

LGA Fire Conference and Exhibition 2013

Purpose of report

For discussion and direction.

Summary

Following the recent successful fire conference in March attention can now be turned to the 2013 LGA annual Fire Conference and Exhibition. As a starting point delegate feedback is also provided in respect of this year's conference.

FSMC Members' views are sought on the proposals for 2013 as outlined in the paper.

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 the final choice of conference location for 2013.

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LGA Fire Conference and Exhibition 2013

Feedback from the LGA Fire Conference and Exhibition 2012

1. This year's conference in Bournemouth was attended by a total of 227 paying delegates, which is an increase on 2011 numbers. The overall delegate satisfaction rate was 86%, with the same percentage of delegates feeling that the conference had lived up to expectations, with all sessions proving relevant and informative. Delegates particularly liked the panel session and the Ministerial address and found the event useful for its networking and business opportunities face to face with colleagues outside the main sessions. Although feedback levels for the workshops were rather limited, the Localism session which covered trading and charging proved popular. In terms of issues to be covered in the future, delegates have suggested: new approach to funding; horizon scanning; sprinklers, shared services and the future of control rooms.
2. 86% of delegates stated that they would attend the conference again. When asked to rank the factors which would influence their decision to attend in future, delegates commented that the most important factor is content, followed by location, date of conference, cost, with the least important factor cited being job role. Suggested improvements for next year include not having an overarching theme, more time between sessions and a less cramped venue.

Background to conference organisation for 2013

3. The FSMC has previously agreed that the following criteria must be taken into consideration when sourcing a venue for this annual conference:
 - 3.1 To only consider venues of a high standard that have in place a fire sprinkler system throughout.
 - 3.2 To continue to hold the conference over two days.
4. Other factors which have emerged during the organisation of the 2012 conference and which also need to be taken on board when organising future conferences, include:
 - 4.1 To negotiate a larger number of bedrooms at the chosen conference hotel.
 - 4.2 To have a larger exhibition area to accommodate increased demand from commercial exhibitors (we already have eight exhibitors confirmed for 2013).

Item 2

5. At the March 2012 meeting the Board agreed that it would like to return to the south of England for its conference in 2013 and concluded that an attractive location increased the popularity of the event with delegates.

Possible options

6. Conference facilities in Bath, Bournemouth, Brighton, Bristol, Portsmouth and Southampton have been considered.
7. Having looked at the venue specifications the following have been rejected on the grounds that they are not large enough to accommodate the fire conference: the Hilton in Bath, the Marriott in Portsmouth, the Marriott in Southampton and the De Vere in Southampton. The Brighton Centre has been rejected on the grounds that it is too costly.
8. The shortlist has been whittled down to the Hilton in Brighton, the Marriott in Bristol (the location of the 2009 fire conference) and the Bournemouth International Centre. Whilst the latter is not a hotel (and separate bedroom accommodation would need to be sourced) it does have a fire sprinkler system in the rooms we would be allocated and it is price competitive.

Further consideration

9. Timings – it has been agreed that the conference should continue to be held in March as the spring timing is now an established feature in the fire calendar year. Taking into consideration purdah and the school holidays the ideal timing is 12 – 13 March 2013. Both the Hilton in Brighton and the Marriott in Bristol are available. The Bournemouth International Centre is available the week earlier on 5 – 6 March 2013.

Financial implications

10. Officers will continue to drive down the costs of staging the annual Fire Conference and Exhibition in 2013 and are using the costs we managed to secure in 2012 as a benchmark for negotiating costs in 2013.