

LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition

Purpose of report

To provide Leadership Board with an overview of feedback from the LGA Annual Conference 2014 and give an opportunity for members to advise and comment on the direction of the 2015 event.

Recommendation

That the Leadership Board reviews the attached feedback from the LGA Annual Conference and considers the recommendations.

Action

To consider recommendations for implementation for the LGA Annual Conference 2015

Contact officer: David Holdstock
Position: Director of Communications
Phone no: 020 7664 3212
E-mail: david.holdstock@local.gov.uk

LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition 2014

1. The LGA annual conference and exhibition 2014 took place at the Bournemouth International Centre on 8-10 July.
2. Delegates, members and staff were asked to feedback their views about this year's annual conference to help us to identify which areas worked well and those areas for further improvement.
3. Those that responded felt that the conference was again a successful showcase for the LGA and the work of local government. In particular, the 100 days campaign and related tools, and the Local Government Innovation Zone highlighted as showing local government at its best. Working together, when needed, to identify radical solutions, and sharing and delivering new and innovative ideas across the sector.
4. Delegates, in the main, felt that the conference included a good range of sessions and speakers, covering the important issues for councils.
5. The exhibition was sold out and sponsorship achieved a good level – with both bringing in a number of new partnerships. Full delegate numbers at this year's conference were again slightly up on the previous year and there were just under 1300 total attendees including full delegates, day delegates and guests. In addition to this there were over 150 speakers and 250 exhibitors in attendance at differing times during conference. Over 300 local authorities sent delegates to this year's conference.
6. Conference opened with the keynote speech by the new Chair of the Association, Cllr David Sparks, which has been downloaded more than 800 times from the LGA website.
7. The LGA received more than 3,000 mentions in national, regional, trade, broadcast and online publications - including 67 episodes in national newspapers and online articles and 1267 broadcast episodes – for Conference and 100 days related stories.
8. The 100 days campaign document has been downloaded more than 5,500 times with the film viewed more than 900 times on YouTube and the campaign microsite having received over 6,600 unique visits. The local 'tool' has been used more than 3000 times since launch.
9. More than 150 cards were received at the 'Number 10' door with 'a healthy nation', 'skills' and 'homes' coming out as top priorities.

Delegate feedback

10. Delegate feedback shows the following:

80% of delegates were very or fairly satisfied with this year's conference.

Responses were received from 62% members, 26% officers, 12% other.
75% of those who responded had attended the LGA conference in the past. These figures are comparable with previous year's responses.

Reasons for returning include:

- *Keep up to date on issues facing local government*
- *It's the most important sector conference*
- *Networking, contributing to debates and discussions, fringe meetings and hearing relevant speakers on current issues*
- *Important way to keep in touch with new policies, networking etc*
- *The chance to meet, talk and discuss LA experiences with others. It provides the opportunity to learn and share and also to see and talk to the exhibitors.*
- *To meet colleagues; To discuss innovations in the sector; to learn from others; to get a view of the overall view from the sector.*
- *Always a lot to learn; good to keep up to date with emerging agendas and to hear key speakers first hand; opportunity to network with other councillors across the UK, from my own and other parties.*
- *Provides interesting, topical and relevant content on current issues. Good opportunity for networking and collecting information.*

The main headlines are:

Reason for attending (very or fairly important)

To hear about current issues in local government	98.3%
To share experiences with other local authorities	89.9%
Quality of speakers and presentations	86.4%
Networking	91.9%
To hear high profile speakers	83.6%
To debate issues of importance to local government	90.6%
To participate in political group activity	56.3%**

**out of 62.3% members responding

Quality of speakers and presentations

Very important	40.2 %
Fairly important	46.2 %
Neither important nor unimportant	10.3 %
Not very important	2.6 %

Length of conference – 70.2% satisfied

Very satisfied	23.4 %
Fairly satisfied	46.8 %
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	20.9 %
Fairly dissatisfied	6.8 %

