Meet the incoming President of the IRRV

Lester Dinnie finds out more about him for Insight readers
Meet the incoming President of the IRRV

Lester Dinnie finds out more about Andrew Hetherton for Insight readers

Digital transformation

Going digital with Broxbourne Council

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Your IRRV Council:

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FIRRV

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MRICS
IRRV (Hons)

**JUNIOR VICE PRESIDENT**
Alistair Townsend
IRRV (Hons)
MCM

**IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT**
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BSc IRRV (Hons)

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**Alan Bronte**
FRICS
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IRRV (Hons)

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IRRV (Hons)

**Davina Chapman**
IRRV (Hons)

**Allan Clark**
MSc IRRV
MCM

**Simon Green**
MRICS
IRRV (Hons)

**Richard Harbord**
MPhil CPFA
FCCA IRRV (Hons)
FIDP
FBIM
FRSA

**Paul McDermott**
IRRV (Hons)

**Roger Messenger**
BSc (Est Man)
FRICS FIRRV
MICarb REV

**Nick Rowe**
IRRV (Hons)

**Kevin Stewart**
FIRRV MAAT
MCM

**Bob Traherm**
IRRV (Hons)

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"Welcome to the October edition of *Insight*, the production of which coincides with the Annual Conference, to be held once again at Telford International Centre."

There is still time to grab a place at the event, together with the Institute’s flagship Performance Awards gala dinner, where the great and the good from 2019 will be announced on Wednesday, 9th October. Check out [http://www.irrv.net/homenew/item.php?id=26451&wid=24&did=13](http://www.irrv.net/homenew/item.php?id=26451&wid=24&did=13)

As always, our latest edition provides a mix of articles from our regulars and a selection of new contributors. Our cover feature highlights the life and times of our incoming President, Andrew Hetherton, as he takes on the IRRV’s ‘hot seat’ for the forthcoming year. And of course we are pleased to provide a pictorial summary of current President Louise Freeth’s year, as she bows out with some final comments, in concluding her popular monthly feature. There’s plenty more information from the IRRV headquarters team, too, as Gary Watson tracks down more hectic activity from our predecessor body in his ‘From the archives’ column, and the work of the Commercial Services Committee is exposed by its chair, Institute Council member, Nick Rowe.

The many and varied professions within the IRRV are well represented as usual. Moira Hepworth reports on the role of the Valuation Faculty Board and Patrick Bond provides yet more recent cases, news and events from the world of valuation. Benefits and welfare reform are taken on by Geoff Fimister and Kevin Stewart, whilst the plight of those in need is highlighted by Dawn Stobart of Christians Against Poverty. The local taxation and revenues field has occupied Alistair Townsend’s mind and Gary Carr of Equita complements Broadland’s Simon Quilter with views on the collection and enforcement industry.

There’s plenty more on offer, too, as the opinion of Institute Chief Executive David Magor rubs shoulders with that of Paul Howarth, and progress in the world of technology and customer service are unpicked by Mel Poluck and David Graaff respectively. In the time-honoured phrase, to find out more, you need to turn the pages and read on and enjoy.

**What’s in the next issue...**

- all the news, views and pictures from the 2019 Annual Conference and Performance Awards
- the world of local government will never be the same again, exclaims Richard Harbord
- Geoff Fimister’s world revolves around improving the lot of the hard-pressed benefit claimant.
IRRV Apprenticeships

The IRRV Level 4
Revenues and Welfare Benefits Practitioner Apprenticeship

- Are you looking to employ an Apprentice?
- Maybe you already have a member of staff in your Revenues & Benefits Team who could benefit from training to upskill?
- The IRRV are an approved provider listed on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP).
- If your organisation is looking for an apprenticeship in Revenues and Benefits get in touch today.

From May 2017, employers with a pay bill of over £3m are required to contribute to an Apprenticeship Levy Account. The Government set targets for the number of apprentices each organisation must employ each year by 2020. If the funding in the levy account is not used within 2 years, the oldest funds are automatically removed from the account. So now is the time for employers, with restricted training budgets, to engage the IRRV to deliver a separately funded, Revenues and Benefits apprenticeship. Successful apprentices will be awarded a Certificate in Local Taxation, Revenues and Welfare Benefits; this would enable them to become a Technician member of the Institute. It is important to stress this is separate to our regulated qualifications with OFQUAL. If the apprentice continues to be a member of the IRRV, they will be able to use the designatory letters ‘Tech IRRV’ after their name. This increases the status of the individual and shows that the employer has a highly skilled, customer centric workforce.

How it works

The IRRV have considerable experience in training staff in all aspects of Revenues and Benefits. We offer a ‘blended learning’ approach to training. As discussed and agreed with the employer, the IRRV will deliver the following training products and services as part of our apprenticeship training programme:
- Legislation / Administration Training
- Conferences and Professional Meetings
- Webinars (Technical and Soft Skills)
- On-line Learning
- Off-site Work and Research
- Face-to-face
- End Point Assessment preparation and support

In addition to the above, as the apprenticeship training fee includes IRRV membership, the apprentice will receive the following membership benefits:
- The IRRV’s prestigious monthly journal, Insight
- Membership of their local IRRV association
- Subject to agreement with their employer, the apprentice could also attend the IRRV’s flagship Annual Conference and the Spring Conference
- Free access to the Technical Enquiry Service
- The IRRV’s monthly newsletter, containing the latest legislative changes, government announcements and current developments within the profession

Fees

Fees will depend on the number of apprentices in each regional cohort. Please contact us to discuss your requirements or go to our website using the link below.

Enquiries

For all enquiries on Apprenticeships, please contact us at apprenticeships@irrv.org.uk or telephone us on 020 7691 8994.

E: apprenticeships@irrv.org.uk
The reform of sub-national funding still awaits that much-needed green light, as the Brexit shadow prevails

...advises David Magor

I write this editorial in fear and trepidation, because by the time you come to read it we could either be out of the European Union with ‘no deal’ or a watered down ‘TM version’ — on the other hand, we could be in the middle of a major constitutional crisis and awaiting a General Election!

With all this navel-gazing by Westminster politicians and the growth of the Parliamentary tented village, the running of the country has become totally subordinated, with an almost total disregard for the services delivered by local government and how they can be effectively funded.

In the four countries of our Union, we see different approaches to the reform of the sub-national funding model.

In Scotland we have a confusing ‘patching’ reform of Council Tax, together with the development of primary legislation to implement the majority of Barclay recommendations, albeit with significant and worrying gaps.

In Wales the First Minister has commissioned a detailed study into land tax, with a determination to take forward the implementation of a ‘vacant site’, which is based on the alleged success of a similar tax in the Irish Republic.

In Northern Ireland we see the initial steps of a consultation process which will hopefully address the dissatisfaction with non-domestic rates from some quarters. This is against the delivery of a revaluation which will create a realignment of the distribution of the tax and will no doubt add further to the debate. The domestic rate continues to be based on capital values but subject to capping, which gives the tax an unfortunate regressive slant.

In England we have total confusion and a lack of any real urgency. No movement on Council Tax, which is still based on historic values, which distort the incidence and a band relationship which is hopelessly unfair. Non-domestic rates have just come through a chaotic Treasury Select Committee with little regard to the obvious problems. The distraction of the failing high street swamped the evidence and gave little opportunity to look at the wider issues.

Sadly, none of these reforms or reviews face up to the stark reality that there is a desperate need to create an independent future-proofed viable source of revenue for local government. If local government is to meet the demands of our citizens in the 21st century there must be fresh thinking on the financial model.

“The running of the country has become totally subordinated, with an almost total disregard for the services delivered by local government and how they can be effectively funded.”

David Magor OBE IRRV (Hons) is Chief Executive of the Institute
Join the team of Clerks at the Valuation Tribunal Service!

The Valuation Tribunal Service (VTS) administers non-domestic rating and council tax appeals and provides general procedural advice on these matters.

The VTS are looking to recruit highly motivated and enthusiastic individuals that can rise to the ever-changing challenges that face a service delivery organisation in the provision of accurate technical and procedural advice to users.

Working under pressure is a key requirement as you will case manage a number of appeals, actively managing the parties involved and then attending hearings to act as clerk and provide procedural and technical advice to Tribunal panels. Travel, for which you will receive expenses, is also a key requirement, as our tribunal hearing venues are located across England. You must be a confident individual with excellent organisational, time management and customer care skills, in addition to high level communication and interpersonal skills.

Ideally you will already be qualified or part-qualified with the professional examinations of the IRRV. If not, the successful candidates will be expected to commit to study to achieve the IRRV Technician qualification ideally within a two-year period, or at least to have made sufficient and significant progress in that time.

In return, the VTS offer a competitive salary ranging from £25,944 to £41,595 (dependent on achieving the full corporate IRRV qualification and based in the London office) and £22,401 to £38,052, it based elsewhere (again dependent on achieving the full corporate IRRV qualification). Home-based working will be considered for those applicants with excellent knowledge in all areas of work after a period of training. Membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme and 25 days annual leave is also offered, which starts from 1st April each year.

For an informal chat and/or further information regarding the application process, please contact the HR team on 0207 426 3900 or contact HR.admin@valuationtribunal.gov.uk

Closing date for any expressions of interest is 5th December 2019.

Deal or no deal?
It was Brighton 2002, and a less experienced PM-elect is photographed at the Institute’s Annual Conference, seeking advice from the IRRV hierarchy on how to pursue his aims.

Insight wonders what advice was proffered …and how much he took on board…

ASSOCIATION NEWS

Insight is pleased to showcase another one of our popular annual events. This time it’s the turn of the Yorkshire and District Association, who held their dinner in early September, taking a leaf out of the book of the national body by utilising the splendid surroundings of the Queens Hotel, Leeds.

We include a pictorial record of the event, courtesy of Association Executive member, Robert Brown. Pictured are the sponsors and our incoming Institute President, Andrew Hetherton, surrounded by three of our Association Presidents, including (second from right) Samantha Smith representing the host Association.

Past IRRV President on the move

Marston Holdings (Marston) is pleased to announce that IRRV Council member and former President Bob Trahern (photographed) has joined as its Business Development Director.

Bob, a regular speaker and trainer at IRRV events, leaves his post as Corporate Director – Community with North Warwickshire Borough Council, where he has led his multi award winning service for the last 20 years. He joins the Group with an extensive knowledge of local taxation, revenue collection and local government generally and has represented the sector on a number of working groups both for the Local Government Association, and the IRRV with the DHCLG, DWP, Cabinet Office and the Ministry of Justice.

In his new role, Bob will work alongside ex National President, Dave Chapman in developing, enhancing and promoting tailored business offerings to existing and new clients across the range of services offered by Marston Holdings. Congratulations from all at Insight!
**STUDENT MEMBERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>EMPLOYER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tiffany Boreham</td>
<td>Hillingdon London BC</td>
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<td>Thomas Gregory</td>
<td>Dunlop Heywood</td>
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<td>Gary Griffiths</td>
<td>Cambridge CC</td>
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<td>Nicholas Jordan</td>
<td>Meritce Ltd</td>
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<td>Aaron Masters</td>
<td>Cambridge CC</td>
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<td>Alekasandra Pirnia</td>
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<td>Ann P Shepherd</td>
<td>Hillingdon London BC</td>
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<td>James Stevens</td>
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<td>Lisa Turfitt</td>
<td>Blackpool Council</td>
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<td>Jonathan Wee</td>
<td>Cambridge CC</td>
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<td>Rommane O Atkinson</td>
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<td>Rachel Heaney- Mayers</td>
<td>Meritce Ltd</td>
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<td>Joanna White</td>
<td>Hillingdon London BC</td>
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<td>Robert Whitley</td>
<td>Greenwich Royal London BC</td>
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<td>Sulma Ali</td>
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<td>Hayley Rumbol</td>
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<td>Tametka Salmon</td>
<td>Swansea Council</td>
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<td>Rob Madden</td>
<td>Maidstone BC</td>
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<td>Sharon L Mort</td>
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<td>Deborah Arnold</td>
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**TECHNICIAN MEMBERS**

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<tr>
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<td>David Sills</td>
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<td>Chelmsford CC</td>
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<td>Ryan Harman</td>
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<td>Harrogate BC – Highest Performing Candidate</td>
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<td>Joanne Scullion</td>
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<td>Mark Wilson</td>
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**DIPLOMA MEMBERS**

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<tr>
<td>Louise Anderson</td>
<td>Bassetlaw District Council</td>
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<td>Felicity R Beasley</td>
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<td>Camilla Gailani</td>
<td>Tower Hamlets London BC</td>
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<td>Janine Gray</td>
<td>Westminster CC</td>
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<td>Jamie Henderson</td>
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<td>Anne Keogh</td>
<td>Luton BC</td>
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<td>Nuzhat Khan</td>
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<td>Andrew Lewis</td>
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<td>Stephanie Lucking</td>
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<td>Leigh Beaker</td>
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<td>Charlotte Lowe</td>
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**HONOURS MEMBERS**

