

Report on the attendance of the Vice Chairman and Clerk of the St Helena PAC to the UKOTP Oversight of Public Finances Forum 2019, Miami

Mark Yon, 18 March 2019

Monday, 4 March 2019

Due to tight connecting flights and delays with US Border Protection/Immigration in the US, we were unable to attend the Welcome Dinner at 18:00hrs, however we did meet colleagues later that evening in the hotel lobby.

Day 1: (Tuesday, 5 March 2019)

Bilateral Meeting

The PAC Clerk, Chief Auditor, Head of Internal Audit (Designate), Senior Internal Auditor and I attended the first Bilateral meeting of the Forum. Also in attendance were:

- Susie Latta, Head of Internal Partnerships, CPA UK
- Matthew Hamilton, Monitoring and Evaluations Manager, CPA UK
- Diana Atungire-Ocaya, Project Officer, UKOTP, CPA UK
- Jo Rowley, Deputy Director, Audit Practice, GIAA
- John Kelly, Professional Practice, GIAA
- Marriam El-Azm, Head of UKOTP, CPA UK
- Paul Wright-Anderson, Audit Manager, UK NAO

The session lasted an hour and the stakeholders centred their interest around:

1. What had been achieved in the respective 3 strands of work as a result of the support received from UKOTP?
2. What were the wider outcomes?
3. Looking forward.

It was also confirmed that the Project had been extended for a further year until March 2020.

From the PAC perspective, we were able to refer to gaps in legislation and that urgent reform is needed; the absence of managed financial resources or a small budget; constraints with our web presence; lack of media coverage; and issues we encounter with SHG YE financials. We also tabled a request for additional training throughout the final year of the project to help with our on-going development, with particular focus on enhancing our questioning techniques when scrutinising financials. We were also able to highlight the benefit of our exposure visit to Isle of Man and Westminster in 2017 and the attachment of the Welsh Clerk, Faye Bowen to the St Helena PAC.



Forum Welcome and introductions

A gathering of all participants together with stakeholders gave way to an overview of the upcoming programme and the Project to date. Introductions were also made by all.

Session 2(a): Reflecting on progress to date

Gareth Snell, MP (Labour Co-operative Party) gave an introduction and Matthew Hamilton made a presentation of the Results of the PAC Survey that had been conducted prior to the Forum.

Presentations were then made by the following PACs:

- Anguilla
- Bermuda
- Cayman Islands
- Falkland Islands
- Gareth Snell (UK PAC)
- Montserrat
- St Helena
- Turks & Caicos Islands
- Gibraltar

In summing up, Gareth Snell determined that there was commonality among the PACs and made particular mention of:

- Procedural challenges
- Unhelpful legal advice
- Untimely responses from Governments and follow-up.

Ezzard Miller suggested the CAPAC approach to St Helena and the sharing of their documents on laws and guidance.

It was interesting to note that having understood each other's committee compositions, at least two PACs were going to consider the use of independently appointed persons/lay members to their committees as adopted by St Helena and the Falkland Islands PACs.



Session 3(a): Identifying practical solutions to common issues

There were only four selected inputs to the session and these were:

- Turks & Caicos Islands (focussed on appointing a dedicated Clerk)
- Bermuda (focussed on the role of Chairman)
- Gareth Snell, UK PAC (focussed on the UK PAC)
- Lucia Wilson (focussed on her role as a Clerk)

Day 2: (Wednesday, 6 March 2019)

Session 4(a): Addressing challenges to public sector management in UK Overseas Territories

A discussion was held and lead by Kevin Summersgill from NAO. After separating into our different strands, the PAC group came up with the following challenges:

- 1.) Managing Major Infrastructure / Capital Projects
- 2.) Financial Management
- 3.) Expectations of Tax Payers and Public
- 4.) Recurring Costs of Major Projects
- 5.) Debt Management

Session 5(a): Evidence session

Delegates were given detailed briefing notes in relation to a mock evidence session on Managing Capital Projects. The group of Clerks presented an impressive range of suggested themes for Chairs to use, having had a separate group session to prepare them, and having done so in just an hour.

Jackie Baillie took on the role of PAC Chair and the remaining delegates were Members. The Chair sought adoption of the relevant themes from each Member and then called on the three actors, who performed the roles of witnesses, to appear before the Committee. The witnesses (who were a Gibraltar delegate and two

CPA team members) performed very well but so did Committee Members with their questions and supplementaries. I was equally impressed with how well the Chair performed and supported Members when needed and asserted herself on the witnesses when they became intentionally awkward.

The evidence session lasted an hour and was factually based on the management of major capital projects by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure in Northern Ireland. The Department had a target to deliver £229m capital investment and while the project had delivered the expected assets, a report by the Northern Ireland Audit Office found that the construction works did not go to plan and encountered significant delays and cost overruns resulting in all seven projects needing additional funding. For one of the re-builds reviewed of which the award of the contract was worth £10.9m, basic tender documentation did not exist and bribery was clearly evident!



Report back by the Clerks and Chairs on the mock inquiry was useful and highlighted the following:

- The session went well generally with good supplementaries
- Witnesses seemed relaxed and not overly defensive
- Good chairmanship with clear, direct, authoritative approach and without domination
- Evidence of tag-teaming by committee Members and Chair
- Some questions needed to be short and precise
- Some instances led to repetition of questions therefore listening skills need improving.

Day 3: (Thursday, 7 March 2019)

Session 6: Outreach engagement

The session was led by Kate Faragher and looked at how the three strands of oversight can be communicated effectively to different audiences and each of the Territory's delegations sat in groups for once.

We were encouraged to develop Communication Plans and were given printed templates for aiding our strategies along the following lines:

- i) Develop a Vision for our PAC
- ii) Identify our Targeted Audience
- iii) Identify Channels
- iv) Approaches to Communicating Effectively



We were also guided on how to make Reporting writing less complex and more clear.



Kate introduced us to creating 'punchy' press releases using a 5-box template which I hope we can adapt:

- Box 1: Headline
- Box 2: Story – What, Who, Where, When
- Box 3: Detail – How, Why, Statistics, Personal Angle, story behind the statistics
- Box 4: Quote – from founder, key person, emotional angle and / or corroborating facts
- Box 5: Notes to the Editor – 24 hr Contact details, additional info & links to pictures or videos

Finally, we did an exercise which looked at what each strand does and where there were areas of crossover in relation to challenges and solutions and producing a shared press release.

In closing, Mark Scott spoke about the web portal where a wealth of resources can be found and interacted with. Matthew Hamilton reflected on the Project and looking backwards and forwards and Diana Atungire-Ocaya reaffirmed that the Project ends in March 2020 and challenged delegations to:

- Make a video and share with the Project
- Share our final redesigned reports
- Produce and share annual reports
- Show our media outreach successes

Session 7: Surgery time

We did not participate in the one-on-one session with stakeholders given that we had expressed our appreciation, expectation and concerns in the Bilateral meeting and Forum sessions.



On behalf of the Clerk of the St Helena PAC and myself, we wish to express our sincere gratitude to the entire CPA UK team and their Partners who made our attendance possible. We are also grateful to the Chairman and Members of the St Helena PAC, Mr Phil Sharman, Mr Anesu Happyman Makamure and Mr Blessing Gurure for their valuable support and, St Helena Government officials for their assistance.

Mark Yon

Vice-Chairman, St Helena Public Accounts Committee