Usefulness of information issued during the conference – 81.9% satisfied

Very satisfied	34.0 %
Fairly satisfied	47.9 %
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	12.6 %
Fairly dissatisfied	3.4 %

The helpfulness of LGA staff – 91% satisfied

Very satisfied	66.1 %
Fairly satisfied	24.9 %
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	7.3 %
Fairly dissatisfied	0.0 %

LGA stand and launches – 77.4% satisfied

Very satisfied	28.5 %
Fairly satisfied	48.9 %
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	13.2 %
Fairly dissatisfied	3.8 %

Venue, organisation and logistics

11. It was felt that conference planning was again improved, with regular direction and input from Leadership Board and the Senior Management Team. A successful mix of the launch of the campaign – with 100 days prevalent throughout the conference programme and visually around the conference venue – and a set of well-planned and interesting conference sessions made for an overall positive event experience.
12. Bournemouth remains a favoured location amongst delegates – however, some of the internal distances between session rooms and the exhibition and catering proved challenging. The main hall allowed for the event to grow if necessary, but also gave the option to make the space more intimate when required.
13. The Bournemouth International Centre is a sprawling conference centre and to maximise impact the LGA offer was spread across the venue – with the exhibition stand in the main exhibition hall and catering point, alongside the LGA political groups; the secondary exhibition hall housing the LG Challenge and LGA Campaigns displays; and the Bourne Lounge accommodating the Local Government Innovation Zone. Whilst this was a positive use of the space, there was some concern that this did not create the hub or buzz around the LGA in one area.
Poor wifi was considered a venue negative for a number of delegates.

Recommendations

Keep programme length for 2015 conference in order to ensure that conference retains its importance in the market.

Reconsider number and timing of political group meetings to ensure full political networking opportunities.

Review the LGA exhibition stand, innovation zone and campaigns areas for 2015 – aiming to secure one area to house all LGA offerings – within the main exhibition area if space allows.

Ensure strong wifi, ensuring premium service and detailed instructions at future venues.

Conference content

14. There was a good mix of speakers and sessions, particularly in the parallel plenary events. There were some comments about the need to refresh the format of workshops sessions to ensure interaction and outputs and to invite international speakers and speakers from other sectors to broaden learning opportunities.
15. Delegates were disappointed with the changes to Government speakers and related programme changes on Thursday – however, a strong Thursday programme (prior to the speaker changes) did not mitigate delegates preparing to leave, and leaving, early.
16. The sessions rated more highly were those around specific launches, pieces of work and hot topics. The health sessions were well attended as were the more ‘out of the ordinary’ sessions such as the Clash of the think tanks.

Recommendation

Continue to ensure speakers from the wider pool with links in to local government.

Ensure policy colleagues give thought to different types and styles of sessions in order to get their message across and to ensure an interesting and challenging programme.

In view of the Scottish referendum – include an international Mayor.

Strong Thursday programme, in particular, is key.

Fringe sessions

17. The change to the timing of fringe sessions worked well, linked to the movement of the political group dinners. This allowed the fringes to feel more integral to the conference and the evening fringes to take place outside of reception times increasing attendance. Allowing external fringe organisers to run sessions as part of the conference offers us commercial opportunities and allows us to widen the sphere of influence of the conference.
18. Political groups were able to make good use of additional meeting space this year to run their own meetings with Ministers and shadow Ministers.

Recommendations

Review external fringe meeting themes and organisations further in advance of conference to ensure no clash with core programme or the work of the LGA.

Exhibition and sponsorship

19. The exhibition sold out this year, albeit bookings were received much later than in previous years. Overall, this year, saw a 10% increase in exhibitors from 2013 and around 40% were new exhibitors. Early feedback from exhibitors has been good with the venue, quality and quantity of delegates identified as positives.
20. Leadership Board and senior management agreed the list of exhibitors and sponsors for the 2014 event including McDonald's, betting companies (alongside opposing groups) and Heineken. There were very few comments about these organisations being involved in the 2014 conference.
21. A good amount of sponsorship was achieved for the conference – with packages ranging from gold sponsor to fringe or workshop sponsor. Work is ongoing to refresh and update some of these opportunities and packages for next year's conference.

