

12 June 2017

Culture, Tourism and Sport Conference 2017 evaluation and proposals for 2018

Purpose of report

For discussion and direction.

Summary

106 people attended the LGA's annual Culture, Tourism and Sport Conference in Bristol on 22/23 February 2017. This report summarises the delegate feedback and suggests a way forward for 2018.

Recommendation

Culture, Tourism and Sport Board members are invited to:

1. Note the Conference evaluation and offer any other comments.
2. Agree that the 2018 Conference is a one day event.
3. Agree that Hull or York is the venue for the 2018 Conference.

Actions

Officers will take forward any actions in line with Members' steer.

Contact officer: Jade Nimmo
Position: Events Manager
Phone no: 020 7664 3014
E-mail: Jade.nimmo@local.gov.uk

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Culture, Tourism and Sport Conference 2017 evaluation and proposals for 2018

Introduction and Background

1. 106 people attended the LGA's annual Culture, Tourism and Sport Conference in Bristol on 22/23 February 2017.
2. The conference provided delegates and the CTS Board with an unrivalled opportunity to strengthen further the relationship between local government and key partners. It received very positive feedback with 100 per cent satisfaction rate, collected in the follow-up survey with a 34 per cent response rate.
3. The conference attracted big names, including Wayne Hemingway and Dame Kelly Holmes, and was a platform to promote the LGA's campaigns and Board priorities, including the Board's work, LGA improvement offer and support on libraries. Workshops covered the latest policy issues and shared leading edge practice on placemaking, investing in arts, and commissioning services.
4. Key to the event's success was the very successful partnership between the LGA and Bristol City Council, who hosted excellent study tours. Several delegates commented that these tours were worth the price of the event alone.
5. However, despite the positive feedback, delegate numbers and sponsor income were down and costs were up. Proposals for adapting the 2018 programme to maximise LGA income while minimising delegate costs are set out in the following section.

Attendance

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Total attendance:	151	106	-45 (including fewer speakers and guests)
Paying delegates:			
Entire conference	83	67	-16
One day/Dinner	15	4	-9
Non-member organisations	12	5	-7
Exhibitors/Sponsors:	9	8	-1
Speakers:	19	17	-2
Guests:	13	5	-8

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Financial position

	2016	2017
Delegate income	£31,697	£22,228
Conference expenses	£12,944	£14,970
Sponsorship:	£5,250	£4,250
Surplus	£18,753	£11,508

6. Further detail on the 2017 conference feedback is attached at **Annex A**.

Proposal for 2018 Culture, Tourism and Sport Conference

7. The CTS conference is regarded as the definitive event for our sector. However, despite consistently positive feedback, delegate numbers and income are a concern for the viability of this event.
8. This is not a challenge exclusive to CTS, but the discretionary nature of most of the services, coupled with the budget and staff cuts already borne by the sector, exacerbates the situation. In particular, our core officer audience is diminishing. Officers and Members with wider responsibilities are struggling to attend two-day (including travel) service specific events.
9. In order to ensure the CTS Conference remains financially viable and continues to attract as many delegates as possible, **we propose amending the format by removing the pre-conference dinner**. This would allow us to reduce the cost of the delegate rate from £299 to £229 for LGA members and from £399 to £365 for LGA non-members, which is in line with our LGA one day events.
10. This would reduce the time for networking with peers from different councils, but opportunities for this are still provided by the study tours, workshops and refreshment breaks.
11. Apart from CTS and Fire, all other service specific conferences are now one day. The LGA's flagship Annual Conference was also shortened in 2016. Several well-established annual one-day events, such as the Public Health and Safer Communities Conferences, are in a stronger financial position than CTS.
12. The most popular and prestigious elements of the CTS conference would be retained - a high quality venue in an iconic cultural, historic and sporting destination, networking and study tours. There would still be three plenary addresses and two rounds of workshops, providing scope to cover the full range of policy issues.
13. We will also continue to pursue all other means to keep costs down and attract as many delegates as possible. In particular, more targeted marketing, an earlier and more targeted approach to potential sponsors, and working with Lead Members and the Political Groups to attract more councillors. We will also provide clear information to delegates about categories of hotels to assist with finding options that suit different budgets.

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Timing

14. Over the past two years the conference has taken place on 24-25 February 2016 and 22-23 February 2017. However more schools are taking this week as half term, which may have an impacted on attendees numbers. Many councils also had budget meetings taking place on the night of the conference dinner.
15. Members are invited to provide a steer on moving the conference to either the week commencing 5 February or back to the original date week commencing 5 March 2018.

Venue

16. More than any other LGA conference, the location is critical for the CTS Conference. We always hold the Conference at an iconic destination and liaise very closely with the host council to showcase their innovation and exciting work. Given this, and taking into account that recent events were in Bristol (2017) and Leicester (2016), we would welcome the Board's view on:
 - **Hull** – As UK capital of culture for 2017, Hull has invested significantly in its cultural offer. This has included one-off events, investment in physical assets, and marketing strategies. Hull is well connected via public rail and is 2.30-3 hours travel from London, 3 hours from Liverpool, and 4.30-5 hours from Bristol.
 - **York** – York has an established reputation as a cultural and sporting city, hosting both the York Marathon and York Skyride. It provides a wealth of options for study tours, including the newly re-opened Jorvik centre following the 2016 floods. York is well connected via public rail and road and 2hrs travel from London and Liverpool, and 4.30 hours from Bristol.
17. Following member's steer, we will approach the preferred location to establish if they have the capacity to support the conference.
18. We have also considered conference centres in Margate, reflecting their success in growing their visitor economy, and Cambridge, reflecting their work on integrated cultural access. However, there are no venue that meets the requirements of the conference in these locations.

Next steps

19. Members are invited to:
 - agree the location for 2018 and conference date (paragraphs 15 and 16)
 - consider removing the conference dinner the night before and make it a one day event – which will allow the delegate cost to be reduced to £229 for members and £365 for non-members (paragraph 9).

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Implications for Wales

20. None.

Financial implications

21. Members' decisions will have an impact on the running costs and surplus from the conference.