

CEO INTRODUCTION - COUNCIL REPORT OCTOBER 2020

Looking out of the window, all looks so normal: the sun streams through, and the leaves are just gently changing to autumnal colours, perhaps a slight chilly edge to the wind but visually everything seems just the same. Yet, of course, the COVID-19 world that CIBSE and the rest of the world are trying to cope with is exceptional and arguably, the most frustrating aspect is the uncertainty and inevitable change. Coping in a crisis is normally about clarity of purpose, excellent information and agility. In my last Council report, I wrote about the 'OODA Loop' – Observe, Orientate, Decide & Act – the whole purpose is to be agile and this I hope is true of CIBSE. I also explained we have three priorities:

- **Maintain Business as Normal** especially Membership renewal
- **Maximise Revenue Streams** Services, Certification & Membership
- **Prepare for the 'New Normal'** our aim is to be even stronger and more effective

From a staff perspective, we have been able to work effectively using Microsoft Office 365 and Teams with our files 'in the cloud' and remote access to our CRM. We have made some significant enhancements with membership applications; all standard routes are now online with the rest to follow by the end of the year. We are currently running an IT Discovery Project with Cantarus to identify our next steps in IT support, which is concentrating on the CMS and Knowledge Portal. We have kept Balham open with minimum staff levels to deal with the post and keep the building secure. We then prepared guidance, trialled and then, organised the processes for the offices to be occupied for those staff who needed to return and were able to travel. We have also run various sessions and weekly briefings to keep the staff informed and support them in these difficult times.

I want to acknowledge that a relatively large number of our members, coordinated by the Royal Academy of Engineering, have responded to the barrage of technical queries from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE). We have also produced COVID-19 Guidance, including 'Ventilation' and 'Emerging from Lockdown' for example, titles have been downloaded over 40,000 times. I am also told that our Technical Director appeared on BBC TV News, twice, to explain the issues of ventilation and the importance of opening windows - another first for CIBSE. For all our members and staff who have given their time and advice so freely, a very big thank you.

I must also mention our tenth Technical Symposium (TS) that moved to a virtual platform over the 14/15 September; we missed the hospitality of Strathclyde University. We had just over 70 technical papers and an excellent range and diversity of speakers and content. A significant 330 people signed-up and the average attendance was always over 50 at any one time; the papers and sessions were recorded, so are available to those registered, at leisure as they say. I must also record my thanks to Tim Dwyer, who as Chair, has led all of the TSs. Tim's enthusiasm and commitment has been terrific, and the TS has just gone from strength-to-strength, but Tim wishes to stand down as Chair – I hope Tim will remain involved with the TS, but we intend to announce a new Chair very soon.

Controlling the cash, nurturing the resources and pacing ourselves as we look to 2021 has been a significant and essential challenge. FRAG, our finance committee, has met several times and we have produced a series of budgets to check that we are on track. Of course, there is still much uncertainty and risk - as we come into the final three months of the year and before renewals - yet thus far we are OK and our reserves intact. I want to say a big thank you to all our volunteers who have supported us and the staff who have been exceptional.

Whilst all this has been going on, there has been significant activity since Council last met on the Building Safety Programme. In July, the Draft Building Safety Bill was published and at the end of September, the British Standards Institution released the first draft of its overarching framework for competence in relation to higher risk buildings. There is still time for you to download and review this and get comments back to us – our Membership and Technical teams are on the case because of the enormous potential impact of the legislation and the competence standards envisioned by this framework on all CIBSE members and indeed all building professionals.

COVID-19 may be taking the majority of the headlines, but the consequences of the Grenfell Tower tragedy and the exposure of poor construction practices and lack of proper controls over what has been built are also matters of national significance and consequence.

Within the body of this report you will find much greater detail of our activities and responses to the new challenges. In my opinion CIBSE is in good heart, the importance of our knowledge and advice is clear. The issues facing society from Climate Change to Building Safety to COVID-19, means that our professional engineering expertise is much in demand. CIBSE is constantly adapting to the new circumstances and is ready for the future; we are positive and enthusiastic and we just need to go and shape a better future for society. So, we need to keep agile, even if looking out of the window and thinking all is normal, life is not!