Recommendations

Leadership Board to continue to provide direction in relation to those organisations the LGA should, or should not, be partnering with.

22. In summary, the objectives of the annual conference are:
 - To provide a platform for the Association to engage with a large portion of its membership.
 - To support the Association's lobbying and influencing agenda through political group meetings and key speeches.
 - To showcase local authority best practice to the wider sector through workshops, fringes, exhibition and case studies.
 - To offer opportunities to profile the Association's new products, research and publications.
 - To allow us to profile the policy work undertaken by the Association, promote local government reputation and the wide ranging benefits of membership.
 - To provide a high profile opportunity for the lead members and senior staff to engage with the membership and partners.
 - To provide income for the Association.
23. The 2014 conference met these objectives and provided a profit to the organisation of more than £440,000.

LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition 2015

24. The LGA annual conference and exhibition 2015 will take place at the Harrogate International Centre between 30 June – 2 July.

-
25. Conference theme:

26. In May 2015 the nation will have a new Government, determining the course the country takes, not just until the end of the decade, but for future generations.
 27. The 2015 annual conference will take place 50 days in to the new Government and halfway through the crucial 'first 100 days' during which it will outline its intentions and begin to tackle its 'must do' tasks, solving the issues that matter most to the people of this country. The Queen's Speech is likely to have taken place and the country will know precisely what the Government's priorities are.
 28. The LGA's campaign 'Investing in our nation's future - the first 100 days' sets out our offer to help whoever forms that Government. Helping them put in place a radical and devolved model for public services, shaping the future for residents and their local communities.
 29. The conference will provide delegates with a timely opportunity to challenge and debate the first few weeks of the new Government and its proposed direction as set out in the manifestos.
-
30. The conference will be taking place at a time of huge change and growing momentum around English devolution. The Scotland Act may have been agreed; we will be in the 800th year of the Magna Carta; and, interest in the proposed EU referendum will be building.
 31. As an organisation we will be looking at the delivery of the 100 days proposals throughout the duration of the next Parliament, taking us up to 2020.
 32. Invitations will be sent to the party leaders for the main political slots. In addition to that, we have already contacted Mark Carney for availability, but the conference proximity to the Financial Policy Committee, means that neither he, nor the Deputy Governors, would be available to speak.
 33. A follow up invitation has been sent to the Archbishop of Canterbury.
 34. Gary Verity, Chief Executive of Welcome to Yorkshire (Le Tour Yorkshire) has agreed to speak about the benefits that the race brought to the Yorkshire economy, its reputation and in bringing its communities together through a cross-party, cross-authority project during a time of austerity. An invitation will be extended to one of the cycling personalities to also take part in this session.
 35. Work will begin across the organisation to identify key sessions and speakers over the next month.

Proposed 2015 outline timetable

Tuesday 30 June 2015

9.00-10.00	Registration and refreshments
10.00-11.30	Political group meetings
11.45-12.15/30	General Assembly
12.15-2.00	Lunch
2.00-2.30	Keynote opening speech by the Chairman
2.45-3.30	Conference plenary
3.30-4.15	Refreshments
4.15-4.45	Conference plenary - political
4.45-5.45	Breakout sessions x 6
5.45-6.30	Civic drinks reception – hosted by Harrogate Borough Council
6.30	Fringe meetings
7.30	LGA independent group dinner

