

LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition 2013

Purpose of report

For information and discussion.

Background

To provide early feedback from the 2013 Annual Conference and give an opportunity for Members to advise and comment on both this year's conference and the future direction of the event.

Recommendation

For discussion and direction.

Action

As directed by Members.

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LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition 2013

Background

1. The LGA conference and exhibition 2013 took place at Manchester Central on 2 - 4 July 2013. An online delegate survey is currently being undertaken; the deadline for responses is the 26 of July.
2. Staff have also been asked to provide their feedback and this, along with delegate responses and the Leadership Board and Executive's comments, will assist the Association to ascertain attendee views, and to help shape and plan future events.
3. Some early feedback received from the delegate survey has been referenced in this report, but should be taken in context at this stage (i.e. 109 responses received so far, or around 8 per cent of attendees).
4. The exhibition was sold out and sponsorship achieved a good level given the current climate. Attendance at this year's conference was just under 1500, including full delegates, additional day delegates, speakers, exhibitors and press. Over 330 local authorities sent delegates to this year conference; which was once again opened up to Next Generation Councillors and Police and Crime Commissioners.

Conference programme and review of 2012 recommendations

5. Sir Merrick's opening speech, launching our '**Rewiring Public Services**' campaign, was well received by delegates, speakers and the media. It was the culmination of six months' work with Members around the country and the launch of the campaign proper.
6. There were 560 mentions in national, regional and trade media, including BBC Online, Guardian, Mirror, FT, Telegraph, Star, Independent, BBC Breakfast, Daily Politics, Radio 4 and ITV Daybreak, the campaign video has already been viewed more than 260 times on YouTube and the campaign webpage viewed 970 times.
7. Following feedback from the Leadership Board after last year's conference, we made the following changes to the conference structure and content:

To review the duration and programming of the conference

- 7.1. Plenary, parallel plenary and breakout sessions were all well attended at this year's conference, excepting the final two plenary sessions at which there were approximately a third of delegates remaining. Breakfast sessions were also well attended with over 200 in attendance each day. Conversely, some of the fringe sessions were less well attended and the fringe programme going forward would benefit from a wider discussion.

Item 2

- 7.2. Delegate feedback shows that only 9 per cent of respondents were dissatisfied with the length of the conference and a discussion at the September Leadership Board agreed that the length be kept as is. Any reduction in the length of the conference could affect delegate fees and the number of speakers and sessions to be incorporated into an already very busy conference schedule. It was also accepted at previous Leadership Board discussions that there is likely to be drift on the last conference sessions whenever they may be. A discussion for how best to mitigate the impact of this reduction of delegates on speakers would be welcomed.

- Develop a wider pool of speakers to include in the conference programme**
- 7.3. It is widely agreed that this year's list of speakers across the programme is amongst the best at any recent LGA annual conference. We welcomed over ten speakers from Parliament and the House of Lords (over and above those participating in political group sessions) and the conference received cross sector support from leading speakers from the fields of health, finance, business, governance, innovation, the voluntary sector and speakers from key Government departments, thus meeting one of the key conference objectives to **support the LGA's lobbying and influencing agendas**. In addition, conference welcomed two international speakers participating in sessions and a virtual speaker from Canada via Skype.

- Review workshop format and timings, set aside flexible meeting space for delegates to continue discussions**
- 7.4. This year's conference reduced down the number of sessions taking place at any one time to a maximum of six and this was well reflected in the audience size for vast majority of breakout sessions. In addition, we moved to a model of 'parallel plenaries' to provide three large sessions around key areas for discussion. In general, the audience sizes at sessions benefitted from the reduced numbers of concurrent events.
- 7.5. The good venue layout and innovations within the exhibition alongside the Innovation Zone in the Gallery allowed for additional networking space and time for discussion post sessions.

- Consider a dedicated 'improvement offer'**
- 7.6. This year's LGA/Nesta Innovation Zone and related pitching, innovation sharing and round tables events created a real 'conference within a conference' and an opportunity to involve more councils in the conference programme.
- 7.7. This worked particularly well on Thursday when LGA staff from the productivity teams worked hard to engage delegates and put the right people together to share experiences and ideas.
- 7.8. Across the conference, delegates heard from almost 100 different local authorities – **helping to showcase local authority best practice**. Every workshop included representation from at least one member authority.