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<tr>
<td>Stephanie O’Neill</td>
<td>Wilks Head &amp; Eve LLP</td>
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<td>Adam Fairclough</td>
<td>Medway Council</td>
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<td>Paul Tyrrell</td>
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**NEW MEMBERS**

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**IRRV JUNE 2019 EXAMINATION PASS LIST**

**LEVEL 3 CERTIFICATE IN LOCAL TAXATION, REVENUES AND WELFARE BENEFITS – ENGLAND AND WALES**

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Christopher Black</td>
<td>Gateshead Council</td>
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**IRRV CERTIFICATE IN LOCAL TAXATION, REVENUES AND WELFARE BENEFITS – SCOTLAND**

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<tr>
<td>David Edgar</td>
<td>North Lanarkshire Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eilidh A Girvan</td>
<td>Argyll and Bute Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robyn Harris</td>
<td>North Lanarkshire Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver Hoskins</td>
<td>City of Edinburgh Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Moran</td>
<td>Falkirk Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greg Pullar</td>
<td>Perth and Kinross Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natasha Reynolds</td>
<td>North Lanarkshire Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geraldine Robertson</td>
<td>North Lanarkshire Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beverley A Wilkinson</td>
<td>Dumfries &amp; Galloway Council</td>
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**LATEST VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATION SUCCESSES**

**LEVEL 3 QCF BENEFITS PATHWAY**

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<tr>
<td>Linda Menna Williams</td>
<td>Basingstoke &amp; Deane BC</td>
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<td>Takisha Shaw</td>
<td>Dorset Council</td>
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**LEVEL 3 QCF BENEFITS COUNCIL**

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<th>NAME</th>
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<tr>
<td>Kathryn Duleba</td>
<td>Kings Lynn &amp; W Norfolk BC</td>
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**LEVEL 3 QCF GENERIC PATHWAY**

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<tr>
<td>Sara M Jones</td>
<td>Gwynedd Council</td>
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**LEVEL 3 QCF LOCAL TAXATION PATHWAY**

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<td>Lona Eluned Roberts</td>
<td>Gwynedd Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Claire Middleton</td>
<td>Bournemouth, Christchurch &amp; Poole Council</td>
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**LEVEL 3 QCF LOCAL TAXATION COUNCIL**

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<th>NAME</th>
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<tr>
<td>Michelle Giles</td>
<td>Basingstoke &amp; Deane Borough Council</td>
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<td>Diljit Bains</td>
<td>Surrey Heath Borough Council</td>
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**VOA IRRV**

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<tr>
<td>Claire Miles</td>
<td>Valuation Office Authority</td>
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**Congratulations to everyone!!**

In order to continue receiving your online magazines don’t forget to keep your membership details up-to-date. Log on to www.irrv.net
Dear reader,

So, before I sat down to write my final missive to your good selves, I took on board the advice provided by our eminent Editor and took a look back at previous President’s final pieces. I will freely admit I am something of a hoarder, as friends who have helped me move house noted, enquiring why I have boxes full of old HB circulars! If you ever need anything not held on the DWP website, it’s probably worth getting in touch.

Anyway, I selected a handful of old October editions of Insight, including one from 2009. Although I didn’t realise it at the time I picked it off the shelf, this was quite a significant edition, since it was the year in which we last had a female president, Julie Holden, and when we used to have a feature called ‘Take 5’ and, to my amazement, that October edition featured yours truly in this slot. I’m sure we must have been running short of ‘willing’ volunteers, which would explain why I was drafted in. Depression quickly set in when I realised how young I looked, not to mention the fact that many of the challenges faced ten years ago are still being faced today by those working in our profession – budget pressures, regulation changes, how to make better use of technology and ensure we provide a first class service to our customers with ever decreasing resources.

I certainly didn’t have any idea then, nor indeed when I started my career in local government, that I would have the honour and privilege to serve as President. One of the most frequent questions I’m asked is, “how is your year going – are you enjoying it?” Well, of course, the answer is a resounding “yes”. This time last year, I spoke about my hopes for the coming 12 months and about how I wanted to share it with as many members as possible, promoting diversity across the organisation. As we all know, Rome (incidentally my New Year holiday destination) wasn’t built in a day, but one of the best compliments I could have received recently came from someone who said that they remember meeting me for the first time and being shocked when they learned that I was about to become President, as I was just so ordinary! That may sound like a slightly back-handed compliment – I guess other Presidents have been far more special (!) – but I have been humbled by the number of people I have met during the last 12 months and the good work that they do, without expectation of reward, supporting the Institute and its members.

That brings me on to the strategy for the IRRV, which has remained firmly on the agenda at national Council meetings. Hopefully, you will agree that we have listened to the feedback you provided and the changes discussed at those meetings will be voted through at the AGM, ensuring that we encompass all members who have gained qualifications.

Before we reach Telford however, there are a number of Presidential duties which I need to fulfil. In fact, I don’t think I’ve been anywhere near as busy as I am about to be in the next few weeks. As I write, next week sees the annual Scottish Conference held in Crieff. This is a must in any practitioner’s calendar and one which owes so much to the hard work and efforts of Fraser Macpherson and the wider Scottish Association. I’ve attended the conferences at Crieff over many years as a speaker, and as an exhibitor in years gone by, and am very much looking forward to attending again this year.

There is a quick turnaround from Scotland to attend the International Association of Assessing Officers’ (IAAO) conference in Niagara Falls. I have to say I am a little more cautious about this event for a few reasons, not associated with the IAAO themselves! I had the pleasure of meeting their then President in Telford last year, Dorothy Jacks. It seems that they have expressed the need to celebrate the current IRRV and immediate past IAAO President, both being female. Our esteemed Chief Executive has made reference to barrels over the falls but I’m sure he is only joking! There is also a question mark about travel arrangements it seems, having recently received a message from BA to advise that the return flight was cancelled, due to industrial action, only to get another message later that day advising it had been reinstated. So, if I’m not in Telford, it’s because I’ve had an extended trip! Hopefully not, however, as there are also trips to Kent, Cardiff and Northern Ireland to squeeze in.

Other duties also continue apace, as I reach the conclusion of Performance Award visits. This is something with which I’ve been involved for a number of years and the standards of those who are selected as finalists never ceases to amaze me. Of course I couldn’t do any of this without the help and support of numerous people, particularly David Magor and Rachel Toombs, who have had the sometimes difficult task of ensuring I know where I should be when and that I get there in time. I fear my last-minute travel plans may have proven a little nerve-wracking for Mr Magor! However, I have also been carrying on with the ‘day job’ during the past 12 months and I must thank my colleagues at the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. They also deserve a special mention for supporting me throughout this period.

My final duty as President will be to hand the office over to Andrew Hetherton for safekeeping and wish him every success for his coming year.

Yours, Louise

Louise Freeth is our 2018/19 President of the Institute
We are fast approaching the flagship event of the IRRV calendar with our Annual Conference coming up in Telford on 8th October. As Chair of the Commercial Services Committee, one of the key roles each year is to work with the IRRV staff to arrange and put together the event – including the exhibition, speakers, rooms, Performance Awards gala dinner and even the entertainment. We are incredibly lucky to have a hardworking team at HQ who put on such a professional event, whilst ensuring we keep fees to the bare minimum.

The first decision to be made each year is the venue. We have now been at Telford since 2011 and each year I am always asked by many people why we cannot return to some of our former venues such as Brighton, Bournemouth or the inland traditional conference venues like Harrogate and Manchester. It must be said that initially Telford was not everyone’s first choice. The simple fact is the deal we get from Telford is by far the best in terms of conference space and value. The former venues we have now been at Telford since 2011 – we now have a plethora of nearby restaurants and bars within walking distance of the venue itself. New hotels have opened, giving a full range of price options for your stay. For those willing to travel a bit further, many regular attendees have found new favourite places to eat and relax in nearby historic Ironbridge and some of the sponsor nights have become famed for their levels of entertainment and hospitality.

“The simple fact is the deal we get from Telford is by far the best in terms of conference space and value. The former venues we used are now often way beyond the price structure we look to keep in place for both delegates and sponsors/exhibitors and not capable of meeting our requirements.”

It’s not just the main conference, dinner and entertainment that happens. Each year there are also several ‘stream’ days taking place. This year on the Wednesday we will separate events for Local Taxation and Revenues, Benefits and Welfare Reform, Valuation and Rating, Fraud and Investigation and a session for our new apprentices. There are also further meetings taking place for groups such as Faculty Boards and the annual meeting of the IRRV Association representatives. This adds to the required size and space the venue must be able to provide.

Hopefully as a delegate you will get to experience a professional, well arranged conference but behind the scenes the work done by the IRRV staff is incredible. No sooner has one year’s conference finished than the planning starts on next year’s events. The selling of exhibition stalls often starts during the previous event, with our key supporters booking their favourite positions and ‘pitches’ as soon as they become available.

It’s not just staff who assist – many members of national Council and senior IRRV members also help with chairing sessions and other roles, such as stewarding on the night of the awards dinner. Each morning starts with a 7am breakfast meeting (which can be tough after a conference night out!) to cover any urgent issues. This can involve venue issues, programme changes – including the worst nightmare of speakers cancelling at the last moment – and ensuring guests are met and accompanied during their visits. The issues we must deal with can vary from sound quality further, many regular attendees have found new favourite places to eat and relax in nearby historic Ironbridge and some of the sponsor nights have become famed for their levels of entertainment and hospitality.

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The whole conference could not happen without the support of our exhibitors and sponsors – they often have to arrive long before delegates to set up and assemble their stands and then pack down before they can think about getting ready for the awards dinner. We are incredibly lucky to have a supportive industry and I hope conference delegates once again take time to visit their stands, meet in person the people they are doing business with all year round (usually via a phone or email) and generally walk away with as many pens, pads and other freebies as they can carry.

The awards dinner is a massive undertaking – feeding and watering the guests to a tight timescale involves a lot of expertise and we
work closely with Telford International Centre colleagues on the arrangements. The big screen presentations (all programmed and delivered by IRRV staff) ensure the excitement of the awards themselves can be seen by everyone in the room. We also are responsible for the booking of the entertainment — after a year off we welcome back Lee Hurst as host — it is always good to see Lee, particularly with his experience as a Revenues Officer during the poll tax days, with Tower Hamlets. After incredible feedback last year, we also welcome back Madhen, who got the room dancing and singing at the 2018 event within a few minutes of taking the stage.

It’s not just the Annual Conference which takes place, of course. We also have the spring events which this year included the Leeds conference, with separate streams for revenues and benefits and a fraud/investigation event in Birmingham. Whilst not the size or scale of Annual Conference, each takes a considerable amount of planning.

We carefully study the feedback from delegates on all aspects of the events and these are taken into consideration for future planning. Speakers are selected carefully, although it is not uncommon to have feedback that “it’s the same old faces” speaking each year and when we change these we get comments asking why a delegate’s favourite presenter isn’t addressing them this year! The programme is carefully put together to try to address current issues in the market and hopefully provide some thought-provoking discussions during the breaks. We have tried new ideas such as the ‘working lunch’, which we trialled last year on day one of the annual event and after feedback we will use this again. Hopefully exhibitors will join their customers for these lunch sessions and then carry on discussions during the wine reception in the exhibition area. One plea is for IRRV members to come to the AGM straight after the drinks reception — it isn’t usually a lengthy affair but important for members to be aware of what is happening with their institute, especially with some radical changes being proposed for this year.

I hope this gives some background to the work that goes into the organisation of the conferences — with the number of delegates who return year on year along with those making first visits I would hope we are doing something right. As Chair of the event-organising Committee, I would welcome any comments or feedback on any of our events. Have a good Annual Conference and I look forward to seeing you during the event... or in the bar later!

“One plea is for IRRV members to come to the AGM straight after the drinks reception – it isn’t usually a lengthy affair but important for members to be aware of what is happening with their institute, especially with some radical changes being proposed for this year.”

Nick Rowe is a member of the IRRV Council and Chair of the Commercial Services Committee
It was once the case that the delightfully capricious nature of this sceptred isle's weather was a singular source of pleasant conversation. On many occasions one has found oneself in earnest conversation with the Reverend D'eath for example on the likelihood of late spring frosts and the potential damage to his tubers.

Now it appears that our climate is merely a cause for alarm. One is aware that some dire predictions would have the sea level rising sufficient to presage waves lapping at the very threshold of one’s orangery. It appears that one’s lead local flood authority is one’s county council and one must admit that one’s previous and occasionally testing exchanges with them gave one cause for concern. One does not wish to be last in line when the queue for sandbags forms outside the town hall.

