increase in the secretariat numbers needed to support our education programme. Our lease has a five year rent review which will take effect in a year's time. Well before then we will have to rethink our space requirements and consider accommodation alternatives, bearing in mind the great rise in City rental costs since 1996.

In many ways 2001 could mark a turning of the page for many aspects of the way your association is run. Now is the time for us to hear your views. ■

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