CEO Report to Council Meeting – 10th October 2014

INTRODUCTION

The CIBSE pace of life continues at speed and I am always impressed by the variety, enthusiasm and sheer scope of all that CIBSE is involved in. During my recent holiday in Scotland I was struck by the very divisive referendum campaign on both sides of the argument. When high emotion is involved it is easy to lose sight of the issues; only in the last few days did the arguments of being part of a larger Union that encourages local and devolved responsibility emerge. Irrespective of the politics it is an interesting question: central control versus local freedom? I only raise this issue because I think CIBSE also has to face a similar dilemma. With the web and social media, instantaneous campaigns and messaging, views and opinions can quickly be generated and encourage a “distributed localism”, yet where are the checks and balances to minimise the corporate risks, liabilities and ensure we do not breach our legal frameworks. CIBSE’s complex web of Regions, Groups, Societies and Networks are equally challenging; we need to empower them all, yet maintain gentle but effective checks and balances.

International President: We are now almost halfway through our Presidential year. The impact of an International President is already tangible, changing our thinking and view of the world. I believe Peter’s year will be a marker for years to come... There have been challenges but outside Delta House these I am sure will have been virtually unnoticed. Peter chairing the Board meetings via video conferencing has been “interesting” and sometimes amusing – Peter’s neighbour’s dog in Melbourne is a frequent contributor to our meetings! The technology could improve greatly but after a minor disaster in July, it is now workable and we have learned much. I think that it is also appropriate to say that with our ASHRAE President Tom Phoenix and Executive VP Jeff Littleton joining us to day and our overseas Regional Chairs joining us, CIBSE is increasingly an “International” organisation. The membership balance for CIBSE is continuing to move from UK to International, so many wish to embrace our engineering philosophy. What has struck me is the large number of overseas members that regularly access the Knowledge Portal.

Membership: The success or otherwise of any membership organisation is very much defined by the renewal and retention rate. As we approach renewal letters going out in the next few weeks it always focuses the staff on what the “lapsed” rate will be. We continue to drive for improvement in this area. We have not “out sourced” the renewal function as many of our peers have done. We believe this is a “people business” where people matter as individuals and we have time to discuss their requirements and aspirations, equally we strive to have efficient and effective business processes using the best IT we can afford. Thus we are in the process of investing in a new CRM that we hope will support the delivery of much of this “personalised service”, putting members at the centre but also using technology to reduce the administration and enhance our service.

Council: There has been a great deal of discussion and debate on how we can improve the workings of Council as a consultative body. The June meeting was described as one of the more positive and useful for some time. The opportunity to discuss, debate, share and then conclude is warmly welcomed. I believe the real challenge though is to demonstrate change and quickly too. Tangible progress can be elusive and in spite of everyone’s best attempts this can lead to frustration; this I think is a hallmark of organisations like ours; it has great strengths but also a few weaknesses. Achieving a consensus is the key I would suggest. We now have a new role; “Council Leader” for the President Elect who now has the responsibility for ensuring the business of the Council is effective and progress is monitored and reported.
**Digital Plan of Works:** The Technology Strategy Board (TSB) recently funded two phases of work for the development of the Digital Plan of Works, to support the introduction of BIM. Prior to submission for Phase 1, many pundits felt it would be impossible for the Institutions to act together – through a complex series of discussions, CIBSE was able to lead a consortium consisting of RIBA, RICS, CIOB, ICE, IStructE, BIFM, APM known as the “C8”, which reported in July. Bids for Phase 2 required a much greater appetite for risk and complexity and although the C8 couldn’t participate we have been able to coerce a “C5” group (RIBA, RICS, CIOB, IStructE,) to work with RIBA Enterprises. Much of the detail is yet to be worked out but I must pay tribute to the huge amount of work Hywel Davies has done in this area, supported by George Adams. CIBSE has really raised its profile by encouraging others to do the “right thing” and to work together for the good of the industry. No guarantee of success yet but at least we are talking!