In a state of alarm, one’s first port of call, naturally, was for spiritual guidance – however, one was dismayed to find that one’s ecumenical interlocutor was unavailable as the notice on the vicarage made plain.

“I am currently on holiday in Bognor Regis. In the event of emergency please pray for guidance”

REV D’EATH

The irony of this was not lost on one. Whilst the likelihood of whelks being deposited at one’s doorstep and the rising tides of cataclysmic destruction wreaking havoc in biblical proportions, one’s own spiritual representative was both metaphorically and literally at the ocean’s edge.

One then turned to the Good Book for solace...

ZACHARIAH 14:8

On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half of it East to the Dead Sea and half of it West to the Mediterranean Sea.

One can only hope the Home Counties falleth not within range. Looking on the bright side one’s collection of nostalgic memorabilia from childhood holidays can only benefit from an additional phylum mollusca or two.
A General Meeting of the Metropolitan Rate Collectors Association was held on 21st October at the Masons Hall Tavern, Basinghall Street, London, with Mr Arthur J White in the chair. Minutes of the last meeting were read and signed.

The quarterly report of the Executive was presented by the Chairman and read; the same being approved. The Secretary reported that Mr H Mather, Borough of Holborn, had been elected a member of the Association since the last General Meeting.

Discussions then took place on various matters relating to the work of rate collecting generally. Some things do not change! This having then concluded the business of the evening, a cordial vote of thanks was passed to the Chairman and the meeting adjourned. The usual quarterly smoking concert was then held after the meeting and a very pleasant evening was spent by all.

The final meeting of the Executive Committee in 1905 took place at Hemmans Hotel, 64 Cheapside in the City of London on Saturday, 9th December, with Mr John Roberts in the chair. Minutes of the last meeting were read and signed.

Applications were received from Mr E Hilton and Mr J Sweet (Borough of Hackney) to become members of the Association. It was resolved on the motion of Mr Moore and seconded by Mr White that Mr Hilton and Mr Sweet be elected members of this Association.

A letter from Mr Coates was presented and read; a copy whereof is as follows; viz:

26 Willoughby Road, Hampstead

October 26th 1905

Dear Mr Crawford

It was exceedingly kind of the Members of the Metropolitan Rate Collectors Association to think of me in the midst of my double bereavements. Sympathy softens a sorrow and the kindness shown by my brother Rate Collectors is very cheering. It does not seem real to me that father and mother are gone and when I go into the room and see the vacant chairs, no words can express my feelings.

Father, as you know, was one of the builders of the Association and he always took a lively interest in its affairs and it is very gratifying to me that the Metropolitan Rate Collectors Association remember him so kindly. One’s sorrow is softened by such reflection.

Again, thanking you one and all for your kind sympathy and with kind regards. Believe me.

Yours Sincerely,

J Coates

The Committee further considered the letter from the National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO), asking this Association to become affiliated thereto. The Secretary submitted a report on the objects of the Association and the same having been discussed, it was resolved that further consideration of the matter be adjourned until the next meeting. In the meantime, the Secretary do obtain copies of such report and forward the same to each member of the Executive Committee, with a request that they should obtain the opinion of their colleagues as to whether this Association should become affiliated to the Association and report to the next meeting of the Committee.

NALGO was founded in 1905 as an association of local guilds of municipal officers. It was a British trade union representing mostly local government ‘white collar’ workers. The main impetus came from Herbert Blain (1870–1942), later to become national agent for the Conservative Party. Blain had formed the first local guild in Liverpool in 1896 and, on moving to London, arranged the national conference in 1905 at which NALGO was formed.

In 1909, the first full-time General Secretary, Levi Hill (1883–1961), was appointed, and by 1914, NALGO’s membership included almost 70% of all British local government officers. Blain and Hill organised NALGO with a national delegate conference and regional and local branch structures. Its first aims were the setting up of a pension scheme, the improvement of the pay, conditions and status of local government officers, the abolition of nepotism (at the time rife in local government) and the welfare of members and their families.

It changed its full name in 1952 while retaining its widely used acronym – NALGO. By the late 1970s it was the largest British white-collar trade union, with over 700,000 members. It was one of three unions which combined to form UNISON in 1993.

The Secretary presented the draft Annual Report of this Committee for the year 1905. The Committee duly considered the same and certain alterations having been made therein, it was resolved that the report, as amended, be adopted as the report of this Association for the past year and that the same be printed and circulated amongst the whole of the Rate Collectors in the Metropolis. This having concluded the business of the evening, a cordial vote of thanks was passed to the Chairman and the meeting adjourned.

It was then an opportunity for those Woolwich Arsenal fans on the Executive to find out how their beloved team had got on that afternoon. There was no ‘Soccer Saturday’ on Sky TV to bring members the result, or waiting for ‘Match of the Day’ that evening. Eventually, they would have discovered it was a 2-0 loss away from home to Bury FC. It was a season that Bury FC escaped relegation by a single point, although much worse was to come for Bury FC in August 2019!
An ongoing issue with the 2021 list was raised, concerning how many individuals can claim appeal rights on a property at one time, and the (re)registration process undertaken by the VOA.

A report on the content of the rating and valuation stream within the IRRV’s Annual Conference on 9th October 2019 was received and several suggestions were made regarding fine-tuning the balance of the programme. The meeting noted reports of several external groups on which the Institute is represented – the VOA Business Rates Advisory Forum (BRAF), held on 16th April 2019; the VOA Professional Bodies Liaison Group on 18th April; and the Valuation Tribunal Users’ Group on 4th June. Geoff Fisher provided an update on IRRV input to matters in the RICS ‘Red Book’.

It was noted that the Non-Domestic Rating (Preparation for Digital Services) Bill had reached the Lords stages and the Briefing Papers for these stages were noted, as was a forthcoming article by the Chief Executive, which outline the (im) practicalities of this Bill. Final versions of several responses to recent consultations were noted, in respect of which the Board had assisted in the drafting stages (and all of which are available on the Institute website) – Treasury Committee, The Impact of Business Rates on Business (closed 2nd April); Decapitalisation Rate in England for 2021 revaluation (closed 30th May); Decapitalisation Rate in Wales for 2021 Revaluation (closed 30th May); and The Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Bill Consultation (closed 30th May).

Some recent case law was brought to the Board’s attention for noting, including Telereal Trillium (Respondent) v Hewitt (Valuation Officer) (Appellant) in the Supreme Court. It was also noted that the government had won a right of appeal against the Appeal Court ruling in the ATM business rates case.

The meeting on 29th August had a particularly full agenda. Reports were received regarding the following external groups – PBLG held on 9th July 2019, the BRAF meeting held on 15th July and the E-Comms working group on 21st August. An update on ‘Red Book’ matters was also received.

The IRRV representation was confirmed for the forthcoming RICS-hosted Rating Leaders Forum Meeting, to be held on 18th Sept 2019. The Board considered a draft of amendments to the Rating Manual suggested by the VOA, which had already been raised at the PBLG meeting on 9th July. The professional bodies had drafted an amended copy of the revised draft, and the Board agreed that the Institute should support this latter copy. The bodies had three principal concerns about the VOA draft, in that; it did not address the ‘logically prior’ question correctly, and that is a concern that has existed for some time; the questions in the draft address whether or not there is a property undergoing reconstruction, rather than whether or not the property is capable of beneficial occupation, which is contrary to the logic of the decisions in both the Monk and Jackson cases; and continued references to the Court of Appeal judgement in Monk are not appropriate, as that judgement was not approved by the Supreme Court.

An update was provided on The Non-Domestic Rating (Lists) Bill; and End of List Regulations. Representation had been made to MHCLG, stating that it was necessary to make progress on the Regulations, and a meeting with the Department had been arranged for mid-September regarding the likely outcomes relating to End of List matters.

An ongoing issue with the 2021 list was raised, concerning how many individuals can claim appeal rights on a property at one time, and the (re)registration process undertaken by the VOA. If a new person sought to claim appeal rights against a property, would the VOA simply remove the formerly registered person’s claim? It would be possible, however, for there to be an occupier and an owner, and possibly intermediate bodies who could be able to validly claim a property. Additionally, someone who has a historic interest might have a valid claim if there has been a subsequent change in rateable value which impacts them. The Board asked for this issue to be raised formally with the Agency, in order to seek clarification.

The RICS Expert Witness working party group was to reconvene shortly, under new chairmanship, and the IRRV looks forward to reviewing and working with the RICS on the working group’s conclusions, in the examination of how the role of an Expert Witness was to be formalised in the relevant guidance note and practice note.
Managing the migration to UC

So did you see the recent news regarding the rollout of the managed migration of Universal Credit (UC)? At 6.41pm on 22nd July 2019, Amber Rudd, the then DWP Secretary of State, made an announcement in the House of Commons about the rollout of this issue. It did not feature much in the news, with Brexit and a new Prime Minister the dominating features across the network.

In her statement, Amber Rudd stated that at the core of the DWP is, “The desire to deliver a considered and consionate welfare system that incentivises work. UC has been rolled out nationally and there are now more than two million claimants. We continue to listen to claimants, stakeholders and Members of Parliament, in order to improve the system. In short, we examine what works, and act accordingly. That is why one of my first acts as Secretary of State was to announce legislation for a small pilot to move existing welfare claimants on to UC. Managed migration involves moving claimants who are still on legacy benefits and whose circumstances have not changed, across to UC. The pilot will give colleagues and claimants confidence in the Department’s approach to the transition before we return to the House to report on progress and seek permission to extend managed migration.”

The Secretary of State also stated, “Today I am laying regulations to commence the pilot, for no more than 10,000 claimants, which will start this month as promised. We will begin with one site – in Harrogate, as previously announced – to ensure that people’s transition is carefully supported. There is a possibility that the pilot will be extended to further sites as it progresses. We will be able to learn from putting processes into practice, and to adapt our approach accordingly.”

The DWP will continue to work closely with expert stakeholders to ensure that the pilot supports the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach claimants. Claimants who are moved to UC will be eligible for transitional financial protection to safeguard their legacy entitlement. They will also have access to additional financial support before they receive their first UC payment, including the two-week run-on of Housing Benefit and the Discretionary Hardship Payment, as well as advances.

Ms Rudd also states that the DWP does not intend to stop the benefits of anyone who participates in the pilot. Instead, they will be testing how they can encourage and support those who move over to UC without halting their benefits. This listen-and-adapt, evidence-based approach is, they believe, the right way in which to deliver UC.

“Ms Rudd also states that the DWP does not intend to stop the benefits of anyone who participates in the pilot. Instead, they will be testing how they can encourage and support those who move over to UC without halting their benefits.”

It will of course be interesting to see how UC managed migration continues to be rolled out. Do remember that 7.3m were due to be on it by 31st March 2017 and we currently have 2m recipients receiving the new benefit. Will the timetable slip and how much further amendment will be made to this key welfare reform before it is fully implemented? And will they ever look to touch older people?

All in all, it is keeping the welfare reform agenda very full on. It is certainly, we would all agree, a very interesting time!

This article is of course appearing in the IRRV’s Annual Conference edition. I hope to see as many of you as I can there.

Finally, a plea to you all yet again. We need you! As IRRV Benefits Faculty Board chair, I would like to encourage new members to join the Board. We have had some success with getting new members, but we need more. The current board members are at http://www.irrv.net/homenew/item.php?wid=46&id=22275&did=22

We meet largely by teleconference, with occasional face-to-face meetings, often held at IRRV events such as the Annual and Spring Conferences. I know we are all very busy doing more for less these days, but if you are prepared to help us, please let me know, providing a brief summary of your knowledge and experience. You can email me on kevin.stewart@midsussex.gov.uk

Should you want any more insight into such an opportunity, you are welcome to approach me at any conference or meeting. So I give you a challenge – come and find me!

The Managing Editor is always on the lookout for articles for the Institute’s magazines, particularly from new faces. There is much happening in the benefits world out there in this period of massive welfare reform and we would love to hear from you about it.

Please contact the editor, John Roberts, on jcroberts54@hotmail.com if you have a story and you feel we can turn it into an article for our magazines.
Still analysing feedback…

“It is well established that the most volatile area of forecasting is the provisions for losses, so whilst this approach will reduce the in-year financial impact on authorities, it won’t make it any more accurate.”

At the time of writing, over six months have passed since the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) closed the consultation ‘Business Rates Retention Reform – Sharing risk and reward, managing volatility and setting up the reformed system’. According to the website, the government is still ‘analysing feedback’.

Reform of such a complex matter as rates retention in time for April 2020 was always going to be tight, but delays such as this compound the uncertainty and financial difficulties faced by local government.

