

REPORT BACK ON CONFERENCE/SEMINAR

REPORT TO: Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

REPORT OF: Chief Executive

TITLE: Local Government Association

DATE: 3-5 July 2007

VENUE: International Convention Centre, Birmingham

1 Recommendation

1.1 You are recommended to note the report.

2 Background

2.1 The Local Government Association (LGA) Annual Conference is the key local government event of the year. The conference is attended by Government Ministers and MPs including senior politicians from all parties; senior civil servants; elected members and senior officers from all types of local authorities; and senior figures from across the public, voluntary and private sector.

2.2 The LGA conference was attended by Cllr Ahmed, Cllr Mutton, Cllr McNicholas, Cllr Noonan, Cllr Taylor and the Chief Executive, Stella Manzie. Cllrs Mutton, McNicholas and Noonan attended for all three days of the conference; Cllr Ahmed attended for two days and Councillor Taylor and the Chief Executive each attended for one day.

3 Cost of attending

3.1 The total cost of attending the LGA Conference including conference fees, accommodation and travel costs was £3,184.

4 Benefits

4.1 The conference provided an opportunity to learn more about developing central government policy and whether the very recent change in Prime Minister would lead to any significant impact on policy direction. Coventry City Council was able to contribute to the debate and to influence future policy about the future of local government and a wide range of policy issues including transport, education, social care, regeneration and climate change.

4.2 Of particular interest was the development and implications of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill and the work being undertaken by the Audit Commission with other inspectorates to develop the Comprehensive Area Assessment

that will replace the current Comprehensive Performance Assessment of local government.

- 4.3 A number of the government ministers due to speak were obliged to pull out as the conference coincided with Gordon Brown becoming Prime Minister and the creation of his first Cabinet. However, where this happened. Ministers were usually replaced with senior civil servants who were able to speak about the on-going development of central government policy.
- 4.4 The Leader of the Council, Councillor Ken Taylor, was a speaker at the conference session on "*Local Area Agreements – new arrangements and new opportunities*" on the second day of the conference. As Coventry City Council is a road tester for the new Local Area Agreements, we were able to contribute fully to the discussion which focused on strengthening partnership arrangements, making more "space" for local priorities in LAAs, delivering better outcomes for citizens and customers and the enhanced role for elected members as leaders of place and partnerships.
- 4.5 The Chief Executive, Stella Manzie, was a speaker in the session on the third day of the conference on "*Road Pricing – transport fit for the future or highway robbery?*" The session examined the case for local road pricing and its implications for the local authority transport role. Stella Manzie spoke as the lead Chief Executive for the West Midlands Metropolitan District Councils about the Road Transport Bill, the complexities of tackling congestion in the West Midlands, the difference between tackling identifiable urban centres and just one and the need for a more strategic approach to this issue.
- 4.6 Other speakers at the conference included Sir Michael Lyons; Darra Singh, the Chief Executive of Ealing Council and Chair of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion, and Professor Chesshire, from the government's Sustainable Energy Policy Advisory Board and Chair of the LGA climate change commission.

List of background papers

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