**CIBSE Journal:** It is now over five years ago that we ended our 30-year association with United Business Media and its predecessors and brought the CIBSE Journal in-house. In February 2009 we launched our new magazine with our partners Cambridge Publishing Ltd (CPL) and Redactive, who sell our advertising; at the time it was a huge risk and a step into the unknown and UBM launched a “spoiler magazine” just to increase the tension – that now seems a long time ago. The Journal continues to prosper, even in the recession it has been able to make modest contribution and now we are seeing increased recruitment revenues. The Journal is still the No1 member benefit and the App has now over 1600 subscribers. The vision was to create a Journal with a momentum of its own; I think this has been a great success. As I write we are going out to re-tender for our advertising partner. CPL will continue with the editorial and publishing element but I anticipate that we shall see further and exciting development of the Journal.

**Building Performance Conference:** I must also highlight another new event, the “Leadership in Building Performance” Conference and Exhibition to be held at the Queen Elizabeth II Centre London, 28-29 October. We have a very good number of exhibitors and currently the focus is to attract more delegates. Traditionally we have always had to work hard to get good delegate numbers. This Conference is all about the effectiveness of buildings, developments, innovation and best practice. The venue is easy to access and it is after all “your” Conference, so why not attend? All the details are on the CIBSE website. I look forward to seeing you there.

**Premises:** At the last Council I reported that we have a premises group to investigate the feasibility of developing the current Balham site for a more appropriate HQ and establishing if it is possible to fund this work by using part of the site for residential development. The work is in two strands: 1) to identify the Requirement in terms of function and capacity and 2) to establish affordability and financial impact. We now have an architectural outline scheme that indicates that by taking the current site occupied by the Engineering Centre, a four storey new-build would create enough space for a HQ and staff. The next step is to create the financial feasibility models. At the same time we continue to engage with other interested parties to see if there are any other feasible options to create a modern and appropriate CIBSE HQ in a central location.

**Staff:** After several changes of senior staff we are now starting to enjoy a period of stabilisation. I am very pleased to say that Lucinda Waits is now established as our Head of Marketing. We have also welcomed Sara Kassam as our new Head of Sustainability Development. Both of them have already made a good start and are having a real impact already. If you haven’t met them yet, do make yourselves known to them. Anastasia Mylona is about to resume a full time role with us, and is now our Research Manager. Having advertised for the new post of Technical Manager to further support Hywel, we were not able to appoint anyone so are taking time to reflect before our next step.
IT Project Update: We continue to make progress on the three-year IT Project; our new Content Management System (CMS) is now reasonably functional and we have embodied a number of improvements and are now starting to identify further development opportunities. We have now focussed on the next stage of the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software and have now selected our preferred suppliers, which in itself are complicated; the suppliers now need to gain a good understanding of our needs while not over-simplifying or missing an opportunity to rationalise. We are at that difficult stage of finalising our User Requirement for the CRM. We are currently on track but the timelines are tight and the challenges significant.

Building Performance Awards: We are already looking forward to the Building Performance Awards on the 10 February 2015 at the Grosvenor House Hotel. We look to have an even better quality of entry than last year and meanwhile the sponsorship is looking good too. Why not come along, as it is a great showcase for the Industry and the Institution and an opportunity to network. We have worked really hard to give it a Client focus – we would really value your support on the night.

Celebrating Success: I am delighted to also welcome to our Council meeting the President of the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers (HKIE), Victor Cheung, who will also be joining us for the President’s Dinner. Victor joined CIBSE in 1985 and has a wonderful story of success in the industry from a very modest background – I am sure he will tell you if you ask. The Royal Academy of Engineering has also announced its new crop of Fellows and I am delighted that Mike Simpson, who will be well known to many, and Shaun Fitzgerald are on the list – more details at www.raeng.org.uk - and they are both Fellows of CIBSE as well as the RAEng. I am sure you will join me in congratulating them on their success.

Conclusion: What I hope you will sense is the positive activity and energy that is being created as we strive to deliver an effective and relevant Institution for our members. There is a lot of passion and this is what makes the world a better place. So I end almost where I began; we don’t all have to agree, nor do we just need to nod in agreement but positively decide that working together, in partnership, must be the solution and will create the most favourable outcome.