The consultation contained a number of open questions, such as how resets should operate, how tier splits should work and what measures could be used to incentivise pooling. However, there were also a number of more closed questions in relation to the government’s proposed approach or indeed some areas where the government’s intention was set out but there was no invitation to comment on it at all – just questions on how it might work.

One such example (being the one that causes most significant difficulties currently) was in relation to what have become known as ‘losses on appeal’. The consultation has basically redefined losses on appeal and grouped them into one of two categories:

• valuation changes, and
• physical changes.

Valuation changes are defined as changes that occur at any stage of the Check, Challenge, Appeal process and also updates made outside this process by the Valuation Office Agency. These are all changes to an authority’s local list backdated to the first day of the list (i.e. the beginning of the revaluation cycle).

Physical changes are changes that are not backdated to the start of the list. These would cover any other alteration to a list, such as Material Changes in Circumstance, deletions and physical reductions, etc.

There is a quite a significance to these different categories. The fundamental difference is that the government is minded to top slice business rates income in order to compensate local authorities for valuation changes, but local authorities will not receive compensation for physical changes – these will be a matter of the risk and reward inherent within the rates retention system.

The issue of appeals within rates retention reform has formed into two primary questions – how to measure the compensation due to authorities and how to mitigate the impact of provisions on in-year finances. Measuring compensation could be fairly straightforward by using a proxy to top slice. How to mitigate the impact is more complex. This is mainly because the current ideas are either unacceptable under accounting standards or unacceptable to government.

The government has therefore suggested that the answer would be to reform the administration of the rates retention system. This starts by authorities estimating their own business rates baseline each year. This would basically be the rates income, net of provisions. There would also need to be a system of floating top-up and tariff payments, which would be used to reconcile differences between the initial estimates of business rates income provided in the NNDR1 form and the out-turn figures available after the end of the financial year through NNDR3 forms.

Because the out-turn would invariably differ from the original estimate, the top-up and tariff payments for the following year would be adjusted to reconcile the difference. It is well established that the most volatile area of forecasting is the provision for losses, so whilst this approach will reduce the in-year financial impact on authorities, it won’t make it any more accurate.

Whilst there are high levels of uncertainty (not just in relation to local government finance!), there are some aspects of this consultation that appear clear. Throughout the paper, it is reaffirmed that the government is committed to the principles of rate retention, being the rewarding of local authorities that grow their business rates and to a business rates retention system that balances risk and reward for the authorities generally. The system will therefore continue to benefit those authorities that focus on ensuring rates yield is maximised.

Of course, from a local government point of view, removing volatility is extremely welcome but it will not make the administration of rates retention much simpler. Whatever way it changes, and even if the in-year financial impact of appeals is reduced, accurate forecasting of losses will remain crucially important. If the calculation of the business rates baseline changes and top-ups and tariffs become floating, it will arguably be more important to ensure that provision forecasts are even more detailed, to ensure the predicted yield losses reflect the relevant financial year when the loss will occur, so as to avoid large discrepancies between NNDR1 forecasts and NNDR3 out-turns and the resultant financial impact this might have.

Since there is no intention to protect authorities from physical changes, provisions will still need to be created to meet accounting standards. Such changes can be complex in valuation terms and from beginning to end can take some considerable time to be settled one way or the other. It is worth noting that in the appeals forecasting I have been involved in for both the 2010 and the 2017 lists, more changes relate to what would now be considered physical changes than those that would be considered valuation changes and the value of these changes can be extremely high. It is therefore crucial that local authorities retain the correct level of expertise to address this.
Upper Tribunal

A rather strange case arguing about whether premises should be ‘split’ into two hereditaments for just one day and whether the former single assessment should be reinstated afterwards. The single day arose because of the limit on the backdating of the effect of proposals to 1st April 2005 which, coincidentally, was also the date the circumstances in the case requiring separate assessment ended.

Upper Tribunal decisions
Decisions of the Upper Tribunal and the former Lands Tribunal all the way back to the end of 1999 are easily accessible on its website, which can be found at: http://landschamber.decisions.tribunals.gov.uk/Aspx/Default.aspx

Valuation Tribunal
Pastor Ajayi v. Virk (VO)
A case showing the complexity of the appeals regulations came before the VTE on whether the appellant was an ‘Interested Person’ able to make a proposal. There was no question the premises were entitled to exemption, because they formed both a place of public religious worship and were registered as a place of worship. Unfortunately, the proposal to delete was made six months after the church had vacated. It therefore failed because the church was neither the occupier at the date of proposal nor then had an interest in the property. The case follows one of Robin Woolway’s many cases – Mainstream Ventures v. Woolway (VO) (2000) RA 395, which made it clear that a proposal by a person who, at the date of the proposal, was no longer in occupation was invalid. See http://info.valuation-tribunals.gov.uk/decision_document.asp?Decision=&appeal=%2Fdecision_documents%2Fdocuments%2F463529057619%2F221N1O

VOA Business Plan 2019/20
The VOA published a new business plan on 18th July, somewhat earlier than expected, due to the need to revise the 2017-19 one to reflect the bringing forward of the non-domestic rates revaluation to 2021.

A compact and easy-to-read document of 11 pages, it expands upon the core purpose and objectives, whilst setting out various performance targets. The highlights:

Core Purpose
We are the public sector’s property valuation experts and advisers, providing the valuations needed to support local taxation and benefits; our work underpins the funding of vital public services.

Vision
To be a world-leading provider of public sector valuations.

Strategic Objectives
1. Produce reliable property valuations;
2. Provide a clear and consistent experience for our customers, clients and stakeholders;
3. Design and deliver a professional, efficient and engaged organisation.


Valuation Tribunal Service Annual Report and Accounts
These were laid before Parliament on 24th July and are available on the VTS website: https://www.valuationtribunal.gov.uk/about-us/publications-policies/annual-report-accounts/

Valuation – is a personal opinion
“A comprehensive definition of the term in a few words is not possible, but putting the matter very concisely, it may be said that a valuation is a considered estimate of worth. It is a personal opinion, so that (no matter what calculations or comparisons help to fix it) the valuer makes a conscious effort to arrive at his opinion of value, the result much be considered a ‘valuation’. Whether it is a good or bad valuation is an entirely different matter, depending on the valuer’s knowledge of the particular property, his acquaintance with the value of other property of the same class, his skill in making the comparison, together with his judgment in arriving at a conclusion.” The Application, Use and Construction of Valuation Tables by Richard Parry, 3rd edition 1930.
When the new President of the IRRV takes office, he’ll be the 100th person in the role. He’ll bring 25 years of experience in the valuer profession to the role, along with advice on how to sell an egg incubator, how to plumb the depths and what not to call a horse. To avoid confusion, please read on...

With a successful background in the valuation sector, based on a solid education foundation, first at the renowned Bootham School in York, then later at Southampton Institute (now Solent University) and the Southampton University, the professional career of this multi-faceted, highly articulate and experienced business leader is still evolving.

As recently as 2017 he left his post as Director and Head of Business Rates at G L Hearn Ltd, one of the UK’s leading property consultants and part of the Capita Group, to set up his own consultancy.

Indeed, Andrew Hetherton has an impressive array of professional body accreditations in addition to his IRRV status, including with the Institute’s Valuation Faculty Board, the Valuation Tribunal Group, the VOA Professional Bodies Liaison Group and the RICS Local Taxation Policy Panel, the Rating Surveyors’ Association (Past President), the International Property Tax Institute and Accessible Retail Ltd One Voice for Retail, Warehouse and Superstore Property.

Meet the incoming President of the IRRV

Lester Dinnie finds out more about him for Insight readers

As recently as 2017 he left his post as Director and Head of Business Rates at G L Hearn Ltd, one of the UK’s leading property consultants and part of the Capita Group, to set up his own consultancy.

Now approaching what he describes as “an outstanding moment in my life and a real honour for any IRRV member”, when he accepts the chain of office of President of the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation, he takes the opportunity to reflect not only on his career to date but on his forthcoming year in office.

Like many past presidents, Andrew Hetherton brings experience of many areas of the IRRV’s remit to the role. Following his time at Southampton Institute, he continued to live in the city, working initially for the Valuation Office Agency Basingstoke where he acquired further expertise in a variety of areas, including Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rates and Compulsory Purchase Part I Claims.

During this time he also continued his professional training to become an Associate of the Incorporated Society of Valuers and Auctioneers, subsequently absorbed by the RICS.

The IRRV Presidency will not be the first time Andrew Hetherton has taken the reins of a membership organisation so he is very well prepared for the task. Firstly, as President of his Student Union in 1990 (re-elected in 1991), then in a similar role for the Rating Surveyors’ Association in 2013, he has accepted the role, responsibilities and workload included. Even so, he acknowledges that the coming year in office will require a real concentration of effort to ensure a lasting legacy.

“It’s a third presidency for me but still a very singular and significant honour” he says “and I want us to address the future with confidence in a time where there is considerable concern surrounding key issues for IRRV members and the communities we serve. Business rates, Universal Credit, local authority funding and a climate of national uncertainty relating to Brexit make this a testing time for us. However, with our own
reform programme up for discussion at the AGM in Telford, I believe we are well positioned and in good shape. We’ll continue to offer our members the support, information, research, training and education they need to advance their careers and provide outstanding quality of service”.

Outside of his professional activities, Andrew Hetherton has a well-known interest and involvement with the Sport of Kings but under the surface (Insight is quite happy to feature an obvious pun) there is rather more extra-curricular activity to discover.

As a young man he developed an interest in and gained advanced qualifications as a scuba diver; by 2003 progressing to Advanced Instructor and First Class Diver and on to the use and instruction in deep technical diving, involving mixed gas and re-breathers. For the uninstructed that’s scary and hazardous!

While others were relaxing in the languid and exotic waters of the Maldives or the Seychelles, he was deep diving in the most wreck-infested waters in the world – the English Channel.

He was one of just 30 wreck divers in the search for the lost submarine Affray which collided with a Russian Merchant ship in 1953 in the Channel and could have sparked World War III. Diving in Hurs Deep at between 95 and 120 metres is no holiday dip! Helping to discover the site of lost vessels such as HMS Limbourne and HMS Charybdis, both destroyers lost in the same action in October 1943 while taking part in Operation Tunnel off the north coast of Brittany, was even more compelling. On board the support vessels were members of the original crews and the discovery of the wrecks, including a ship’s bell, provided not only a physically challenging exercise but one filled with poignancy and emotion.

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Marriage to wife Helen in 2002, and the subsequent raising of a family called time on such activities, however, and the births of Sophia (now 15) and Joshua (13) were added reasons to avoid the intrinsic dangers of deep technical diving.

Thrills and uncertainties of a different kind, this time on terra firma, whether the going is soft, good or firm – have progressively dominated extra-curricular enjoyment. From a family background in racing, passed down from his great-grandfather, a founding member of the Racehorse Owners Association in 1937, grandfather and father who were both Racecourse Stewards in Yorkshire; Andrew has increased his involvement to the point where he is now majority or part-owner of four horses and a syndicate owner of two more.

“Looking to our future we see that local authorities expect to be under continued pressure on budgets whilst there is no let-up on the deliverables expected from them.”

His horses are trained by William Knight on the beautiful Sussex Downs near Arundel and there is no mistaking the pleasure in Andrew’s voice as he describes an early morning visit to watch the gallops. “All the excitement, trials and tribulations of owning racehorses can be put into context on a clear early summer morning, watching these beautiful animals being put through their paces” he says. And just in case anyone should fear that this exhilarating experience should take him too far from his professional duties, Andrew points out the racing names of some of his equine friends.
are; Unit of Assessment, N over J, Progressive Rating and Ad Valorem Queen (anyone seeking further clarification should ask for assistance from the IRRV’s extensive portfolio of education and training options).

On the matter of naming horses, he does admit to being over-ruled on one occasion by an irresistible combination of his wife and his racehorse trainer. Had Andrew been left to his own devices then Ad Valorem Queen would have been called Rate My Filly’s Ability. *Insight* offers neither a comment, nor a defence for such a proposition.

He also draws perhaps some unexpected parallels between the world of horseracing and his professional life, particularly where the training of his horses and the welfare of the people that look after them are concerned. “Teamwork is absolutely critical in both environments” he says “and understanding that working well together produces the best outcomes, that you need to take advice from specialists and, above all, that being involved with day-to-day tasks will keep your own performance levels sharp and focused.”

His enthusiasm for the year ahead is clearly evident as he summarises the challenges the IRRV faces. Supported, however, by a streamlined and re-structured committee set up, an extensive range of education and training options and a highly motivated HQ operation with David Magor at its head, he believes the IRRV is irreplaceable as part of the delivery mechanism for first class local government services.

