

## **LGA Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition venue and location for 2016 and beyond**

### **Purpose of report**

For discussion and agreement.

### **Summary**

This paper sets out the venue option for the 2016 fire conference and exhibition and agreement is sought for a recommended list of venues and locations for future years.

### **Recommendation**

Members are asked to agree the venue and location for the 2016 Fire Conference and Exhibition and to agree the recommended list of venues and locations for future years as set out below in order for officers to book venues subject to their availability.

### **Action**

Officers to reflect Members' comments in conference planning.

**Contact officer:** Amanda Spicer  
**Position:** Events Organiser, LGA  
**Phone no:** 020 7664 3158  
**E-mail:** [amanda.spicer@local.gov.uk](mailto:amanda.spicer@local.gov.uk)

## **LGA Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition venue and location for 2016 and beyond**

### **Background**

1. Now in its 18<sup>th</sup> year, the LGA annual Fire Conference and Exhibition has attracted an average of 250 delegates and a range of exhibitors and sponsors in recent years. The event is considered to be an important part of the annual fire industry calendar, one of the showcase events organised by the LGA and an important income-generator.
2. Numbers for the 2015 conference are holding up well.

### **Considerations**

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; and
  - 3.2 to continue to hold the conference over two days (finishing with lunch on the second day).
4. Other factors emerged during the organisation of the 2012 conference which also need to be taken on board when organising future conferences and these include:
  - 4.1 the need 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 (over recent years the exhibition has been growing in size - we have 19 exhibition stands at this years' conference which all sold out in good time); and
  - 4.3 to ensure that all the workshop rooms are of a sufficient size to accommodate delegate numbers.
5. With regards to the location of the 2016 conference, we have considered venues in Manchester, Liverpool and Bristol.

### **Option**

6. In order to fulfil the majority of the criterion set out in 3 and 4, the availability of suitable venues is extremely limited. We have looked at the Hilton hotels in Manchester (event held here in 2010) and Liverpool. However Manchester is too expensive (costs approximately 45% more than 2015) and the breakout rooms and exhibition are too small. Liverpool is currently not big enough to hold a similar-sized exhibition and

catering area but has plans to build an extension in late 2015 which might make it a viable option for 2017. We also considered conference centres such as the ICC, Manchester Convention Centre, Bournemouth International Centre and Harrogate International Centre but the conference facilities are too vast or unsuitable for this event.

7. The venue and location we would like to propose is the Bristol Marriott City Centre hotel where this event was last held in 2009.
8. We are provisionally holding the following space on Tuesday 8 to Wednesday 9 March (set up on the 7<sup>th</sup>).

<b>Room</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Capacity (all theatre unless otherwise specified)</b>
Bristol Suite, Ground Floor	Main room, breakouts, dinner	550 main room (312 dinner)
SS Great Britain, Ground Floor	Breakouts	80
Conservatory, 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor	Breakouts	130
Wallace Suite, Lower Ground Floor	Breakouts	50
Concord Suite, Lower Ground Floor	Breakouts	50
Front and Side Foyers, Empire Suite, Ground Floor (along the main room and separate room)	Catering, Exhibition	16 (3m x 2m space only)

9. The hotel is provisionally holding 80 delegate bedrooms for both nights.

#### **Financial implications**

10. Based on the space above, the cost of the Bristol Marriott is approximately 15-20% more expensive than 2015.
11. The exhibition space is limited to 16 stands; there will be a reduction of approximately £4,500 in potential exhibition income if all space is sold.

#### **Future years – venue options**

12. Given the limited number of venues available for this event, we would like the FSMC to consider future fire conferences being held in repeated venues on a cycle of three years similarly to the LGA's annual conference ie. 2016 Bristol Marriott, 2017 Liverpool Hilton\* (or Gateshead Hilton), 2018 Gateshead Hilton (or Liverpool Hilton\*). This schedule would enable us to plan ahead without the need for lengthy annual venue searches.

*\*Subject to site survey to investigate suitability post-refurbishment.*

13. The LGA Leadership Board has decided that the LGA needs to be more commercial and the events team are responsible for a substantial income generation target each year. To assist us in maximising the income generating potential for this event, members are asked to review the list of criteria / requirements for the event eg fire sprinklers in the conference facility. If we can adopt a more flexible approach on the conference venues we use we will have more choice of destinations to offer you and more scope for increasing the size of the exhibition and commercial income generation potential. Unless this happens, the event will need to take place on a rotation basis in a small pool of venues.
14. In addition, it should be noted that Leadership Board will be considering the delegate fees that the LGA charge for their events. The Fire conference delegate fees have been held since 2008 and it may be decided to increase these at the March Leadership Board.

#### **Recommendations**

- That Members agree the venue for 2016 is the Bristol Marriott City Centre Hotel on 8-9 March 2016.
- That Members reconsider the specification and agree a recommended list of venues and locations for future conferences.
- That Members adopt a more flexible approach with regard to the venue criteria.