ATT Welcome

Welcomes

01 December 2020

2020: ’twere well it were done quickly

It is the season of goodwill to all and never has the desire to send good wishes to each other seemed more important or relevant.

I find myself in the privileged position of having to write the Welcome page for the December edition of *Tax Adviser* for the second time. The absurdity of this is manifest when you think that, when I wrote in February 2020, it was my half term report, or so we thought. Since then, the world as we knew it has changed and I look back on the year that was with a mixture of emotions and feelings I could never have imagined.

The anticipation of loads of travel and events promised by my diary at the time did not quite materialise. While I was not able to visit as many branches as I planned to, I am able to look back and celebrate the versatility and adaptability of members of the profession.

As the country went into lockdown in March, the speed with which HMRC put together the CJRS and SEISS schemes is commendable. There followed government support initiatives which meant that our members were kept busy trying to help clients adapt their businesses and obtain whatever available support there was to keep their heads above water. Never have I known our services to be in such demand. Members should be proud of how they performed during these times, while simultaneously dealing with the challenges brought by the pandemic themselves.

I am so proud of how our members of staff and volunteers have adapted. Very early on in this pandemic, the Association’s office was shut and most employees supported to work from home. Commendations need to go to our Chief Executive Jane Ashton, and Helen Whiteman, Chief Executive of the CIOT, for their quick thinking and firm decision making at the time.

Our Technical team has been kept very busy explaining the rules and regulations behind the various Covid-19 support schemes. Our website (www.att.org.uk/covid-19-latest-information-guidance-resources) is a great source of information and our Technical officers Emma Rawson, Helen Thornley and Will Silsby have been absolute heroes in helping to disseminate this information. They also helped to collate our responses to various consultations, one of which was on Raising standards in the tax advice market. It is our view that tax professionals should be members of a body that subscribes to PCRT, but we appreciate that this could take a while, and our response proposed a way forward.

We are pleased that the government listened to our calls for an extension to the AIA. We have once again called for an ability to opt out when a change straddles an accounting period. I remember writing about this in our December 2018 edition (www.taxadvisermagazine.com/article/att-welcome-december-2018) and it is a justification of the need to continue to make our voices heard.

We are first and foremost an educational charity and, while we have all found skills that we did not know we had at the beginning of the year, never have we had to be more innovative. None more so than our education team who had their plans to offer our examinations online 'accelerated'. One paper was sat in June and, as I write, the November examinations have just been held successfully.

Those who have attended any of our previous admission ceremonies in the House of Lords will agree that it is a shame that we have been unable to hold any this year. I am aware that plans are afoot to hold one this month, 'virtually' of course. I look forward to meeting new members on that day – and face to face soon.

I am glad that the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee, a joint effort with CIOT, is now fully operational. You may have noticed a series of articles in this magazine over the year because inclusion remains a top priority. We are always looking for new members on our committees and Council. Please get in touch if you think this is something that you would like to do. We can only get better when we have more inclusive ideas feeding into our decision making.

Virtual meetings are now the norm and we had our first online AGM this year. I would like to thank members of Council for the extended mandate and trust reposed in me.

On a personal basis, one of the most significant things arising from the extension of my tenure as President is that I get to work with two CIOT Presidents. My sincere thanks go to Glyn Fullelove who stepped down as CIOT President in November, and who has been a great friend and support to the Association. I look forward to working with Peter Rayney, the new CIOT President, until our next AGM when I hand over to Richard Todd.

What does the future hold? After the year that we have had, I dare not make any predictions. Suffice to say that I expect that the three B's of Build Back Better may translate to Brexit, Boris and Biden.

Have a wonderful Christmas everyone and I wish each and every one of you a super and better New Year.

Stay safe.

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