“David continues to be an opinion former for the sector and a consummate professional we can all learn from”, he says. “Looking to our future we see that local authorities expect to be under continued pressure on budgets whilst there is no let-up on the deliverables expected from them. IRRV occupies a unique position here – we enable local government to harness and harmonise the skills set across key disciplines which they need in order to raise finance, provide key services and serve the public.”

In an environment which, post-Brexit, involves uncertainties on an unprecedented level, he contends that the IRRV is going to be needed, more than ever, producing a vocationally-savvy, highly qualified and expert cohort of professionals which will provide the next generation of local authority leaders.

He concludes with a resounding endorsement of the Institute and its role: “The IRRV is an advocate for progressive change and with its armoury of educational options, from apprenticeships to distance learning, we will help to create the optimum fiscal environment for people and businesses. We will offer advice to national government and practical implementation at local level so that the balance between rent, rates and local taxation is fair and transparent. Local government needs us and we are committed to providing it with a qualified, professional workforce so that it can deliver best value to its communities.”

“We will offer advice to national government and practical implementation at local level so that the balance between rent, rates and local taxation is fair and transparent.”
“By investing in an approach that consolidates and tracks property inspection related data, they can now report on the number of property inspections carried out each week and what the status or outcome of those inspections is.”

Reap the rewards of property inspections

Property inspections can be hugely time consuming and labour intensive, with those authorities lucky enough to have dedicated property inspectors still hampered by the limited number of visits achievable each day.

Ongoing legislative changes around empty properties and business rates retention, mean that those authorities who can conduct property inspections in a more targeted and proactive way can reap the rewards. By maximising the number of inspections that can be conducted and the supporting processes around a visit, significant revenue and efficiency gains can be derived, as some authorities can attest to.

Surrey Heath Borough Council, for example, are responsible for the collection of tax for around 36,600 domestic dwellings and 2,600 business properties. They have recently revolutionised their property inspections process using technology designed to track new property developments and manage the ongoing process of inspections electronically.

Instant access to management information

Prior to the implementation of the solution, Surrey Heath had no readily accessible management information to report back on and any data captured required in-depth resource intensive analysis. By investing in an approach that consolidates and tracks property inspection related data, they can now report on the number of property inspections carried out each week and the status or outcome of those inspections.

Visual and trackable evidence relating to inspections

Another key element to their approach was ensuring they could electronically capture photographic evidence to sit alongside all other notes and records related to a property. This has enabled them to electronically view and track progress on new property developments, as well as providing a visual historical record, outlining what happened in the lead-up to a decision being made following an inspection.

Surrey Heath effectively have a documented catalogue of events that supports what happened, which can be easily accessed from either the office or out in the field. They have been able to use this approach to expand their relationship with the Valuation Office Agency, by providing photographic evidence to back up the decisions they make.

Completion notices and exemption checks

Ellie Hawkins, Revenues Team Leader at Surrey Heath BC, says, “Using a dedicated property inspection solution has ensured we can more accurately issue completion notices to the right person at the right time. It also enables us to conduct reviews on some of the more obscure discounts and exemptions to make sure they are still valid. It makes the process more fluid and gives our inspector more time to focus on the task at hand and conduct ad-hoc reviews on specific groups of properties.”

With daily data updates taken from the revenues and benefits team, planning department and building control and loaded into the system, Surrey Heath can accurately report on the number of completion notices issued in a given period. A number of statistics and reports can be provided instantly to senior management teams, providing more visibility and transparency, backed up by solid evidence of the work conducted.

Handling new property developments

Implementing a property inspection solution has also saved the council time and resource by automating the process of adding over 300 new property developments and corresponding information into the system. The ability to now have an instant view of new developments means Surrey Heath can easily monitor what stage of the build a development is at and whether an inspection visit needs to be brought forward. Dealing with new property developments is much easier now, with the set-up of watchlists and automated tracking and flagging tools, leaving the team more time to focus on other areas.

Preston City Council have implemented similar technology and, as a result, can now record all property inspection details online, whilst on site capturing all relevant information immediately. With an emphasis on workflow, once visits are completed the system works out what needs to be done next, based on how the online form was completed and inspectors can automatically schedule revisits to properties at any point in the future.

Property inspectors have more control of their workload and accountability of their time, determining where they go based on more informed data and taking a more targeted approach to visits. Less administration is required and all information is accessible from handheld tablets.

New property developments

With the ability to record and monitor new property developments, staff save time on manually tracking progress, giving managers the information they need to report on and a better indication of what new properties are likely to come into taxation.

At an event held earlier on this year, Preston and Lancaster Shared Service were able to report that income from completion notices issued increased by 285% in 2018 compared to 2015 figures. There is clearly a very real opportunity here to bring properties into taxation more quickly and efficiently, helping boost much needed revenue.

Tracy McAvoy is Marketing Director with Destin Solutions Ltd. If you want to find out more, email info@destin.co.uk call 01772 842092, or visit them at the IRRV Annual Conference on Stand 19.
**Tuesday 8th October – PLENARY SESSIONS**

9.00  Registration
9.15  Conference Opening
*Cllr Stephen Reynolds*, Mayor of Borough of Telford & Wrekin
10.00  Presidential Address
*Louise Freeth*, President, IRRV
10.30  Reviewing the Impact of Welfare Reform
*Professor Christina Beatty*, Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University
11.00  The Future of Revenues and Benefits in an Uncertain World
*David Magor*, Chief Executive, IRRV
11.30  Exhibition Opens
*Louise Freeth*, President, IRRV
12.30  Buffet Lunch served in Main Hall during session
12.45  Managing your Personal Well Being
*Dave West*, Smile Motivation
13.55  Tea / Coffee in Exhibition Centre
14.30  Using Emotional Intelligence in Revenues Collections
*Dave Chapman*, Managing Director Rossendale
15.00  Future of Revenues, Rating and Welfare Benefits: Panel Session
*Louise Freeth* [Chair], President, IRRV
*Zoe Kent*, Revenues & Benefits Manager, Swale BC
*Alistair Townsend*, Director, Alistair Townsend Ltd
*Nick Rowe*, Assistant Director of Finance – Local Tax and Accounts Receivable, Ealing LBC
16.10  Wine Reception – Exhibition Centre
17.30  AGM

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**Wednesday 9th October – LOCAL TAXATION AND REVENUES**

8.30  Registration and Exhibition Opens
9.00  INDESSER – A New Approach to Fair Debt Recovery
*James Hilton*, Business Development Director, Indesser
*Ian Ferguson*, Income Recovery Manager, Believe Housing
9.35  The Impact of Breathing Space on Enforcement
*Vicki Alexander*, Associate, Ward Hadaway
10.10  Changing Culture and Improving Collection – A Case Study
*Ed Bowen*, Housing Benefit Technical Manager, Runnymede BC
10.45  Refreshment Break
11.15  Is UC Delivering its Intentions?
Speaker TBC, Citizens Advice
*Paula Doherty*, Team Leader Benefits and Welfare, Dumfries & Galloway Council
11.50  To be an IRRV Performance Award Winner – One Year On
*Michelle Kettle*, Welfare and Benefit Team Manager, South Staffordshire Council: Excellence in Social Inclusion Award
12.30  Lunch Break
14.00  Analysing The Council Tax Reduction Schemes
*Kevin Stewart*, Business Unit Leader - Revenues and Benefits, Mid Sussex DC
14.35  Everything You Need to Know About Universal Credit ... but Were Afraid to Ask!!
*Sam Lister*, Policy Officer, CIOH
*Sheldon Wood*, Policy Officer, CIPFA
15.15  Refreshment Break
15.45  Fraud and Error Strategy in HB – Direction of Travel?
*John Giblin*, Giblin and Sullivan Consultancy Services
*Alan Sullivan*, Giblin and Sullivan Consultancy Services
16.15  Delivering Professional Money Advice
*Craig Simons*, Debt Sector Coordination Manager, Money and Pensions Service
16.45  Close of Exhibition
16.45  End of Sessions
18.45  Drinks Reception
19.30  Performance Awards Gala Dinner
Wednesday 9th October –
RATING & VALUATION STREAM

8.30  Registration and Exhibition Opens
9.00  The Man from the Ministry – Latest Developments in Rate Reform
   Nick Cooper, Valuation and Policy Advisor, Non-Domestic Rates, MHCLG
9.30  Check, Challenge and Appeal – A Situation Report – A Valuer’s View
   Josh Myerson, RSA Vice President
10.10 Lessons to Learn concerning CCA and presenting cases to Tribunal
   Tony Masella, CEO VTS
10.45 Refreshment Break
11.15 Future of the Non Domestic Rate: Panel Session
   Andrew Hetherton (Chair), Senior Vice President IRRV
   Mark Higgin, Chair, RICS Local Taxation Group
   Simon Green, Partner, Gerald Eve
   John Webber, Chair, Rating Diploma Holders
   Thomas Stratton, Chair, Rating Surveyors Association
   Tony Masella, CEO VTS
12.30 Lunch Break
14.00 Revaluation 2021 – A Progress Report
   Simon Moston, Valuation Office Agency, Chief Valuer Revaluation Group
14.35 Ratepayer Assisted Valuation and Outsourcing Statutory Valuation Processes
   John O’Sullivan, CEO, VO Ireland
15.15 Refreshment Break
15.45 Recent Decisions in the Courts
   Dan Kolinsky, Barristers Landmark Chambers
16.15 Property Tax – An International Perspective
   Paul Sanderson, President, International Property Tax Institute
16.45 Close of Exhibition
16.45 End of Sessions
18.45 Drinks Reception
19.30 Performance Awards Gala Dinner

Wednesday 9th October –
APPRENTICESHIP STREAM

8.30  Registration and Exhibition Opens
9.15 Introduction
   Sue Williams-Lee, Head of Educational Services, IRRV
9.30 The IRRV Level 4 Apprenticeship in Revenues and Welfare Benefits: The First Year
   Sue Williams-Lee, Head of Educational Services, IRRV
   Gary Watson, Deputy Chief Executive, IRRV
   Clare Sewell, Apprentice Officer, IRRV
   Roger Bowen, Apprentice Officer, IRRV
10.15 How to achieve successful outcomes using ‘Emotional Intelligence’
   Dave Chapman, Managing Director, Rossendales
10.45 Refreshment Break
11.15 IRRV Apprenticeship – The Stepping Stone to Future Progression?*
   Lee Sirdifield, South Kesteven DC
   David Magor, Chief Executive, IRRV
11.50 The End Point Assessment
   Fay Edwards, South West Councils (our chosen EPAO)
12.30 Lunch Break
14.00 Onwards – Join Streams

Thursday 10th October –
PLENARY SESSION – HOLIDAY INN

9.30 Refreshments
10.00 To be an IRRV Performance Award Winner – One Year On
   Bob Trahern, Assistant Chief Executive (Community Services), North Warwickshire DC: Excellence in Innovation Award
12.00 Close of Conference
In my last column I promised to report back on progress in the redesign of our Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system. “Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth”, said Mike Tyson. And so it proved when we came to the implementation. The plan had been to re-write the IVR based on the questions that customers asked. This gave us six options, but the corporate standard was to have no more than four options at any level. I’m not entirely convinced that this supposed ‘good practice’ has much validity – there seem to be as many views as there are IVR systems.

But in order to progress matters, we redesigned the options so that we start with options that we can easily redirect rather than what customers usually ask for. The next challenge was to get a professional voice recording, which again was not possible to do, because we have neither a contract nor a studio. So, the new recordings are all done on an iPhone by a member of staff. This is just about alright as a stopgap measure, but we really need to re-record everything properly with some equalisation and compression.

That is still on the ‘to do’ list. So, having re-written the options and recorded the new scripts, we then set up and tested everything before going live a couple of weeks ago. This is where I should now be reporting at how delighted customers are with the new scripts, and how the resulting redirection to self-serve has reduced queues and made life so much easier for our call handlers. But sadly, I don’t have any data!

Our phone system does not report on the number of customers choosing each option - customers have not shown themselves to be as many views as there are IVR systems.

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Our phone system does not report on the number of customers choosing each option - customers have not shown themselves to be delighted with the scripts and nor have they diverted themselves to access the service online. Or at least as far as I can tell.

“If you can’t measure it, you can’t improve it”

“We need to do it the way the customer wants it, not the way we want it.”

is a quotation widely attributed to W Edwards Deming, but in fact comes from the management guru Peter Drucker. Peter Drucker is the man who invented modern business management. He wrote 39 books on the subject and is widely regarded as the greatest management thinker of all time. When you think about this quote, it sounds sensible enough. Because if you can’t measure something, and know the results, you can’t possibly get better at it. For example, if you want to lose weight you might measure it by stepping on the scales, or just noticing if your clothing feels looser – if you don’t, you have no idea whether you are succeeding or not.

