

ICAEW Staffs, Salop and Wolverhampton President's report 2019-20

I am amazed at how the last year has flown by.

I set as a principal goal of my year to improve the level of our engagement with local Universities and their students. Thanks to the support of our committee members and ICAEW colleagues we have had success in strengthening our links with the Universities of Wolverhampton, Keele and Staffordshire and we now need to build on these connections in the future.

It is encouraging to have seen the increase in recruitment of ICAEW students in our district, reflecting the nationwide picture. The availability of the ICAEW qualification through an apprenticeship has undoubtedly helped to encourage employers take on new trainees and I hope that we will continue to see this trend continue.

I have made several trips to Chartered Accountants Hall during the year in my role as a member of the group carrying out a review of District Societies. I believe that we all agree that we should seek to increase the level of engagement between members and ICAEW and that District Societies have a vital role to play in promoting the interests of their members and in promoting ICAEW to the wider community.

My year as District President is closing with our country in the midst of the coronavirus crisis. As chartered accountants we have a key role to play in advising our clients and organisations how to minimise the economic damage caused by the crisis, by helping to steer them through extremely choppy waters. We must also remember that our own members may need support in these tough times and, as well as ICAEW and CABA offering excellent support, members in our district can support each other through a greater sense of working together.

The growing use of online meeting tools and social media greatly help in improving communication between members and I am very pleased to act as Chair of a new ICAEW Small practice members' virtual meet-up for Staffordshire, Shropshire and Wolverhampton with the first meeting scheduled for 26th May 2020.

This month marks the 100th anniversary of Mary Harris Smith becoming the first female Chartered Accountant. Although we could not proceed with our planned event to celebrate the centenary, I see this as an opportunity to remind ourselves that as a District Society we should always look to promote diversity. Furthermore, as Mary Harris Smith did not gain her membership until the age of 75, we can be inspired by her perseverance and determination in 'never giving up'.

I am very grateful for all of the support I have received from fellow committee members and Linda Conway and Sophie Dale-Black who made me feel that I was always acting as part of a strong team moving forward with positive ideas. I am also grateful to those members who have given many years of service to the committee who have decided this year to step down, in particular past President James Eyre-Walker who has continued to make valued contributions during my year as President.

I look forward to supporting John Capper as our incoming President over the coming year.

Neil Phillips
President 2019-20