

ACT

CONSTRUCTIVE DEBATE

One of the expectations of members of the ACT – and certainly of our Council – is that we should achieve and sustain an external profile for the organisation. There can be heated debate as to what ‘profile’ really means but I am under no illusions that part of my job is to do my best to meet that expectation.

The reasons why there is this emphasis are fairly self-evident: at the very least, members and the broader community of the ACT’s stakeholders, including our staff, derive satisfaction from seeing the ACT’s views and actions gaining public recognition. Members will hopefully take this as a positive reinforcement – for them and perhaps also for their employers – of the feeling that they belong to a body with a serious role in the wider community.

We have to be careful in seeking profile. There are internal tensions, such as the need to be aware of differences between opinions that may be strongly felt by me and the team working in the ACT but may not necessarily be aligned with the views of ‘the membership’, to the extent that we feel confident we know what those views might be.

There are other more subtle tensions too: as treasurers we may feel justified in being forthright about the merits or otherwise of, say, new accounting standards, whilst the ACT’s position may unwittingly make life a little harder for individual members in the wider financial and professional community. As the ACT we can express views that our individual members may have difficulty in articulating in their capacity as employees. These dilemmas incidentally highlight the distinction between the various roles played by the ACT – professional group, members’ body, trade association, educator etc.

The solution we try to adopt is to be thoughtful and judicious about how and where we contribute to debate. This applies both to actions intended to reinforce the ACT’s profile, as well as to the much lower key but arguably more important effort we make to contribute to consultation exercises and participate in working groups with the likes of the FSA, the Treasury and the Bank of England.

Members will therefore I hope be pleased to have seen that our views on the Higgs report on non-executive directors were well reported in the *Financial Times* and elsewhere. The Higgs recommendations very closely mirrored what we had supported in our submission. This was important to us because we see risk and its understanding as a common denominator that links treasurers and non-executive directors. The latter must understand risk in the widest sense and contribute at board level to monitoring how well and prudently it is being managed.

For non-executive directors to be able to acquit their duties properly they need to have some understanding of the language of risk in which treasurers are professionally immersed. So we argued to Higgs that it is important that non-executive directors have ready

access to senior managers (such as treasurers), and also incidentally to external advisers, in order that they can be exposed to the strategies and techniques being used. Our response to the publication of the Higgs report welcomed its conclusions but challenged whether the need for ‘training’ of non-executive directors (as the report calls it) was properly thought through.

The key to our ability to be effective in our profile and our contribution to consultation and working groups lies in the strength of our technical resource. This relies on the ACT’s Technical Committee (led by Jon Boyle), on our own internal working groups spawned by the committee and on our Technical Director, John Grout. To help direct our efforts going forward one of the areas John is focusing on is identifying where the ACT has been active in the past and therefore where we already have a ‘seat at the table’. We continue to be very keen to hear from members or indeed others who have an interest in the accounting, regulatory and legal issues that impact the practice of treasury, and who would enjoy the chance to be part of the ACT’s efforts at contributing constructively to their debate. **RICHARD RAEBURN**

ON THE MOVE

- **James Koh MCT**, formerly Treasurer at Marconi, has moved to Courts plc as Group Treasurer
- **Richard Garry MCT**, has been appointed Head of Treasury at Toyota Financial Services (UK) plc, recognising greater global responsibility. Previously he was Treasury Manager.
- **Ernest Tsang MCT**, has been appointed as Senior Manager in the Financial Services Advisory Group at Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Hong Kong office in December 2002 after running his own consultancy business for the last two years.
- **Jo Browne AMCT**, is now Deputy Group Treasurer at the BBC. She was formerly Deputy Group Treasurer at Thomas Cook UK Ltd.
- **Jonathan Fisher AMCT**, previously Director, Corporate Audit, Lehman Brothers International Europe, has moved to Bears Stearns International Limited as Managing Director, Internal Audit.
- **Rory Nealon MCT**, has been appointed CFO of Trinity Biotech plc, he was previously CFO at Conduit plc.

Please send items for inclusion (including daytime telephone number) to Anna McGee, amcgee@treasurers.co.uk.