And yet, I know that our redesigned IVR is objectively better than it was before. Our scripted greetings are friendlier (and actually make sense now), we have removed the previous pointless options that all routed to the same place, and with one queue rather than three, the average waiting time must have reduced. This is something which has definitely improved, I just can’t measure it. So, could the great man

Drucker be wrong?

Our friend Deming takes another view: “That the most important figures that one needs for management are unknown or unknowable, but successful management must nevertheless take account of them.”

Even when you can’t measure exactly what you want, you can learn about the area with related data. Without precise measures, you must use judgment. Judgment will often be better with an understanding of theory and repeated attempts to test those theories and learn. There is a danger that we mistake the

“The main point Deming was making was that we can’t pretend the data we have tells us everything we need to know. We must think. We must understand that data is useful, and its limitations must be remembered.”

measures for the thing itself. Measures are a proxy and we need to understand the limitation of the data we use. The main point Deming was making was that we can’t pretend the data we have tells us everything we need to know. We must think. We must understand that data is useful, and its limitations must be remembered.

So back to my own example. Have we made an improvement? Absolutely. Can I provide any data? Absolutely not. But the fact that we can’t evidence the improvement does not make the changes any less worthwhile and nor are we absolved from trying to get the data. So we are meeting the system supplier in the coming weeks to find a way of getting the data on how customers behave and thinking too about how we can gauge how customers feel about the new routing. The fight continues!

David Graaff is Principal Consultant with Graaff Ltd
One of the most efficient ways to maximise collection is with your visiting officers. Ironically this is usually the first team hit by budget cuts in a revenues department – at the end of the day, it’s expensive to send a member of staff out to check a property."

Be kind to your visiting officers

The topic of my latest article focuses on a role that I feel strongly about. After all, as Business Rates and Visiting Manager for my authority, it is an area close to my heart.

As ongoing cuts to local government funding restrict spending and budgets dramatically, reducing services in the community, there is a clear need to maximise revenue income. One of the most efficient ways to maximise collection is with your visiting officers. Ironically this is usually the first team hit by budget cuts in a revenues department – at the end of the day, it’s expensive to send a member of staff out to check a property. But with Council Tax collection and Business Rates retention almost independently funding councils, it is fundamental the billing is correct.

With Business Rates retention entering 75% of the total amount retained for local authorities, and the revenues support grant diminishing fast, has become increasingly important for local authorities to focus on the net collection of non-domestic rates for self-funding. Not only are the effects of cutbacks from central government causing an issue but the increasing number of rates avoidance tactics and businesses utilising them is too. This has increased the strain for business rates teams in ensuring correct liability and billing. It is my opinion that a good visiting service will assist with this, help maximise collection and prove to be profitable in assisting with preventing rates avoidance, or at the very least make it harder to achieve.

Having a strong visiting service regularly out on the streets can potentially identify missing yield for rating. This could be as simple as an air conditioning unit on the side of a warehouse or a new storage container on previously unrated land, which if not rated is revenue lost and naturally the earlier it’s discovered the quicker it can be assessed and charged. Not only additions to an already existing rateable value but new hereditaments such as advertisement boards, which have been missed from the rating list, can be identified by a visiting officer and entered as soon as possible. Other new hereditaments which are under construction should be monitored by the visiting team to ensure that a completion notice is issued as soon as practicable to begin rating and, subsequently, charges.

Having your visiting service carry out regular inspections to small business rate relief (SBRR) hereditaments can prevent fraud, as well as preventing any relief being unnecessarily applied. A portion of SBRR claimants will vacate a property without advising the council, so checking that the property is empty will enable the council to remove the SBRR and apply empty relief as soon as possible.

Visiting businesses which request part occupied relief will assist with establishing whether the relief can be awarded - there’s always a filing cabinet with something in it to prevent relief! While the relief is discretionary to local authorities, it is good practice to apply, and inspecting the hereditament can ensure it is applied correctly.

With more businesses closing and ending their leases, some landlords are turning to businesses who take on units under a ‘peppercorn rent’ to take occupation for six weeks then vacate or claim the unit is empty – a clear rates avoidance tactic to exploit the six-week rule. Sending a visitor out enables an authority to check occupation and if they are unable to gain access to the hereditament then an appointment should be made to confirm things. This results in the tenant having to supply stock and show some sort of physical occupation in the unit, including any empty period they claim.

For Council Tax, a visiting officer can check for Single Person Discount fraudulent claims by attending a property to see if multiple adults live in a dwelling. Taxpayers claiming for a disabled person reduction, wishing for their tax to be calculated from a reduced band, should be visited to establish the exact adaptations described in the application. Regular visits to assessments claiming an empty exemption (for example Class F) should reduce unnecessary revenue loss if the property is occupied. Also, you need to check potential splits of a property causing multiple dwellings to be rated.

As manager of my team, I ensure visiting staff are all fully trained and up to speed with changes in the regulations. This enables our authority to keep on track with maximising our collection in the changing world of local government funding.

Matthew Ward

IRRV (Dip) is Business Rates and Visiting Manager with Luton Council
In an era when large and complex service transformation is often dogged by delays and false starts, the early results are startling.

The Challenge
For the council, its agreed objectives were no less than to transform itself into a digital organisation, re-designing services to meet modern expectations. Ambitious, optimistic and far-sighted, these objectives took the spirit of a public sector report and made it real.

In November 2015, the Local Government Association (LGA) published one of four linked reports under the theme ‘A Digital Vision for Local Government’. The first document was entitled ‘Transforming local services through digital’ and in its foreword Councillor David Simmons CBE, Chairman of the Improvement and Innovation Board at the LGA had this to say:

“The imperative for local public services to fully exploit the potential of modern digital tools, technologies and approaches in order to improve delivery and save money has never been greater. We face rising citizen demand, needs and expectations at a time of severe spending and resource constraints.”

A recent article in the Open Access Government (26th July, 2019) went further, calling on local authorities to avoid ‘running their activities with a traditional mindset rather than one developed to take digital into account from the start.’ It went on to state that ‘Building digital services on new channels should help extend how customers can get support from local government organisations... By understanding the possibilities inherent in new digital developments, councils can implement better services for the communities they serve.’

Becky Davies, Consulting Manager at Sopra Steria, takes up the story:

“In four short months we have delivered to the council a ‘Go Live’ status on the programme. Our minimal viable product includes a new customer engagement reception area, website and completed first phase of the new digital service.”

The digital transformation – methodology
Three fundamental methodologies are being combined and personalised to deliver the promise of the programme:

• service design – to put the customer at the heart of design and delivery
• business transformation – to manage the necessary organisational and culture change
• agility – working interactively to demonstrate return on investment fast.

Working in this way has brought Sopra Steria consultants, user experience designers and technical experts together with Broxbourne Council from the very start, allowing the team to tackle the hardest problems at the outset, breaking the programme down into manageable ‘chunks’, whilst demonstrating value very quickly.

In addition, the approach adopted has been agile and flexible, taking an in-depth look at the services while running an end-to-end transformation in parallel.

Key milestones for the project are:
• a new website for Broxbourne Borough Council to encourage self-service
• a new reception for face-to-face queries
• new ways of working for operational teams to make the most of smarter technology.

“Working in a One Broxbourne Team alongside our council colleagues and putting the customer at the heart of our transformation were the key enablers for the project to hit all of its targets and deadlines. This is a huge leap forward for Broxbourne Council to achieve its vision of becoming a digital council by 2020.”

Sandra Beck, Director of Finance at Broxbourne Council, confirms that close partnership working has been key to success.

“Sopra Steria has married its expertise with our experience, guiding us step-by-step as we transform the organisation and services. We’ve already done a lot of the hard work up front. In 12 weeks we’ve been able to address some really tough issues and create a practical strategic plan to steer us through the complex delivery of this project.”

An impressive list of deliverables
In an era when large and complex service transformation is often dogged by delays and false starts, the early results are startling. We delivered a high level design in 12 weeks for a council-wide transformation, with a strong business case which secured commitment and investment from the council. We then delivered the key milestones across a period of just 15 weeks.

Introduction
Ray Baker, Local Government Business Unit Director at European information technology consultants Sopra Steria, explains how close partnership working with Broxbourne Borough Council is managing a cultural shift to embrace new digital technologies at the authority.

It is in many ways an inspirational case study which shows how a council can rise to great challenges, supported by the right provider, and benefit from a personalised approach to re-imagining its public service delivery.

“Going digital with Broxbourne Council
A personalised approach to re-imagining public service delivery

In an era when large and complex service transformation is often dogged by delays and false starts, the early results are startling.”
This project is proving to be an object lesson in how a personalised approach to re-imagining public service delivery can achieve demanding short term milestones and create the conditions for a major stride forward in local authority performance.

Ray Baker is Local Government Business Unit Director at Sopra Steria. He can be contacted on: 07966 825536 or ray.baker@soprasteria.com

https://marketing.soprasteria.co.uk/lgdigital

At a glance...

This collaboration between public and private sector has shown how a fully integrated process can work efficiently, rapidly and effectively.

From examining Experian data to determine the specific demographics of the Broxbourne customer base to the systematic upgrading of hardware and software, Sopra Steria has engaged the full participation and involvement of the Broxbourne Borough Council team.

“This collaboration between public and private sector has shown how a fully integrated process can work efficiently, rapidly and effectively.”
The mid-July launch date for the Universal Credit (UC) ‘managed migration’ pilot in Harrogate has just come and gone at the time of writing. It was a bit of a cliffhanger as, with days to go, the necessary regulations had still to be put in place and there seemed to be no parliamentary time for the promised debate.

Managed migration is the intended transfer of the remaining ‘legacy benefit’ recipients to UC. The regulations in question provide just for the pilot, not the full rollout. Controversially, they are bundled together with compensation for lost Severe Disability Premium (SDP).

Readers may recall that, following a court case in which the lawfulness of large income losses for severely disabled people was successfully challenged, ministers decided, from mid-January 2019, to prevent claimants entitled to the SDP from ‘naturally migrating’ (through changes of circumstances) until managed migration caught up with them. 

Critically, managed migration involves ‘transitional protection’ (TP) for claimants who would otherwise lose, whereas natural migration does not.

Compensation
For those former SDP recipients who had already transferred to UC and lost money, ministers promised compensation. This was intended to compensate for the loss of the SDP, but — again controversially — not for that of the accompanying Enhanced Disability Premium (EDP).

To add to the confusion, the original proposed compensation amounts (contained in draft regulations published in late 2018) were much too low even to cover lost SDP. Following further criticism in the courts, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) – although appealing the court’s decision – decided to increase the compensation. Still, the new amounts reflected only the loss of the SDP, not the EDP (a continuing shortfall of £73 per month).

Cliffhanger
To return to the mid-July excitement — in the event, the government was able to issue the regulations suddenly, by means of a parliamentary dodge which (to cut a complicated procedural story short) entailed a statement from the Secretary of State, followed by a short discussion rather than the promised full debate and vote.

This gave the go-ahead for the pilot, but the regulations could still fall (we may know by the time you read this) as Labour has ‘prayed against’ them, which means that an eventual debate and vote will happen.

Should the regulations be defeated, amid today’s unpredictable parliamentary arithmetic, this would be a real setback for the DWP’s notoriously accident-prone UC timetable. But would it be bad news for claimants? This is not straightforward.

Faced with further opposition in Parliament, the DWP moved swiftly to drum up support. Neil Couling, Director General of the UC programme, wrote in early August to various stakeholders, urging them to back the regulations to avoid delaying compensation.

The Disability Benefits Consortium (DBC) – which has over 80 member organisations and upon which I represent the IRRV – replied, explaining that in our view, there were both snakes and ladders here. Essentially, we had important reservations about aspects of the regulations, but were also mindful of the consequences of delay.

Firstly, our reservations.

The DBC has always wanted to see a review-based approach to the managed migration process, whereby legacy claims would be reviewed, any additional information acquired and UC claims created accordingly. This was a very serious concern indeed when the regulations originally appeared last year, as a ‘sink or swim’ approach seemed a very real possibility.

Since then, we accept that the DWP has been serious in its current attempts to minimise fallout and we have been very willing to engage in detailed discussions with officials, while remaining concerned that some (especially the most isolated) might fall through the net.

Secondly, we believe that the EDP should be included in the natural migration compensation amounts.

Delay
While these reservations are very important, we have nevertheless been making the point to politicians of whatever party, when they have asked us for our views (both on these regulations and the earlier version) that delay also has its consequences. The DWP has emphasised the SDP compensation, but there is the wider point that the longer managed migration takes, the more claimants will, through changes of circumstances, fall into natural migration. While some of these will be gainers, many will be losers and there is no TP (of course, we think there ought to be).

