
Report to

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

18th October, 2006

Report of

Director of Finance and ICT

Title

FEEDBACK ON THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE
4TH - 7TH JULY 2006

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To advise Scrutiny Board 1 of the outcomes of attendance at the Local Government Association Conference 4th to 7th July 2006.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Scrutiny Board are recommended to accept the report.

3 Information/Background

- 3.1 The Local Government Association Conference is held each year providing an opportunity for Elected Members to learn about developments in Local Government as well as to meet with like minded politicians including political group meetings.
- 3.2 The 2006 Annual Conference took place at the Bournemouth International Centre and was attended by 5 Members and 1 Officer:
- Ken Taylor, Leader of the Council
 - Kevin Foster, Cabinet Member (City Services)
 - Hazel Noonan, Cabinet Member (Community Services)
 - John Mutton, Leader of the Opposition
 - John McNicholas, Shadow Cabinet Member (Transportation)
 - Angie Ridgwell, Director of Finance and ICT
- 3.3 The Conference was opened by Sir Sandy Bruce Lockhart, OBE, Chairman of the LGA, introducing the Conference under the banner heading 'The Future is Local'. Sir Sandy quickly handed onto Sir Michael Lyons who talked about his inquiry and his final report which would be published in December 2006. Sir Michael Lyons advised on the remit of his inquiry and some early indicative outcomes. In particular he reflected on the role of Local Councillors in terms of place shaping, which was a key finding of his preliminary reports, recognising the different needs of individual Local Authorities, communities and areas. Sir Michael urged Elected Members to get closer to their communities and to

establish their needs and how they could work with each other to ensure that these needs were met. Sir Michael Lyons and in particular supported by Professor Tony Travis of the London School of Economics also had some debate about the Local Government Finance Model and the desire, and indeed resistance, of tax payers to pay no more taxes and the dilemma this provided for all policy makers and service deliverers. Conversely to this overview, both Sir Michael and Tony Travis highlighted the fact that businesses were prepared to make some additional tax payments where they perceived they were getting good value for money and economic vibrancy as a result, citing BIDS as a good example of this.

- 3.4 Ruth Kelly MP presented to the audience setting down her vision for Local Government. Ruth Kelly identified her desire to reduce bureaucracy and indeed the fact that she was creating an anti-bureaucracy taskforce under the Leadership of Michael Frater, Chief Executive at Telford and Wreakin Borough Council. Ruth Kelly also talked about her desire to be flexible in respect of local structures to meet the needs of each individual area and urged Local Authorities to present their proposals for the provision of local services to her for consideration rather than her imposing set models on the Local Government community.
- 3.5 David Cameron MP also presented to the Conference highlighting a number of his policies for the future and his desire to reduce bureaucracy and cut costs within the Local Government community. In particular David Cameron indicated that he believed there was significant opportunity for cost reduction by streamlining the inspection regime currently applied to Local Authorities.
- 3.6 The Conference also included a look at the Transport Agenda and the need for public policy to affect personal choice. During this session reference was made to the recent Government announcements on the Transport Innovation Fund and the West Midlands role in this area. Other speakers considered the issue of devolution and double devolution as well as looking forward to the London Olympics in 2012.
- 3.7 In addition to the formal speaking sessions were a range of fringe and breakout sessions which covered issues ranging from licensing, recycling, homelessness, Parish Councils and domestic violence among others. Of particular interest to Local Councillors was the session on City Regions where Paul Tilsley, Elected Member, Birmingham City Council was presenting to the group. Also of particular interest was the Eating for Health session where Coventry's innovative ideas in respect of this agenda were presented by Craig Hickin, alongside the Food Standards Agency, the IDEA and LACORS.
- 3.8 In all the Conference provided significant opportunities for networking, especially around the exhibition which accompanied the speaking sessions. Opportunities were taken to build relationships with the Council's ICT supplier and to raise concerns with their new Chief Executive Officer in respect of the standards of service being delivered. Opportunity was also created to meet up with other customers of the IT supplier and this was being followed up with meetings to establish where joint working may prove beneficial to both Local Authorities. A range of political contacts would also have been made which will complement the learning opportunities provided by the Conference

4 Financial Implications

The cost of the conference was £495 per delegate.

5 Other specific implications

	Implications (See below)	No Implications
Area Co-ordination		✘
Best Value		✘
Comparable Benchmark Data		✘
Coventry Community Plan		✘
Crime and Disorder		✘
Equal Opportunities		✘
Finance	✘	
Health and Safety		✘
Human Resources		✘
Human Rights Act		✘
Impact on Partner Organisations		✘
Information and Communications Technology		✘
Legal Implications		✘
Property Implications		✘
Race Equality Scheme		✘
Risk Management		✘
Sustainable Development		✘
Trade Union Consultation		✘
Voluntary Sector – The Coventry Compact		✘

List of background papers

Proper officer:

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Papers open to Public Inspection

Description of paper

Location

None