



Coventry City Council

Public report

REPORT BACK ON CONFERENCE/SEMINAR

REPORT TO: Scrutiny Board 1
REPORT OF: Chris West, Executive Director Resources
TITLE: Report back from CIPFA Conference
DATE: 10-11th July 2013
VENUE: London

1. Purpose

The purpose of the report is to give feedback on the CIPFA Conference 2013. Cabinet on 18th June 2013 approved the attendance of Councillor Gannon, a Conservative nominee (Councillor Blundell), the Director of Legal and Finance Services (Chris West) and one additional officer from the Finance and Legal Services Directorate (Barrie Hastie).

2. Background

The CIPFA Annual Conference is an opportunity to network with colleagues, exchange ideas and learn from others by an exciting programme of speakers from across the public services, practical workshops/sessions and a large exhibition where you can view the latest products and services.

Speakers at for the 2013 Conference included:

Jaki Salisbury – CIPFA President
Stephanie Flanders, Broadcast journalist and economics editor
Chuka Umunna MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills
Ben Page, Chief Executive IPSOS Mori
Professor Tony Travers, Chairman, The London Finance Commission
John Pienaar, political correspondent
Lord Heseltine
Mariana Mazzucato, RM Phillips Chair of Science and Technology Policy, University of Sussex Business School

Panel speakers:

Owen Jones, The Independent columnist and author of *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class*
Derrick Anderson, CEO, London Borough of Lambeth
Tim Montgomerie, Comment editor, The Times, Conservative blogger and commentator

Lord Sutherland, Chair of Royal Commission into long-term care of the elderly, President Alzheimer Scotland, Action on Dementia and Chair of the English Community Care Association

Anand Shukla, Chief Executive of Daycare Trust

3. Cost of attending

	Costs Approved by Cabinet/Cabinet Member	Total of Actual Costs
Conference Fees	First delegate £795.00 3 further delegates at £495.00 Total: £2280	
Flights	£0	£0
Additional Travel Expenses	£576.00 (rail tickets)	£552.00 (4 tickets)
Accommodation	£720.00 (x 4 persons)	£560.00 (x4 persons)
Subsistence		

4. Benefits

The annual CIPFA conference is the main event each year for senior Local Government Officers and Members to consider the key strategic issues affecting local government finance. This year's conference took place at a time of significant change for local authorities. Not only are the financial challenges unprecedented and set to get even harder, but the sheer volume of new policy initiatives and fundamental changes to the way in which local government finance works add to the challenge of navigating a way through these difficult times.

The first keynote speaker was broadcaster and journalist Stephanie Flanders who set the current global recession in context and examined how countries recovered from them. Ms Flanders then outlined what she perceived was in store for the UK and its public finances by 2020.

Other keynote speeches which were particularly informative included an analysis of the role of public services in fostering the conditions for prosperity and growth delivered by Chuka Umunna. Ben Page, the Chief Executive of IPSOS Mori, delivered a typically entertaining review of demographic and attitudinal changes in society and Tony Travers delivered a study on the London Finance Commission which was established to help improve the tax and public spending arrangements for London in order to promote jobs and growth.

Following the publication of his 'No Stone Unturned: in pursuit of growth' report for the Department of Business Innovation and Skills, Lord Heseltine presented his key findings and messages for the local government sector. Mr Heseltine's report focuses on a comprehensive plan to improve the UK's economic prospects and makes the case for a major rebalancing of responsibilities for economic development between central and local government, and between government and the private sector.

Lord Heseltine's address very much picked up the key theme of the conference, entitled 'Beyond Austerity', which was that a new response was needed to the financial and policy challenges that lie ahead. It was widely emphasised that the traditional response of looking for ever more efficiency savings would not address the scale of the pressures ahead. Instead local authorities not only needed to be looking at delivering services differently, but that they had a crucial role to play in fostering the conditions to promote economic growth locally which would be vital to securing economic recovery in the longer term.

In addition to the keynote addresses, there were also series of more operational workshops on subjects such as procurement and commissioning, social enterprises, health and social care integration and the challenge for the finance function in local authorities which offered practical insight into how these issues might enable local authorities to be better placed to respond to the difficult financial challenges they face.

Outside of the main conference activities, the opportunity to network and discuss current issues with peers and colleagues proved invaluable. In such an uncertain climate, the opportunity to discuss and understand the strategic financial planning assumptions which peers are making across the country is invaluable and has impacted directly on some of the financial assumptions that we have made at a local level in terms of our Medium Term Financial Strategy and our early work on the budget for 2014/15.

In addition, the opportunity to consider some of the wider strategic policy issues has been instrumental in helping to shape the key strategic thinking at officer level as we develop plans for the ABC programme, our City Deal, the Friargate development and the various other economic growth initiatives that are being developed locally.

List of background papers

Proper Officer: Executive Director, Resources

Author: Barry Hastie

Tel Number: 024 7683 3710

(Any enquiries should be directed to the above)

Other contributors:

Papers open to public inspection: Nil

Description of paper: Report Back on Conference/Seminar

Location: CH60

Approved by Cabinet on: 18 June 2013