Wednesday 1 July 2015

8.00-9.00	Early bird sessions
9.00-10.00	Political group meetings
10.00-10.30	Conference plenary
10.30-11.15	Refreshments
11.15-12.15	Breakout sessions x 6
12.15-2.00	Lunch (lunchtime fringe meetings)
2.00-2.50	Parallel plenary sessions x 3
3.00-3.45	Conference plenary
3.45-4.30	Refreshments
4.30-5.15	Conference plenary
5.15-6.00	Fringe meetings
6.00-7.00	Drinks reception
7.30-	Political and chief execs dinners

Thursday 2 July 2015

8.30-9.30	Early bird sessions
9.30-10.15	Parallel plenary session x3
10.15-11.00	Refreshments
11.00-11.30	Conference plenary – political
11.30-12.30	Political group and officer meetings
12.30-1.00	Conference plenary – political
1.00	Close of conference with lunch

36. This allows for the following numbers of sessions:

- Up to 8 x plenary sessions (including Chair's keynote and 3 party leaders)
- 3 x sets of political group meetings (one extra set of sessions from the 2014 conference)
- 2 sets of workshop sessions (6 workshops in each)
- 2 sets of parallel plenary sessions (3 or 4 in each)

- Evening and lunchtime fringe meetings

Recommendation

Given the continuing importance of the financial landscape to our delegates, identify other financial heavyweight(s) to invite. For example, Robert Chote, Andrew Tyrie, a retired Governor or other financial analyst.

Identify an international mayor to speak.

Given the changing landscape, suggest holding back more hot topic sessions for late inclusion.

Exhibition and LGA 'hub'

37. A brief has gone out to design, and build, a feature area within the main exhibition. This will be a multi-purpose open space, designed to demonstrate three key elements within one 'hub', 'zone' or 'village':

Local Government (or LGA) Information

38. Incorporating elements from the LGA corporate stand – showcasing campaign elements, interactive features, PC access and membership benefits

Local Government (or LGA) Innovation

39. Incorporating elements from the Innovation Zone – including presentation area, increased use of technology and showcasing innovation case studies and challenges

Local Government (or LGA) Conversation

40. Including soft seating for continuing conversation, a central meet and greet point and a refreshment area.
41. Political group stands will also be accommodated in this area.
42. This will be the first area seen by attendees both after registering and going into, and out of, the exhibition and will create a sense of arrival and vibrancy.
43. The wider exhibition is already selling well and a list of those organisations already booked is below for information. Betting companies (alongside The Campaign for Fairer Gambling) and Heineken have indicated their interest in attending again this year.

Company Name

Army Families Federation
Asidua
Blue Sky Peterborough Ltd
BRC Consulting
British Gas

Centre for Public Scrutiny Ltd
Charities Aid Foundation (CAF)
cloudBuy
Community Development Foundation
CSSC Sports and Leisure Ltd
DANFO UK Ltd

Geological Disposal
iChoosr Ltd
INLOGOV
Land Registry
Local Government Chronicle
National Audit Office
Newton Europe Ltd
NLGN
Ordnance Survey
Ovo Energy Limited
Partnership

Pinnacle PSG
PIRC Limited
Public Health England
RNIB
Royal British Legion Industries
Scape System Build Ltd
Stroke Association
The Contractors Health and Safety
Assessment Scheme (CHAS)
The MJ
UNISON

Recommendation

Given our work with the Betting Commission, that we continue to include betting companies (alongside the Campaign for Fairer Gambling), that we include drinks and fast food companies only where they are showcasing either healthier lifestyle or positive change i.e. low alcohol beers, or other aspects of their organisations i.e. the skills agenda, as agreed at previous Leadership Boards.

We recommend not working with tobacco companies or e-cigarette manufacturers where the benefits have not been fully tested. We would also not wish to be seen to be partnering with payday lender-type organisations.

Lists of exhibitors and sponsors will be shared regularly with Leadership Board and senior management.

Conclusion and next steps

44. Work has already begun on the 2015 annual conference and the Events team will continue to work with the Leadership Board to ensure that feedback is acted upon, the conference programme is timely and that speakers and sessions are of interest to our membership and the wider sector.