

CLASS GROUP CELEBRATES 30 YEARS OF CO-OPERATION

ALTRINCHAM – 1 July 2005

The CLASS Group, which represents one of the most important and long-lasting co-operations between LGPS organisations, held its AGM last week with prominent figures from the industry including Joanne Segars, NAPF Policy Director and Phil Goodwin, LPFA Director of Operations making keynote speeches. Celebrating its 30th year, the Group was originally formed in 1975 to develop a system to computerise their pensions administration, which they did working closely with *heywood*, one of the leading suppliers of pensions administration software. This year's event, attended by over 130 delegates representing 57 local authorities, was hosted by one of the original eleven members of the CLASS Group, Lancashire County Council, at its offices in Preston.

The theme of the meeting was "Coping with Change" and topics discussed during the day included the impact of the Gershon Report, future changes affecting local government pensions, and the need to make best use of technology and software in order to meet the changing demands placed on pensions administrators.

Joanne Segars spoke about the recent legislative changes and said:

"I don't think there has ever been a time with so much change on the agenda and so much change promised." She went on to talk about the future of pensions and the measures that could be taken to prevent a pensions crisis, such as implementing a Citizen's Pension.

During his keynote address to the AGM, Phil Goodwin commented:

"The expectation from the Gershon Report is that ongoing efficiencies can be achieved through joint partnerships and this is something that we have gradually been doing for 30 years and will continue to do.

I think we should concentrate most on the service we provide and the challenge for us is not to worry about aggregation but to look at improving service through better utilising product functionality. The CLASS Group continues to offer the way forward."

From its original eleven members, the CLASS Group now consists of 87 local authorities administering pensions for 96 Local Government schemes and Ged Dale, Head of Pensions from one of the founding members, Tameside MBC, commented on the importance of the CLASS Group:

“CLASS is an excellent example of co-operation in the local government area and one that has been around now for over a quarter of a century. Its AGM and user groups provide effective fora to discuss local government pensions issues and how technology can help us to improve service for our members. *heywood's* equally long-standing commitment to the LGPS provides a wealth of experience to enable the provision of effective software at a reasonable price and for this software to be updated effectively following legislative changes.”

One of the fundamental elements of the CLASS Group is the level of private and public sector co-operation, illustrated by the close involvement over the thirty years of *heywood*, the leading supplier of pensions administration software to the public sector. Talking about their work with the public sector, Pat Marchbank, Head of Public Sector at *heywood* commented:

“We have been working with the CLASS Group for 30 years and we welcome the opportunity to continue to work with them at this time of major change in the sector. Through working closely together, we can help ensure that the local authorities have the necessary system amendments to meet new legislative requirements and extend software functionality to facilitate continual improvement of the quality of service for scheme members.”

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Notes to editors

CLASS Group

CLASS Group stands for Computerised Local Authority Superannuation System and was formed in 1975 with eleven members. The idea behind the CLASS Group was to develop a system to computerise their Pensions Administration and the selection of *heywood* and the close working relationship *heywood* has had with the CLASS Group since its formation is one of the most successful examples of Public and Private Sector co-operation. The CLASS Group now has 87 members.

heywood

heywood was established in 1975 and has been part of Aquila Group Holdings Limited since 2002. Aquila Group Holdings Limited, comprising *aquila* and *heywood*, is the leading supplier of pension administration software solutions in the UK. The pension schemes for over 6.5 million members in more than 200 major organisations are run using the group's two administration software solutions, *administrator* and *AX/Se*. These solutions cover the whole range of available schemes including DB, DC, hybrid, career average, cash balance and stakeholder.

The Group provides solutions to the Financial Services, Third Party Administration, Corporate and Public Sector pension scheme markets in the UK, Ireland and the rest of Europe. Its clients include Prudential, Norwich Union, BBC, Asda, BP, the European Central Bank, Accenture, Aon Consulting and most local authority schemes.

AX/Se is *heywood's* integrated pensions system which addresses the requirements of all types of Corporate and Public sector pension schemes. *AX/Se* also has integrated web, imaging and workflow capabilities, as well as an award winning call centre module.

For those clients who wish to out-source their pensions IT function, *AX/Se* can be offered via a fully hosted or ASP service. To ensure a low risk implementation, the group provides experienced consultancy services for business management comprising project management, process engineering, data migration, management information and system integration.