As we can see problems with both scenarios (proceed or delay) we are aware that there is a risk of our being selectively quoted by either or both sides of the argument. We have therefore been at pains to urge anybody citing our analysis, to recognise that we have reservations about the regulations and likewise about delaying them. This could be resolved if the government were to concede both a review-based transfer and adequate compensation, but meanwhile, we are where we are.

So at the time of writing, we have a small pilot, a large degree of uncertainty and slow progress towards a new system that will help some, hurt others, partially compensate some of the losers and continue to be one of the few things that can compete with Brexit for the headlines.

1 The Universal Credit (Managed Migration Pilot and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2019:  http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2019/1152/regulation/3/made

Geoff Fimister is a writer and consultant on social security and related issues
I am sure we would all agree that in the UK today people should not be sitting hungry in cold, dark homes. Yet, shockingly, nine in ten (89%) CAP clients have skipped meals due to debt and 80% went without heating on at least a weekly basis. This is not right in a just and compassionate society.

Christians Against Poverty (CAP) is a national debt counselling charity, supporting people in debt and poverty. Our free service operates using a home-visiting model, meaning that day in, day out we are walking into homes for the first time and seeing the destitution for ourselves. This summer, CAP launched a briefing paper titled Left destitute by debt. The paper detailed the high number of those in financial difficulty who experience poverty so extreme that they lack basic subsistence. Experiencing destitution has been defined by The Joseph Rowntree Foundation as having gone without two or more of six essentials over a certain measure of time — shelter, food, heating, lighting, clothing and footwear or toiletries. Before CAP’s help, one third (32%) of clients experienced destitution.

CAP client Olly was one of them.

“I was in a hard money situation and living on benefits. You feel bad as you can’t get a job. You don’t know when your next bit of money is coming in. I have five kids so you know you have to put them first whatever happens.

“There was never any money to pay the bills. Sometimes I’d have to juggle the money round if there wasn’t enough, and decide between whether to spend the money on electricity or food that week — that’s how bad it got! We were on a key meter and constantly running out. We were in the dark. It was really hard on the children. They would normally watch TV — but then they couldn’t. At times we had no food in the house. We couldn’t even afford a loaf of bread.”

Going without meals, not turning the heating on or not having adequate clothing for the weather were some of the most common markers of destitution. It is not right that people are being forced to go to bed early because they cannot afford to turn the heating on or, in some cases (37%) cannot afford to turn on the lights. Being destitute plays a significant part in feeling socially isolated, driven by issues of cost and lacking the material means for maintaining a social network, as well as shame and anxiety caused by living in destitution and debt.

Most households were swept into destitution by low income and for many this was despite being in work. More than a third (35%) of households who experienced destitution received less than £11,000 per year. Vulnerability also played its part, with many who had experienced destitution also contending with several other difficult situations, such as being a lone parent, having mental ill-health or having a physical disability.

We all have a part to play in helping to support people who are facing destitution. This may include considering the challenges customers face when we are speaking with them, ensuring that we signpost people to organisations who can provide appropriate help, and being flexible and understanding with collections both in policy and procedures.

Dawn Stobart is Director of External Affairs with Christians Against Poverty

Experiencing destitution has been defined by The Joseph Rowntree Foundation as having gone without two or more of six essentials over a certain measure of time - shelter, food, heating, lighting, clothing and footwear or toiletries.”
The rollout of Universal Credit (UC) and monthly reassessment of a claimant’s entitlement is having an impact on the administration and maintenance of Council Tax Reduction (CTR) claims. It is also having a knock-on effect on Council Tax (CT) collection, due to changes to instalment payments and delays in recovery. The effect is greater in areas where there are higher proportions of claimants, as well as those which have been on full service for longer.

UC is designed to be paid monthly and is calculated on the claimant’s individual circumstances, including Real Time Information (RTI) earnings data supplied by HMRC. Fluctuations in income are commonplace, albeit such changes are very often minor. However, they do lead to monthly revisions in UC awards, triggering UCDS notifications to Billing Authorities from DWP.

The main issue is around the frequency of changes and the requirement to re-bill customers. The CT instalments have to be revised, which can lead to problems with Direct Debits, due to the notice period that has to be given, as well as confusion for customers. Clearly there is a cost to such frequent changes and the resulting collection and enforcement activity which can follow. Many authorities have implemented changes to their CTR schemes, in order to try to reduce administration and the impact on customers. In order to address the problem and simplify the process, there are two schemes which are proving to be popular – income banded schemes and discount schemes.

There are advantages to both the banded and the discount schemes. Many local authorities have worked in partnership with external consultants, to model the impact of such schemes both financially and on customers. This works particularly well where authorities can cooperate as a group to share outcomes and knowledge across the local area. Banded schemes take into account household income and circumstances and deliver different levels of support depending on household composition. The number of bands can be varied according to local circumstances and such schemes offer clarity for claimants. Discount schemes go further and align more closely with the CT system with criteria usually associated with the types of income which a claimant receives, such as those in receipt of passported benefits or non-passported claimants with or without children.

Such schemes offer simplicity but can be detrimental to groups of claimants. This is primarily due to the bluntness of such schemes and the risk of cliff edges for claimants who may suffer a significant reduction in CTR if their income changes by a small amount but which is enough to push them into the next income bracket in the scheme.

As a result of perceived limitations of banded and discount schemes, as well as software costs associated with their implementation, some authorities are looking at other options. One such option is a ‘tolerance’ scheme. This works by establishing a monthly tolerance level whereby if a claimant’s UC award increases or decreases within the tolerance range, the CTR change is not processed. This means that when notification of an income change is received which is within the tolerance, the customer’s assessment is frozen and there is no need to change Direct Debit payments or other instalments. This also reduces confusion for customers and saves the council the time and money associated with issuing more bills and the resultant delays to payments. Such schemes need to be carefully modelled and put out to consultation in the normal way before being implemented.

Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council both currently operate different rules and entitlements within their respective CTR schemes. The two councils are now in a collaborative arrangement and are moving to a ‘one team’ structure, with common practices and procedures. In time, each authority’s CTR schemes will be examined and they may be aligned. This work has not yet been undertaken but officers from both authorities have been working hard to jointly analyse the tolerance scheme and its potential effect on claimants in each area. This has proved to be very successful through the pooling of knowledge and ideas.

Indications from modelling a £20 per month tolerance scheme for Broadland and South Norfolk are that it would result in a reduction in changes emanating from UCDS notifications of between 40% and 50%. If this is borne out in the ongoing caseload, it would represent a significant reduction in administration and avoid some of the associated collection issues. The most important outcome would be a reduction in disruption and confusion for customers and their ability to pay their CT. An important part of the process is work between benefits and revenues teams to streamline the billing and collection process for all CTR customers and look at ways of improving the administration of their CT accounts.

Tolerance schemes in themselves are not the complete answer. However they do offer the opportunity to address some of the issues which are a result of frequent UC changes. Levels within a tolerance scheme can also easily be varied in future years, to ensure the right income threshold is maintained. They also offer a breathing space to give authorities the chance to fully evaluate more sophisticated solutions, such as the income banding and discount schemes which may offer a more holistic solution in the future.

Simon Quilter is Revenues and Benefits Manager with Broadland District Council

As a result of perceived limitations of banded and discount schemes, as well as software costs associated with their implementation, some authorities are looking at other options. One such option is a ‘tolerance’ scheme.
Fifteen years ago, the world of enforcement was poorly regulated, malpractice was widespread, and agents were often badly trained. Things are no longer like that – after the Taking Control of Goods Act was passed, fees became regulated, practices monitored, and the industry started to turn slowly towards where it is now.

Whilst there has always been a resentment by some towards debt collection and enforcement, many forget that this service is generated by people not paying fines, taxes, or criminal conviction penalties. However, the traditional methods of enforcement have changed, modernised, and now even lead the way with use of technology, vulnerability care, and ethical business practices.

The industry spends considerable time and money trying every method possible to get customer engagement prior to resorting to visiting the customer on the doorstep. These methods are soft approaches by telephone, email, text, and letter, and are designed to ‘nudge’ the customer into communication, not intimidate them or cause added undue stress. These methods are also heavily invested in to ensure that the best wording is used, through correspondence and engaging with collection agencies. In reality these efforts are designed to help the customer, to avoid further fees being added, to engage early so that payment plans can be an option for their account, and to avoid the embarrassment and shame that some feel when an enforcement agent visits their property.

Some customers see these techniques as harassment, and a way to ‘con’ them into opening correspondence and engaging with collection agencies. In reality these efforts are designed to help the customer, to avoid further fees being added, to engage early so that payment plans can be an option for their account, and to avoid the embarrassment and shame that some feel when an enforcement agent visits their property.

Despite these efforts at pre-enforcement and compliance stage, the opportunities given to communicate before the visit of an enforcement agent are often ignored. This in some cases is due to people burying their heads in the sand and thinking the problem will go away, and others because they have genuine reasons and fears of communicating with enforcement agencies. Research suggests that this could be because if an individual customer has Council Tax arrears, they will also have between 10 and 15 other debts that they are struggling with. Recognising these statistics is one of the drivers behind the changes in the enforcement industry and why all collections companies are having to think of new ways to encourage customers to communicate.

With the much talked about announcement around ‘Breathing Space’ coming into effect in 2021, this will potentially provide further help to those who need it most. This is still a grey area, with many saying it will work but many from the advice sector being doubtful and unsure as to how it will work. There are also elements that need confirming, such as where it will fit within the enforcement process. The most logical step probably being before cases are sent to enforcement, as this will add another filter level and help protect from enforcement people with financial vulnerabilities. Time will tell how this process will turn out but it is one of a long list of changes that will affect the industry.

With the recent changes to legislation regarding the compulsory use of Body Worn Video (BWV) cameras, this will help to provide footage that will benefit everyone involved. Such a tiny percentage of complaints in the last few years have been upheld when supported by BWV footage, that it has helped to show the third sector advice agencies, and the clients, that most of the complaints received are from customers who were not aware of enforcement agency powers and instructions. The introduction of this technology being mandatory will change very little, as most enforcement agencies have been using BWV for several years. This, combined with regular spot checks and internal audits of the footage, have benefitted the way visits are carried out and ensures that enforcement agents are accountable for their actions. This again re-enforces that best practices are always carried out ethically, professionally, and morally, and now with the evidence to support that it gives further transparency to enforcement agencies.

Further recent changes within the industry include the introduction of ‘social value’ elements being added to tenders since the introduction of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, which states that all contracts involving spending public money need to show consideration to social value. There are some grey areas within this, though most enforcement activities are done at zero cost and therefore there is no direct spend from the issuing authority using public money. However, there is a general recognition that these additional services should be issued into the communities in which we work.

Projects that enhance society are every organisation’s responsibility, so with more authorities requesting social value in tenders, this can only help to make positive changes within communities. However, this is reliant on the delivery of the social value commitment being professionally managed and delivered and reported on to all stakeholders, to ensure that the projects reflect what is being delivered and are not just a statement to gain extra marks within the tender process.

Whilst all these things will influence the way enforcement is carried out, the changes have all been positive around supporting vulnerable customers and using technology to streamline the way the industry works. Will we ever see a day where there is no need for a knock on the door? I hope so, but I don’t think so. There will always be the people who choose not to pay, regardless of their personal circumstances, and these are the people which all enforcement agencies are engaging, fairly, ethically, and professionally.
The quality of local government organisations’ digital services is still patchy

The internet lends itself brilliantly to putting people at the centre of services, providing great end-to-end user journeys and tailoring services to meet citizens’ needs. Yet, infamously, the quality of local government organisations’ digital services is still patchy.

Despite decades of efforts and initiatives, the gap between online services provided by business and those provided by the public sector is still palpable. That is not to say government organisations haven’t achieved great digital things. The question is, are local authorities working in isolation on digital transformation initiatives, doomed to repeat their peers’ mistakes, or are there sufficient mechanisms in place to share the trailblazers’ successes and help others replicate them?

The London Office of Innovation and Technology (LOTI) is trying to break that tradition. It describes itself as ‘a collaborative vehicle to strengthen boroughs’ ability to innovate, build common capability and scale up digital innovation across London’s public services.’

Launched in June by The Greater London Authority (GLA), and led by former director of innovation charity Nesta, Eddie Copeland, it is funded by its own membership of 15 London boroughs, the GLA and the 33-borough strong London Councils group.

At the time of writing, LOTI said it was too early to comment, as they were still refining their plans, but its workstreams provide a strong clue as to where efforts will be focused, with names like, ‘collective knowledge’, ‘embedding standards’, ‘data collaboration’ and ‘shared experiments’. On the subject of data collaboration, it’s worth mentioning here one of the cross-sector effects of freeing up data for councils to use and share. When Transport for London began publishing live data on train and bus arrivals, it made way for an explosion of private services, like CityMapper, to help passengers work out the best way from A to B. LOTI also plans to offer at least 100 digital apprenticeships in LOTI member boroughs by 2020 (influenced by a Hackney Council model) and to facilitate peer-to-peer sharing of tools, patterns, code and council data through City Hall’s London Datastore, a data-sharing portal where anyone can access data relating to the capital.

