

Annual Report 2006/07

By Adrian Waite, Managing Director

'AWICS' is passionate about public services. That is why I decided to enter local government service in 1981. That is why I founded 'AWICS' as an ethical management consultancy to provide support to those who provide public services – in all parts of Britain and also abroad! We want to make a real contribution to improving public services because they are so important to the fabric of our society.

Our mission statement is 'Independence, Integrity, Value'. We approach our work from an independent standpoint – not burdened with our own preconceptions and objectives – but with a genuine wish to help the client to achieve their objective. Our consultants are of the highest calibre. We observe the highest standards of integrity that should be expected of any consultant working with public services. We offer both 'quality' and 'value for money'. We are not the largest management consultancy. However, we are big enough to make a difference – but small enough to care!

This report covers the year 2006/07, the eighth year of trading and another very successful one. Turnover during the year was the second highest level ever achieved. It is now clear that 'AWICS' has been able to increase this level of turnover and profitability in 2007/08. During the year we had one full-time and four part-time employees. We also had six associate consultants.

Our increasing numbers of clients include national government departments, local authorities, housing associations, arms length management organisations, professional bodies and others who provide public services. The services that we provide include:

- Regional Seminars
- In-House Training
- Management Consultancy
- Independent Tenants Advice
- Publications

And we made a real contribution to improving public services in many areas. The following illustrate just a few of the projects to which we have contributed during the year:

Regional Seminars

Our programme of regional seminars was launched in February 2006 with a series of five sessions of 'All You Want to Know about Local Authority Housing Finance' that were held in various venues around England during February and March 2006. This course is an introduction and overview of the important and complex subject of local authority housing finance that is designed for the non-specialist. This proved a popular series and it was repeated in 2007 with a series of nine sessions held between February and November. Another series is planned for 2008.

During the autumn our series of seminars on 'Sustainable Housing Business Plans and the Efficiency Agenda' were held at various venues around England. These were presented with assistance from senior staff of Derby Homes and considered how local authorities and arms length management organisations could construct robust and sustainable housing business plans in the context of the government's efficiency agenda.

Appleby Business Centre, Bridge Street, Appleby in Westmorland, Cumbria. CA16 6QH.
Telephone: 017683-52347 or 52165. Mobile: 07971-321863. Fax: 017683-54005.
E-Mail: Adrian.waite@awics.co.uk. Websites: www.awics.co.uk and www.awics.eu

Managing Director: Adrian Waite MA CPFA ACIH FIPSM
Company Number: 3713554. VAT Registration Number: 721 9669 13

Our programme of regional seminars has been further developed during 2007/08 with additional seminars on:

- All You Want to Know about Housing Association Finance
- All You Want to Know about Local Authority Housing Finance in Wales
- All You Want to Know about Local Authority Housing Finance in Scotland
- All You Want to Know about Local Authority Finance
- Arms Length Management Organisations – Freedoms, Flexibilities and the Future
- Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 – Implications for Local Authorities and Housing

Our regional seminars are well received by the delegates who attend who find that the training and information provided enables them to become more effective in their roles. Organisations attending our regional seminars include central government, local government, housing associations, academic institutions and others.

In-House Training

In-House Training courses were provided to Government Regional Offices, Local Authorities and Arms Length Management Organisations on:

- All You Want to Know about Local Authority Housing Finance
- All You Want to Know about Housing Association Finance
- Sustainable Housing Business Plans and the Efficiency Agenda

Clients included:

- Bristol City Council
- Cambridge City Council
- Derby Homes
- Government Office Southwest
- Government Office West Midlands
- Harrow Borough Council
- New Prospect Housing (Salford)
- Northwest Leicestershire District Council
- Oldham Borough Council
- Redbridge Borough Council
- Sheffield Homes
- Stoke on Trent City Council

As a result of this, Councillors, Board Members, Civil Servants, Housing Staff, Finance Staff, Tenant representatives and others have been empowered to carry out their roles to greater effect. We are continuing to expand the range of in-house training available.

Management Consultancy

We offer a wide range of consultancy services to local authorities and others principally on management, financial and housing issues. For example, we assisted Birmingham City Council with a Value for Money Procurement Strategy for the Housing Services; Carlisle City Council with the development and delivery of training strategies and programmes for Members and managers; Enfield Borough Council with the development of their Housing Revenue Account Business Plan; South Derbyshire District Council with housing revenue account business planning; and Warrington Borough Council with a 'health check' of their housing revenue account and with housing revenue account business planning.

Carlisle City Council has recently received a series of awards for good practice in its management training programmes.

We are continuing to work with local authorities on housing and other issues during 2007/08.

Independent Tenants' Advice

We were successful in tendering for the position of Independent Tenants' Adviser at Fenland District Council during their Housing Stock Options Appraisal that was completed in June 2005. The Council subsequently developed its stock transfer option and we were re-engaged as Independent Tenants' Advisor by the Tenants' Forum in October 2005. Our role was to ensure that the tenants of Fenland were empowered to take a decision on the future of their homes and neighbourhoods and were able to do so from a position of knowledge. We worked with the Tenants' Forum, Tenants' Associations and the tenant body at large to ensure that everyone understood all the issues and participates in all the decisions. We did this through holding meetings, visiting housing estates and sheltered housing schemes, issuing newsletters, working through the press and other media and providing a freephone service for tenants with questions and issues to discuss. We advised the tenant-led Transfer Options Development Group that managed the whole process on matters including the selection of the housing association partner. We also advised tenant members of the Shadow Board of the new Roddons Housing Association.

Fenland District Council balloted its tenants on stock transfer in November 2006. The result was that 54% of tenants supported the transfer. The transfer is expected to be made in November 2007.

Professional Bodies

During the year Adrian Waite was invited to speak at conferences organised by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants; Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and the Northern Housing Consortium.

We also publish the electronic newsletter the 'Public Services News'.

Our contribution to making improvements in public services has therefore been significant. Our potential to do even more in the future is even greater.

I also believe in the importance of making a voluntary contribution where appropriate. I am a member of the Housing and European Panels of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy; and an Honorary Fellow and National Council Member of the Institute of Public Sector Management.

This annual report is designed to give you a flavour of what 'AWICS' is about. We also have two websites and welcome enquiries by e-mail, telephone or at our office. Addresses are shown below.

Adrian Waite
Managing Director
October 2007