



11th December 2012

Agenda Item: 7

REPORT BACK ON A CONFERENCE OR OTHER APPROVED VISIT

**COUNTY COUNCILS NETWORK ANNUAL CONFERENCE 19TH & 20TH
NOVEMBER 2012**

Purpose of Report

To report back on the outcomes of a visit or event approved under the travel and accommodation policy.

Background

The County Councils Network Annual Conference was held in Staffordshire on 19th and 20th November 2012.

The County Council's representatives were Councillor Mrs K Cutts, Councillor M Suthers OBE DL and the Chief Executive.

The County Council's travel, accommodation, conference and member development policies provide for written reports to be produced which describe the business of the event and an evaluation written by the council's representatives of its success, with particular reference to the business of the council or the achievement of learning objectives.

This report has been prepared by the Chief Executive and is supported by the papers issued from the conference, which are available on the CNN website for further information.

Representative's Report

3.1 Purpose/aim of the event or visit

The County Councils Network (CCN) is a cross party special interest group of the Local Government Association which speaks, develops policy and shares best practice for the County family of local authorities, whether unitary or upper tier. It is a cross party organisation whose views carry particular weight for a large proportion of the country outside the big conurbations: CCN's 36 member councils, with over 2,500 Councillors, serve 23 million people or 47% of the population over 44 thousand square miles or 85% of England.

The annual conference is a key event in the CCN calendar and brings together members and officers over a two day period providing a unique opportunity to reflect on the challenges facing local government, to share experience and find solutions to common issues.

The Conference focused on a range of key issues for member authorities, and featured a number of workshops to enable delegates to share learning from the experience of member authorities. There were also a number of plenary speakers including Government Ministers.

3.2 Achievement of objectives

The conference enabled delegates to collectively consider developing agenda's which present both significant challenges and opportunities for local government and counties in particular. These challenges include the impending transfer of Public Health responsibilities, changes to planning, developing a new relationship with schools, troubled families, welfare reform, police and crime commissioners and a new system of funding for local government, whilst continuing to deliver essential public services against a background of continuing financial restraint.

The conference gave leading members, officers and partner organisations the chance to reflect on some of the key challenges and opportunities facing councils and to share the innovative approaches and solutions already being implemented by counties across the country.

Much of this innovation and good practice was showcased in workshops at the Conference, where CCN member councils from across the country shared learning about a range of important issues – community budgets, integrating and transforming care, addressing troubled families, workforce reforms, working in partnership and driving growth. A major focus of the conference was how the type of growth that our localities need could be delivered, while continuing to protect the quality of the local environment and the importance of County Councils having a critical role in creating the right conditions for local economic growth.

Speakers included the Chairman of the LGA - Sir Merrick Cockell; Michael Chater OBE - Chairman of NACL who spoke on the subject of 'What Next for Localism'; Professor Tony Travers of the London School of Economics, Andrew Cozens CBE, who considered the Social Care Funding Challenge, Richard Hawkes, the Chief Executive of the charity *Scope* and Ben Page of Ipsos Mori who, provided an in depth insight into public perceptions.

Jonathan Flowers, Director of Veredus and Market Director of Capita addressed the conference on the biggest issues facing Local Government today - and perhaps more importantly - the the issues that the sector will face in the future.

The conference also received speeches from the Rt. Hon. Eric Pickles MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Brandon Lewis MP and the Rt. Hon. Don Foster MP - both of whom are Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government

Cllr Martin Suthers, Deputy Leader and Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board, and David Pearson, Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director of Adult Social Care, Health and Public Protection, Nottinghamshire County Council facilitated a workshop entitled *Health and Social Care Act: a source of tension or an opportunity for innovation?* The workshop considered the changes arising from the Health & Social Care Act and how the financial pressures on health & local government create both an environment of risk but also a platform for integration & dynamic innovation. The workshop explored the opportunities and challenges of Health and Wellbeing Boards and the importance of creating integrated commissioning aligned to Personalisation and the Social Care White Paper. The presentation also addressed working with health and local government commissioners and providers to create innovation and financial sustainability. The workshop also provided some practical examples of integrated commissioning & partnership working.

The first Conference session was a presentation from the Host Authority - Staffordshire County Council '*Getting ahead of the fire. The Story of a successful but bumpy road along the path to a whole system approach to care*', followed by the 'story so far' of the Community Budget pilots as told by Essex County Council and Cheshire West and Chester Council.

Other conference workshops included Transforming Care (Derbyshire C.C.), Thriving Families (Oxfordshire C.C.), Safer Hertfordshire (Hertfordshire C.C.) as well as Workforce Reforms (Buckinghamshire C.C.)

The conference saw the launch of two major CCN publications - the first 'Planning for Prosperous and Sustainable Rural Communities' showcases good practice from across the CCN 'family' members. The second was 'Counties: Driving Economic Growth' which looks at the opportunities for driving economic growth outside London and the big cities; highlighting examples of the work that is already being undertaken by CCN Member Councils.

Attendance at the conference proved to be beneficial as the whole agenda was focused around the key issues and challenges currently facing the County Council. Members were able to hear first hand, the future direction of central government policy, what this would mean in practice for delivering public services and the different models and approaches which could be adopted. As such, the objectives of attending the conference were achieved.

Statutory and Policy Implications

This report has been produced to ensure compliance with the Council's Travel and Accommodation policy and current arrangements for approving attendance at conferences, seminars and Member Training events.

Background Papers Available for Public Inspection - List

Electoral Division(s) Affected - List