Other initiatives include a project to ease the process of setting up Information Sharing Agreements across organisational boundaries, the creation of a guide on the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for London’s public sector organisations and a single guest wifi network for public servants and elected members to get online, no matter where in the capital’s public sector estate they find themselves.

“The question is, are local authorities working in isolation on digital transformation initiatives, doomed to repeat their peers’ mistakes, or are there sufficient mechanisms in place to share the trailblazers’ successes and help others replicate them?”

The Metropolitan Police, Transport for London, the London Fire Brigade, the Olympic Park, the London Legacy Development Corporation and the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government, among others, have pledged to work with the group.

‘We would like to see LOTI act as a convening point in a post-Brexit world, making sure that London can play a role in an emerging city-to-city market in smart technologies, as well as in important transnational and technology-focused research and innovation programmes’, wrote former GLA director of intelligence and analysis Andrew Collinge in his article ‘The Start of the Possible?’

If it can achieve its aims, this single consortium – with a remit of just one city – could create massive savings. It is supported by the Philanthropic arm of Bloomberg, the New York based financial, software, data, and media company, which last year distributed $767 million to its projects.

Last summer, Bloomberg Philanthropies launched the European Digital Innovation programme, with an even broader remit – to help cities across Europe replicate good digital practice by promoting open standards and a culture of innovation, including ‘co-production’ with the technology sector.

‘The idea is to push European capital cities to move further and faster by providing technical assistance and grants, leadership development and peer-to-peer networking for the senior city staff leading digital services efforts,’ writes Todd Asher of Bloomberg Associates’ Media and Technology team on blog-publishing platform Medium. ‘Cities around the world will benefit, as these cities identify and share emerging best practices in this area.’

He writes, ‘We’ve seen in a lot of instances where individual agencies or departments have brought services online, so you might have a system for paying parking tickets or to look up property deed information. But on the other side of the screen, the government employees fulfilling these requests might be working the same way they have for years.’ The project has kicked off with Helsinki, Bratislava and London and will formally roll out in the autumn.

It is hard to fault the principles of these programmes. Whether service delivery managers, digital teams, data experts and service designers have the will to share (and are prepared to let go of their ideas and data), on a large scale, remains to be seen. But perhaps the concept of 375 local government organisations all trying to solve the same problems in isolation
is an outdated view anyway. According to former Chief Digital Officer at Hampshire County Council, Jos Creese, the will is certainly there at local level. “Councils are in general very keen to collaborate, more so than in central government or in the private sector some would argue,” says Creese, who is now a digital analyst and consultant. “Through local partnerships and professional associations, there is a great deal of sharing going on today.

“There are issues, however, where there is perceived competition or concerns about acknowledging failure, because of the reaction of press or public scrutiny. We need a climate where it is safer to admit when things don’t work, in order to learn from them,” Creese tells Insight.

“There is a significant distinction between sharing services and sharing ideas. Collaboration in the broadest sense is much more likely to succeed than fully integrated shared services. This includes sharing data policies, practices, strategies and architectural principles for IT. Such sharing is common practice.

“Using this shared resource is complex. There are a range of differences in public service organisations that will make fine-tuning shared insights and assets necessary before they are incorporated. This is often not understood by those not involved in local authority business delivery”, he says.

But even where there is the will to collaborate, the technology may not lend itself to the service, especially when more than one local authority is involved.

“It’s notoriously difficult to scale innovation around the local public sector,” writes Linda O’Halloran, former head of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Local Digital Collaboration Unit, on the MHCLG Digital blog. “Technology designed for one local authority doesn’t just slide neatly into another, because council systems speak different languages and their business processes aren’t standardised.”

“As a result,” continues O’Halloran, ‘many innovators struggle to serve local authorities. Few new companies can afford to adapt their products for each client and councils spend more on tailored systems that do not join up more than is technically necessary. Our aim is to enable these cross-sector projects and demonstrate commitment to an open, flexible and interoperable local service market.”

The unit also aims to increase collaboration nationally, to help councils to learn, reuse and adapt from work that has gone before, addressing funding cuts and developing sustainable service models.”

And Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council is building a prototype tool that gives social workers information on a child’s family, previous contact with social services and lead professionals’ contact details.

There is a growing focus on encouraging collaborative local government digital services – to share recipes for success, and to provide reusable, shareable assets to avoid duplication and, frankly, failure.

Perhaps it is unsurprising in times of cutbacks that the focus must be on the ‘tried and tested’ when rethinking public services to suit the times. But also, the world is increasingly globalised and ever more shaped by technology. Boundaries matter less. If there has ever been a time for peer-to-peer learning, the time is surely now.
Help is on the way when it comes to dealing with problem debt, but the challenge is widespread and complex.

Problem debt costs the UK at least £8.3bn through the damage it causes to family life, health, productivity, employment prospects and various costs to the welfare state, local government and other agencies, according to StepChange, a leading debt advice charity. 2

The government-sponsored Money Advice Service estimates that just over eight million people in the UK are over-indebted, and that 22% of UK adults have less than £100 in savings, making them highly vulnerable to a financial shock, such as job loss or large unexpected bills.

Importantly, the nature of debt is shifting away from consumer credit towards public sector debt. Citizens Advice saw reported problems relating to public sector debts, such as Council Tax (CT) arrears, increase from 21% in 2011/12 to 40% in 2017/18. Consumer credit problems reduced from 52% to 33%.

It is fair to say that there is increasing recognition of problem debt, and there are some welcome new initiatives. For example:

• good quality debt advice, which is critical in helping people, has expanded. The Money Advice Service spends £48 million a year on directly commissioning debt advice, funded by a levy on financial services firms. An estimated £148 million of further funding is paid directly to debt advice bodies. But an independent review, published in 2018, found that the shortfall between supply and demand meant that there should be an increase in free debt advice to support around 600,000 more people

• the Financial Conduct Authority introduced a price-cap on short-term high-cost credit in 2015, leading to reduced charges, but recognises it needs to do more in this area. All low-income households should be able to access low-cost credit products which should be more widely available

• the government intends to legislate for a 60 day ‘breathing space’ when debtors won’t be chased by creditors and interest rates will be frozen. This will give time to develop an action plan to manage and reduce debt. But it won’t be introduced before 2021, and it signals that people are not seeking help early enough

• the Welsh Government will remove the sanction of imprisonment for CT debt, as it is essentially counter-productive. And in 2017 Citizens Advice and the Local Government Association agreed a CT collection protocol, with emphasis on early intervention.

Changes to the benefit system could also help address problem debt. DWP’s solution to the Universal Credit (UC) five-week wait is to make recoverable advances more readily available. Around 60% of UC claimants have some form of deduction (not including sanctions). Research by Policy in Practice shows that taking account of both the five-week wait and the deductions to recover advances pushes 63% more households into a shortfall between their income and their expenditure. The run-ons of legacy benefits will help but they don’t come into force until July 2020, far too late for many.

Individual policy responses are of course very helpful but all the evidence suggests that a more rigorous and better co-ordinated approach is required. In its Tackling Problem Debt report, the National Audit Office (NAO) concludes that government, specifically Treasury, needs to have a more effective and coherent approach to problem debt.

A starting point would be to define and implement best practice in dealing with problem debt, building on recent work. Best practice principles include timely assessments of vulnerabilities, personalised and pro-active support, affordable repayment plans, maximising income, and signposting or referring people to good quality debt advice. By contrast, the NAO estimates that intimidating actions and additional charges were 15%-29% more likely to make debts harder to manage, and lead to increased levels of anxiety or depression. Policy in Practice is working on a Cabinet Office led project to track the impact of different approaches to debt enforcement on other outcomes, including health and homelessness. This will provide real evidence of what works and what doesn’t.

Secondly, a more rounded, holistic approach would mean joining up enforcement strategies. It is no use pursuing debts in isolation. A better way would involve using data more effectively, particularly in the public sector. Information on debts to local and central government is not readily available and, even when it is, it can be somewhat opaque.

My feeling is that there is something of a time-bomb ticking away here. More and more people are likely to find themselves in difficulty in future. Debt feels like one of those many policy areas that have not been given enough priority because of other pressures on government time. Engaging seriously with people in managing their debts does have a high cost, but action can be targeted and successful interventions will save resources in the long term. We need to build on the good work already underway and focus more attention on developing the right solutions now.

1 Defined as when someone becomes unable to pay their debts or household bills
2 https://www.stepchange.org/policy-and-research/social-cost-of-debt.aspx This was in 2013
3 Other funding for debt advice is paid for by the consumer, by creditors (Fair Share), and by a mixture of public and private funders on a voluntary basis
4 Peter Wyman, Independent Review of the Funding of Debt Advice in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Money Advice Service, 2018
5 http://policyinpractice.co.uk/new-research-the-impact-of-welfare-reform-on-child-vulnerability/
6 See, for example, ‘Responding to citizens in debt to public services, a rapid evidence review’. Wales Centre for Public Policy, February 2019
7 The Cabinet Office leads the government’s work to improve debt management practices in government.

Paul Howarth is an independent policy consultant
Attn: Revenues and Benefits Managers

Colleagues,

I would like to draw your attention to the courses we are running from IRRV HQ that lead to our professional qualifications.

The Level 3 Certificate Course is designed for those who wish to gain a professional qualification and further their careers whilst the Diploma Course is designed for those who wish to progress to senior positions and leads to the highest level of qualification; IRRV Honours. Students are able to study either by Day Release or Distance Learning; details of which are set out below:

**Day Releases Courses**

The courses being offered are as follows:

**IRRV Level 3 Certificate**
- Revenues & Welfare Benefits stream
- Non Domestic stream
- Valuation Tribunal stream
  
  [www.irrv.net/homenew/item.php?wid=65&iid=26097](http://www.irrv.net/homenew/item.php?wid=65&iid=26097)

**IRRV Diploma Course:**
  
  [www.irrv.net/homenew/item.php?wid=65&iid=26101&did=38](http://www.irrv.net/homenew/item.php?wid=65&iid=26101&did=38)

Courses run over three terms on one day each week starting in October and continuing until May. These will take place at the IRRV offices in Central London.

Contact: Mila Chladkova (Education Officer)

courses@irrv.org.uk

**Distance Learning Course**

The courses being offered are as follows:

**IRRV Level 3 Certificate**
- Revenues & Welfare Benefits stream
- Non Domestic stream
- Valuation Tribunal stream
  
  [www.irrv.net/homenew/item.php?wid=65&iid=26097](http://www.irrv.net/homenew/item.php?wid=65&iid=26097)

**IRRV Diploma Course:**
  
  [www.irrv.net/homenew/item.php?wid=65&iid=26101&did=38](http://www.irrv.net/homenew/item.php?wid=65&iid=26101&did=38)

Distance learning caters for those that are looking for the flexibility to decide when and where to study and / or are unable to attend a day release course one day a week. Students can enrol at any time of the year.

Contact: Mila Chladkova (Education Officer)

distancelearning@irrv.org.uk

The following links may be helpful when deciding whether an organisation would want to support staff on studying for a professional qualification of the Institute:

**Syllabus (Level 3):** [IRRV L3 Certificate](http://www.irrv.net/homenew/item.php?wid=6&iid=21756&did=16)

**Syllabus (Diploma):** [IRRV Professional diploma](http://www.irrv.net/homenew/item.php?wid=6&iid=21759&did=16)

If you have any questions arising from this communication, please do not hesitate to us.

**FEES**

Fees for both Day Release and Distance Learning are £1,260.00 (plus VAT) for Level 3 Certificate and £1,380.00 (plus VAT) for Diploma.

Organisations should note that they may want to take advantage of the '3 for 2 Offer’ on multiple bookings; this offer applies to bookings on either course or across both courses.
MISSION OUTCOME: 100% SUCCESS

We’re delighted that yet again we received a 100% clean bill of health for annual billing and our service was pronounced ‘excellent’ by all our clients.

We like to think that we don’t just pull the stops out at annual billing but that we’re delivering a best in class service all year round. We support councils with daily billing and manage all their regular post to relieve them of the burden of handling post in house and helping them to drive down costs and maximise efficiencies.

Whether you’re sending a handful of letters or a bulk mailing – talk to us and see how we can help.

You might also like to attend one of our free ‘best practice’ seminars in September (in partnership with the IRRV) for some inspiration and to talk to colleagues about how to best meet the increased challenges of improving communication with reduced budgets.

To find out more and to book your free place please contact:
JASON.LUSTY@CFH.COM : 07739 976458 : WWW.CFH.COM