

24 May 2010

LGA Annual Fire Conference 2010: fire service – the next five years

Summary

This paper provides Members with a summary of feedback from delegates who attended the LGA Annual Fire Conference which took place in Manchester on the 9th and 10th March 2010.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- To note the contents of the paper
- Play an active part in formulating the programme for the 2011 conference, which will be held in Gateshead on 8 & 9 March 2011, in due course.

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Overall

1. Total attendance for the conference was 317, an increase of 15 delegates on 2009. This can be broken down as 253 paying delegates, of which 211 were members, 32 non-members, 27 speakers, 35 exhibitors and sponsors and 3 members of the press.

Officer feedback:

2. Building on the earlier lead-in times achieved for the marketing of the conference in 2009, the 2010 conference was marketing from August 2009 and resulted in an increase in delegate numbers on the previous year. Keeping with the success of the previous year's campaign direct marketing started in July 2009 with a second alert followed by:
 - 2 mailouts, one in the autumn and one after Christmas
 - 3 adverts in First magazine
 - a full advert on Fire times
 - an e-mail campaign carried by Fire times
 - several e-mail campaigns to Fire and Emergency Planning contacts
 - marketing through the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority
 - a further alert in Feb 2010
3. Despite the recession and the general decrease in the number of delegates booking on most of the LGA conferences, it can be seen that the Annual Fire Conference has an established audience which - given the right location, speaker line-up and quality of hotel - would always consider this conference as the event to attend for the sector. It is important that early marketing is undertaken every year to ensure numbers match those achieved in the last two years, while further marketing collaborations with external organisations could be explored to widen the reach of the market and possibly increase numbers further.
4. Exhibitors benefitted from being very centrally located immediately outside the main auditorium in areas where all the refreshments and catering were served. This allowed for an optimum amount of time to engage with delegates and many useful leads were made. Several exhibitors have expressed an interest in exhibiting in Gateshead and have even indicated that they would recommend to potential exhibitors to do likewise. Lion Apparel – the main conference sponsor (this being the first year of a three year sponsorship deal) was very pleased with their involvement with such a successful event and looks forward to next year's conference.

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Delegate Feedback:

5. Delegates felt this conference was a success and built on the 2009 event, in terms of the location, venue and organisation. The satisfaction level achieved (gathered from the online evaluation forms) was 89.6%, a slight decrease on 2009 (90.25%).
6. Delegates felt that the Hilton Manchester Deansgate Hotel was an excellent venue for this year's conference in terms of its first-rate facilities, accommodation, attractive environment and accessibility. The venue staff and AV team were very approachable and helpful and provided a good level of service. On the downside, several delegates commented on the inadequate size of some of the rooms used for the workshop sessions and the lack of seating for lunch. Both issues are being taken on board as we start to organise next year's conference.
7. Below are some of the delegate's comments:
 - An excellent conference, thank you.
 - Disappointed that the Minister did not bother to turn up.
 - Good debate on day 2 opening session.
 - I thought that overall the conference was very interesting and stimulating, tackling the very real issues of the moment, unfortunately time limited in some cases where further debate and discussion would possibly have been beneficial.
 - Workshop venues needed to be bigger – I was unable to attend the one I was interested in – it was full very quickly as the room was too small.
 - More focussed aims and objectives are needed for workshop groups.
 - More seating for lunch needed.

Financial Implications

8. There are no financial implications.

Implications for Wales

9. There are no implications for Wales.

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