Item 2

Review sessions for those not involved in political group sessions

- 7.9. There was a strong programme of events for Chief Executives and Officers at this year's conference and the feedback has been to further increase this offer. We will continue to work with officer bodies, Association of County Chief Executives (ACCE), Association of Local Authority Chief Executives (ALACE), SMCE etc. to join up and make best use of Chief Executives' availability at conference.

Review the format of the LG Challenge sessions

- 7.10. As agreed, this year we dispensed with the LG Challenge plenary session and instead asked the Challenge finalists to make the best use of the audience to 'sell' their proposal for the Bruce-Lockhart scholarship.
- 7.11. The three excellent finalists were all very engaging and made best use of the opportunity to connect with delegates and secure their votes.

Communications

- 7.12. A full and clear briefing was provided for all staff and lead Members this year, not just for the conference, but also in relation to the 'Rewiring Public Services' campaign, the key questions and an additional small prompt card was provided for staff, but also welcomed by a number of delegates.
- 7.13. We were able to **support the LGA's policy work and membership strategy and help to promote local government reputation** through this core staff briefing, through senior Member and staff attendance on the exhibition stand and throughout breakout sessions across the conference ensuring the Chair's briefing fully reflected the campaign themes. The much improved co-ordination of the publications available at conference allowed for all delegates to receive copies of the key documents, and we were also able to ensure the exhibition stand was the place to go for additional information and contact.
- 7.14. The exhibition stand, 'boulevard' and central hub in the exhibition provided the LGA with a much improved opportunity to be seen and for senior members and staff to engage with delegates.
- 7.15. Our online offer was again much improved with almost 200 ipads being loaned by delegates across the event and almost 500 downloads of the conference app. Tweets reached 20 times more accounts this year than in 2012, almost 600,000, and the conference roundup and conference presentations (available before the end of the event) were an excellent summary of the conference day by day.
- 7.16. This improved communications offer allowed us to **provide a high profile for the LGA's lobbying, research, publications, and the ongoing core work of the programme and productivity teams.**

Delegate feedback

8. A snapshot of the delegate feedback (based on the current small sample of responses received) shows the following:
 - 8.1. Around 92 per cent of delegates were very or fairly satisfied with this year's conference (an increase of 7 per cent compared to 2012).
 - 8.2. Responses were received from 67 per cent Members (increase of 7 per cent on 2012 levels), 24 per cent officers and 9 per cent other.
9. 75 per cent of responders had attended the LGA conference in the past. Reasons for returning included:
 - 9.1. *It's just a must attend event;*
 - 9.2. *A rare yet valuable opportunity to hear from, speak to and share with others;*
 - 9.3. *I find it very useful to increase my awareness of important issues;*
 - 9.4. *Continuing interest in LG - networking - listening to debate on national topics;*
 - 9.5. *A good opportunity to learn, share, think and reflect;*
 - 9.6. *It is an interesting and important event in the Local Government calendar;*
 - 9.7. *Networking and information gathering;*
 - 9.8. *To keep up to date with local government issues and colleagues;*
 - 9.9. *Always find them interesting and very good opportunity to network; and*
 - 9.10. *Main sector conference - the only conference of this type I attend during the year.*
10. Venue – very well received with over 85 per cent of respondents either very or fairly satisfied in relation to its location, layout and facilities.
11. 99 per cent of respondents stated that they would attend the LGA annual conference in the future.

Conclusion and next steps

12. Work has already begun on the 2014 annual conference, which will take place on 8 - 10 July at the Bournemouth International Centre and the Events team will continue to work with the Leadership Board to ensure that feedback is acted upon, the conference programme is current and the speakers and sessions are of interest.

13. Future annual conference events are as follows:

13.1. 30 June – 2 July 2015, Harrogate International Centre (confirmed)

13.2. 5 – 7 July 2016, Bournemouth International Centre (confirmed)

13.3. 4 – 6 July 2017, Manchester Central (proposed), other venues also being investigated.

Financial Implications

14. The conference continues to generate the largest profit of all the events held across the Association and is this year projecting a profit in the region of £350,000.