

Meeting:

Date:



## CTS Conference 2023

### Purpose of report

For decision

### Summary

This report outlines the impact of the CTS Conference 2023 and invites members to feedback on their experience as delegates and facilitators.

Members are also invited to provide an early steer to inform thinking about the 2024 conference.

Is this report confidential? No

### Recommendation/s

That the CTS Board:

- Provide thoughts and reflections on the day
- Agree that the 2024 conference takes place in March 2024
- Agree that the LGA events team explore Knowsley as the preferred location

### Contact details

Contact officer: Ian Leete

Position: Senior Adviser - Culture, Tourism and Sport

Phone no: 0207 664 3143

Email: [ian.leete@local.gov.uk](mailto:ian.leete@local.gov.uk)

# CTS Conference 2023



## Background

1. The CTS Conference took place as a hybrid event on 15 March 2023. Despite a number of challenging events later being scheduled for the same day – Budget, Teachers Strike, Tube Strike, and Civil Servants Strike – the day was well attended.
2. 85 delegates registered, with 66 attending in person and 39 attending online. The number planning to attend in person was originally higher, but the announcement of the tube strike led to a small number of delegates switching to online attendance. Some presenters also contributed online, while others were in-person.
3. This level of attendance compares well to the last in-person conference in 2020, which had 89 delegates – all in-person as no online option was offered.
4. These numbers are down from 2021, when 714 delegates attended the wholly online events. However, the LGA took the decision to make the event free for that year only, in reflection of the Covid-19 pandemic, and numbers are not expected to reach this level for a paid-for conference.
5. The 2023 event included a tour of the Coliseum, led by the Chair of English National Opera. 13 delegates attended this, although 30 delegates originally booked. This replaced the usual study walking tours that have typically been held alongside the in-person conferences.
6. Feedback and activity on social media indicates a positive reception to the event, with significant on the day discussion. Additional insight was also gathered on the day through a slido poll which will be used to inform the CTS workplan brought to the new board in September.
7. A feedback survey has been issued to delegates and will close on 26<sup>th</sup> March. [Presentations from the event are now available online.](#)

## Proposal

8. Despite various clashes with activity this year, the early to mid-March period continues to attract a good number of delegates, while avoiding other significant dates like the LGA annual conference. We therefore propose that the conference remains around this period in 2024.
9. The conference has traditionally moved about the country to allow delegates to explore sights that are of cultural, sporting or touristic significance, including cities of culture. Since 2016, the conference has been held in: Bristol, Hull, London, Portsmouth, Virtually, and London. There was no conference in 2022.

10. While it was felt necessary to test the hybrid experience in 2023 using the LGA's own premises, it is desirable to return to the previous format of moving around the country. Hybrid facilities have improved, but the strong level of demand for in-person attendance at the 2023 conference suggests that location-based activity is again desirable.
11. Based on recent visits, the conference should take place in the North West, North East, or West Midlands, as regions that have not held a recent LGA CTS conference. There is a slight preference for the North West, as the Board has made visits to or held smaller events in Birmingham and Newcastle during this period.
12. The CTS Board has been invited to hold the 2024 conference in Prescot, by [Knowsley Council](#), following the development and opening of [Shakespeare North](#). This forms the centrepiece of a cultural regeneration, including green spaces and an historic venue. Knowsley was also [Liverpool City Region Borough of Culture 2022](#) and has insight and experience that would be interesting to delegates. The close proximity to Liverpool also makes access relatively easy for delegates, including affordable accommodation if they choose to stay overnight.

## Implications for Wales

13. None.

## Financial Implications

14. The CTS conference is a fee-paying flagship event that must cover its own costs as well as generate income for the LGA. It is supplemented by a series of free events for members throughout the year.

## Equalities implications

15. The LGA will ensure that speakers represent a broad range of lived experiences, alongside political and geographical balance.

## Next steps

16. The Board are invited to reflect on their experience of the day, including the sessions they attended, overall format, and use of technology such as slido. This will inform future conferences.
17. Members are invited to agree:
  - A date of March 2024
  - Further investigation of Prescot as the preferred location.