CIOT President's page: Change is the only constant in life

Welcomes

21 October 2022

Since my last President’s page such a lot has happened in the world around us, not least in terms of here in the UK. They do say that change is the only constant in life, and we have certainly seen a lot of that recently!

Many of us have a love-hate relationship with change. I know I do. Certainly, when things are going badly, we can often take comfort in the fact that things are not going to stay the same. Things might get better or they might get worse – but they are going to be different. Conversely, of course, when things are going well, we want things to stay as they are forever. Unfortunately, life doesn’t work that way. Whether we actively try to keep things as they are or not, change is invariably going to happen.

As you will know from my previous President’s pages, I wrote to the two candidates in the run up to the Conservative leadership election, and more recently to the new Chancellor and tax minister, outlining our concerns on several matters: simplification, MTD and service levels at HMRC.

Correspondence aside, what a time, in both UK politics and tax, to be in the thick of it. And never more so than when I found myself, having never attended a political party conference, at both the Labour conference in Liverpool and the Conservatives’ equivalent in Birmingham. I was there to chair events held jointly with the Institute for Fiscal Studies on tax and the cost of living crisis. A big thank you to all the panellists who made my job easy by the depth of their insights, even though things (from a tax perspective at least) were changing day by day. There is a short report on the debates in the Briefings section of this edition of *Tax Adviser*.

Since those debates took place we have seen some major changes to the package of tax cuts announced on 23 September – as well as to those in charge of our fiscal

policy. Perhaps there will be more between my writing this and your reading it? In any case, while all this change and uncertainty can be exciting to watch, it is not great for the tax system or the wider economy. It is not just the bond markets which are looking to the government for certainty. Tax professionals and those we advise are praying for a period of stability too.

In addition, the end of September saw me host a reception for many of our amazing volunteers from across the Institute as a thank you to them all. The event was held at the National Gallery in London. I was delighted that so many could make it and that I was able to hand out, in person, certificates to Moira Kelly, Daniel Lyons, Elizabeth Anfield, Keith Bell, John Foulkes, Stephen Foulkes, Felicity Whitley and Chris Williams. This list includes two members – Keith Bell and Felicity Whitley – who I remember well from my days as chair of the Suffolk branch.

This group has between them a phenomenal number of years of service to the Institute, and we are extremely grateful for their time and efforts over the years. Glyn Fullelove was President when I became Vice President, and I was delighted to also hand him a scroll and badge in recognition of his service to the Institute. You can see more on this event in the Briefings section.

Looking to the future, over the coming months a number of our branches and associated institutes celebrate significant anniversaries. As part of this I was delighted to be involved in The Institute of Hong Kong’s Golden Jubilee and that of the Sheffield branch recently.

As I am sure you know, the Institute’s mission is education – and we are focused on ensuring that we continue to offer relevant and valuable qualifications to as wide a population as possible. So I am particularly pleased that later this month I will be officially launching our new qualification: the Diploma in Tax Technology (DITT).

As a final thought for this month, 13 November is World Kindness Day. In considering this, please take a moment to reflect upon one of the most important and unifying human principles and something we have heard a lot about in recent years. Simply put, an act of kindness, no matter how small, can go a long way. And numerous studies have shown that being kind makes you happy – so for all of us it’s a win win!