

Item 3

LGA Fire Conference and Exhibition 2012 and 2013

Purpose of report

For discussion and direction.

Summary

Preliminary planning for the 2013 LGA annual Fire Conference and Exhibition is already underway. This planning will take into account not only delegate feedback from the 2012 Conference, but will continue to take account of the increased financial strains on the organisation and those being faced by Fire and Rescue Authorities.

FSMC Members' views are therefore sought at this early planning stage to consider how the costs associated with the staging of the annual Fire Conference could be reduced to the benefit of delegates and to the LGA.

Recommendation

Members are asked to comment on the possible options for the 2013 Fire Conference as set out within the report.

Action

Officers to reflect Members' comments in conference planning.

Contact officer: Jane Marcroft
Position: Events Organiser, LGA
Phone no: 020 7664 3080
E-mail: jane.marcroft@local.gov.uk

Item 3

LGA Fire Conference and Exhibition 2012 and 2013

Background

1. Now in its fifteenth year, the LGA annual Fire Conference and Exhibition has attracted an average of approximately 240 delegates and a range of exhibitors and sponsors. The conference is considered to be an important part of the annual fire sector calendar, one of the showcase events organised by the LGA and an important income generator.
2. Despite the tough economic climate, delegate numbers for the 2012 conference have been maintained, achieved through a more comprehensive marketing strategy and targeted information with a number of Chairs and Chief Fire Officers. We were also able to benefit from firming up the programme at a very early stage, since nearly every speaker agreed immediately upon request. We are grateful to FSMC members who have helped enormously with this.

Possible options for the future

3. At the Board meeting in March 2011 Members agreed that the following criteria must be taken into consideration when sourcing a venue for future conferences:
 - 3.1 To only consider hotels of a high standard that have in place a fire sprinkler system throughout
 - 3.2 To continue to hold the conference over 2 days.
4. In light of the experience in organising the 2012 conference the following additional requirements will be taken into account:
 - 4.1 To negotiate a larger number of bedrooms for conference delegates;
 - 4.2 There is evidence that we could grow the exhibition (we have two more exhibitors in 2012 than in 2011 and have had additional requests for exhibition space that we have not been able to meet) and therefore we will consider a larger exhibition area for the 2013 conference.
5. With regards to the location of the 2013 conference, the following cities are being considered in order of priority: Birmingham, London, Cambridge. Birmingham has a possible four venues so this looks most promising at this stage.

Further considerations

6. It is important that officers continue to consider a series of proposals that aim to improve the conference so that it remains attractive to delegates while at the

Item 3

same time offering real value for money. We will endeavour to hold the delegate fees at current levels which have remained unchanged since 2008.

7. Members are asked for any comments they may have on the proposals set out below:
 - 7.1 Sponsorship opportunities – there is now strong interest from the fire industry in this event and we may be able to attract more exhibitors. It should be noted that Lion International's three year sponsorship deal ends in 2012 and officers will be working to secure continued sponsorship going forward.
 - 7.2 Timing – this event has always taken place in mid-March. Although some periods of the year are cheaper (such as early January), the Spring timing is now an established feature in the fire calendar, and other events are scheduled around this. To disrupt this timing would be unpopular and may impact on delegate numbers.
 - 7.3 Feedback has suggested that Members get real value from the additional meetings which take place in the margins of the conference, thus maximising every opportunity to discuss common issues and network. Given the very full programme is it now time to consider running the programme over two full days rather than one and a half?
 - 7.4 Expand the number of workshops being run concurrently. At this year's conference there are six separate workshops, but we could expect 40 delegates at each which is rather large. The price of workshop rooms can vary significantly from one venue to another and Members will want to be aware that this would add to the overall cost of running the conference.

Financial implications

8. Officers have been able to drive down the costs of staging the annual Fire Conference and Exhibition in 2012 and will use these figures as a benchmark in future negotiations.