



ASSET

PROFESSIONAL PAPERS FROM THE

ACES PRESIDENTIAL CONFERENCE

BRENTFORD, SEPTEMBER 2009



HOLIDAY INN, BRENTFORD LOCK
~ venue of the ACES Presidential Conference
September 2009

ACES

The Association

ACES, the Association of Chief Estates Surveyors and Property Managers in the Public Sector, represents the chief estates and property management professionals in the public sector throughout the UK.

The Association was formed in 1986 with the amalgamation of two long-standing bodies, ALAVES, the Association of Local Authority Valuers and Estates Surveyors (founded in 1949), and CLAVA, the County Valuers and Land Agents Association (founded in 1908). Until 1995 the amalgamated Association operated under the name of LAVA, the Local Authority Valuers' Association.

Membership

Membership of ACES is open to the senior estates surveyors and property managers from each local authority or other public sector organisation.

Meetings

ACES has a very active branch structure with branches covering the whole of England, Scotland and Wales. There is also a Rural Branch for those members involved in rural property management or the work of County Councils.

Most of the work of the Association is carried on in the regular branch meetings held around the country. At a national level there are usually two professional conferences each year and an Annual Meeting. The occasional Study Days on major topics are also open to non-members of the Association.

Publications

ACES has a full programme of publications of professional interest to the public sector surveyor. The yearbook 'Per Annum' contains up-to-date contact information for all members.

'The Terrier' is the Association's regular journal and is published quarterly. Each year, there are also usually two editions of 'Asset' containing professional papers compiled from ACES conferences and dealing with the latest issues.

Government liaison

One of the primary roles of ACES is liaison with central government and this is carried out through a variety of means, both informal and formal, such as the DCLG/ACES Working Party and the Valuation Liaison Group.

Further information and website

Further information on the Association and on membership can be obtained from the ACES Secretary at the address on this page or by visiting the ACES website at www.aces.org.uk

ASSET

The Publication

This edition of ASSET is a compilation of edited transcripts of the verbal presentations, including overheads, given at the ACES Presidential Conference in Brentford in September 2009.

Some are formal briefing papers; others are more informal and conversational in style.

Use

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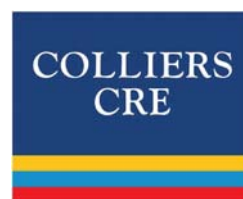
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THE PUBLIC SECTOR v THE RECESSION



LEE DAWSON

ACES President

Lee has over 30 years experience working in the public sector and in that time has worked for five local authorities ranging from large metropolitans to small cities and districts. He is now Head of Corporate Property and Project Co-ordination at the London Borough of Hounslow. Lee is a Fellow of the Royal

Institution of Chartered Surveyors, and holds a diploma in Project Management as well as a Masters in Business Administration.

He has been a member of ACES for 24 years and a member of three branches in that time, namely South West, Heart of England and now London. He is past Chairman of the Heart of England and London branches and in November 2008 became the current President of ACES.

INTRODUCTION

On the day I became President, at the Annual Meeting on 14th November 2008, a well-known representative of a professional organisation said to me at the Centenary Luncheon, "Well of course we expect you to be the white knight you know, charging in and saving us. This is where the work will be, with the public sector, and you will spend us out of recession".

A few months later I was trying to think of a theme for the Presidential Conference, as one does, and obviously "recession" seemed like a good start and a number of people came up to me and asked, "What is the public sector's role in all this?" Then those words from the Annual Meeting came back to me as well as thoughts about the role of Government/Public Sector in helping to get the country out of recession and the theme of The Public Sector versus The Recession was born. Since then the debate about the role of public sector in helping us out of recession has escalated.

But now the debate has moved on. A few days ago the Prime Minister, in a speech at the TUC, used the word "cuts" in the context of public expenditure which gives the lie to the perception that we were in some sort of comfy, closeted environment and could simply spend our way out of the recession. Nonetheless I still feel it is appropriate for us to discuss what the role of the public sector is in these times.

Unfortunately I am old enough to remember working through two previous recessions. When I started working in the North East back in the 70s unemployment there stood at 22%. Today's recession will have to get a lot worse before we get back to those days. However my first experience, and subsequent ones, has been that the public sector has to be there and has to step in and has to do things because it is there for that area in the long term. I still remember my last deal in the North East was to buy a shipyard from British Shipbuilders for the Council as part of its long-term regeneration activity. I remember meeting some chap who drove up from London. I think it was the first time that he had ever been north of Watford, and we did a deal the same day and he drove back. If you go back now the yard is completely regenerated. However, this took a long time, so nobody is suggesting it is easy.

Neither was it easy in the 90s, but again, the public sector had a key role to play in that.

Today some of the causes, and some of the solutions, will be different but the impacts are nevertheless the same. Rising unemployment is affecting certain groups and that in turn has a political dimension to it that we must work with. The biggest difference with today's recession is that the pressure on the public purse is much greater now than it was in those two recessions and so it is unlikely that we will be able to simply spend and regenerate our way out. This is the real challenge.

You will see the theme running through these Conference papers starting with the big picture, the impacts on us and related issues. There are contributions from the Audit Commission, leading economists and surveyors as well as an appreciation of the political dimension from the Leader of Hounslow Council.

I cannot promise a solution here but there will be ample food for thought that should stimulate everybody to consider how he or she can challenge the recession because each area will be different, each council will be different, and each region will be different. However, ACES members and the public sector have a positive role to play irrespective of location.

There will be a lot of talk about asset rationalisation but in my opinion the focus should be on service rationalisation. After all in Hounslow, and I am sure it is the same nationwide, we do not have a lot of empty properties lying around that we do not know what to do with. But we do have properties that are occupied by services and it is occupation that costs money and this is what impacts on tax levels. The Prime Minister is talking about cuts and everybody agrees cuts will happen. The debate is not if but when and how much services will be affected.

My plea to ACES members is do not sit back and expect the service departments to deliver. They have to be in there as part of the team effort. Property has to be in there with positive suggestions and leadership. Service rationalisation will have to happen, now or later so do not sit back and let it happen around you, get in there and help sort the problem out. It is not going to be easy and it is not going to be short term, but property professionals can and should contribute in a positive manner.

Lee Dawson
