

Annual Assembly 2010 Update

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Board meeting date: 26/01/2010 Confidentiality: **Open**

1. Issue

1.1.1 To update the Board on arrangements for the 2010 Annual Assembly.

2. Recommendations

2.1.1 The Board is asked to note the progress on planning for the 2010 Annual Assembly.

2.1.2 The Board is asked to give its views on the issues raised, in particular the session ideas provided in **Appendix A**.

2.1.3 The Board is asked to approve a two-day delegate cost of £430, and a one-day delegate cost of £230.

3. Consideration

3.1 2010 arrangements

3.1.1 The Board took the decision in September 2009 to proceed with a two-day Birmingham-based national Assembly in 2010. Necessary contracts with the ICC have been signed.

3.1.2 Following this decision officers have been considering options to amend the 2009 arrangements. Drivers for change are to consider efficiencies / cost savings, to reflect delegate and officer feedback and to ensure the assembly is an attractive proposition for delegates in 2010.

3.1.3 Some of the issues under consideration are set out in the sections below.

3.2 Event format and timing

3.2.1 Feedback from 2009 included a call for more free time between the fringe events and the conference dinner on Monday evening, more time for lunch, less time for refreshments and an earlier finish on Tuesday. We propose accommodating all these elements. In order to do so, session length will be cut from 90 minutes to 75 minutes. Judging by delegate feedback we do not anticipate a negative response to this.

3.3 Venue, catering, AV facilities etc

3.3.1 The contract with the ICC specifies use of a range of rooms and commits us to a minimum catering spend – which we normally exceed. Audio-visual technical support costs are extras depending on the type and nature of support required. There is limited scope to trim these costs. We may wish to review the nature of the Monday evening dinner, but it is a recognised part of the programme, and a key networking opportunity for delegates. We do not propose any significant changes.

3.4 Programme

3.4.1 Delegates have expressed a repeated preference over the years for ‘involving’ workshop-type sessions, which has led to the predominance of smaller (up to 120-delegate) sessions rather than larger ones, and a limited number of all delegate plenary sessions.

3.4.2 We wish to continue to meet the needs of different communities within the audience such as single purpose authorities, parish interests, newcomers (rather than seasoned Assembly-attendees) and so on. This dictates some general topic areas for us.

3.4.3 Nevertheless, given that individual delegates this year chose only five sessions to attend, we have concluded that the overall number of different sessions could be reduced (there were 27 in 2009) without significantly affecting the degree of choice.

3.4.4 An internal development group will lead on programme development. Members of the group have been selected on the basis of their ‘front line’ work with delegates and their understanding of wider ethical governance issues, relevant SfE projects, the local standards framework and the Code. They have been asked to provide feedback on the provisional session topics outlined in **Appendix A**, which has been drawn up following discussion with the 2009 Steering Committee. The development group will also help to ensure the quality and accuracy of session content and provide an experienced and knowledgeable support network for staff responsible for individual session development.

3.5 Advisory Steering Committee

3.5.1 An advisory steering committee helps shape the agenda for the Assembly and acts as a sounding board over any potential changes in arrangements. The 2009 steering committee met for its wrap-up meeting in November, and a new steering

committee has been formed. This includes Board representatives Shirley Flint and Elizabeth Hall. External members of the group come from authorities that have previously been or are currently shortlisted for the LGC Standards and Ethics award.

3.5.2 Confirmed members as at 31 December 2009 are:

- Caroline Nixon, Independent Chair of Standards Committee, Waveney District Council
- Mike Wilkinson, Independent Chair of Standards Committee, Leeds City Council
- Mark Scrimshaw, Independent Chair of Standards Committee, Newcastle City Council
- Mark Bowen, Director of Legal and Democratic Services, London Borough of Bromley
- Peter Sass, Head of Democratic Services & Local Leadership, Kent County Council

3.5.3 Their first meeting will be held on 21 January 2010, and will include further discussion of session topics as set out for Board Members' interest in **Appendix A**.

3.6 Setting the delegate fee for 2010

3.6.1 Our pricing policy for delegates has been to hold the two-day cost at £430 since 2007. Clearly the options for us are increase, no change and decrease. Board members will recall that the final financial out-turn in 2009 was as follows.

Income	£308,000
Expenditure	£370,049
SfE subsidy	£62,049

3.6.2 Early indications are that 2010 outgoings will be broadly in line with 2009 figures.

3.6.3 On that basis it is recommended that the two-day delegate fee is held at £430 for a fourth successive year.

3.7 Marketing timetable

3.7.1 The invitation mailing to potential delegates will be issued week commencing 15 March 2010. It is our aim to include the advance programme for the event as part of this mailing, condensing the marketing timetable and providing session information to delegates earlier than in previous years. This will give delegates more time to select their preferred session. This is dependent on timely development of the programme. If there are delays in development it will be necessary to use a two stage booking process as in previous years.

- 3.7.2 The Assembly web pages, including online booking pages, will also be launched week commencing 15 March 2010. The booking pages will include the option to select session preferences online.
- 3.7.3 It is our intention to launch an 'expressions of interest' page on the SfE website at the beginning of February 2010 to capture names and details of authorities who wish to book places. They will then receive a priority call back in March when booking opens.
- 3.7.4 Depending on delegate numbers, an additional invitation mailing can be prepared and launched in June 2010.
- 3.7.5 All booked delegates will receive a confirmation of place mailing by the end of September 2010. Delegates who opt to do so will be able to receive this mailing via email.
- 3.7.6 Mailings will be supported by press releases to Info for Local and key trade press.

3.8 Other issues

- 3.8.1 It is proposed that the pre-event speaker dinner should be discontinued and a more informal gathering substituted. Numbers of SfE staff required at the Assembly will be reviewed carefully. We will also take a close look at hotel accommodation costs and options to ensure an appropriate balance between value for money and convenience.

4. Risk and financial considerations

- 4.1.1 The financial performance of the 2009 Assembly is set out above.
- 4.1.2 The cost elements are predictable and either fixed or vary according to delegate numbers. Income, of course, relates entirely to delegate numbers and the principal risk associated with the event relates to a shortfall of paying delegates. Marketing traditionally begins in the spring and early bookings give us a predictor of likely numbers. Marketing activity can be increased to further stimulate demand.

5. Appendices and attachments

- 5.1.1 Appendix A: Suggested session topics