



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority
Finance and Resources Committee

CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC FINANCE AND ACCOUNTANCY (CIPFA) CONFERENCE 2010

Report of the Former Chair of
Finance and Resources Committee

Agenda Item No:

Date: 09 July 2010

Purpose of Report:

To report back to Members on the attendance at CIPFA conference by the Chair of Finance and Resources Committee and the Strategic Director of Finance and Resources.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The CIPFA conference is the largest event in the area of local government and public sector finance. It presents an opportunity for delegates to hear some of the leading experts in the field of finance speaking on a range of current issues for the public sector.
- 1.2. At the meeting on 9 April 2010 the Finance and Resources Committee gave approval for the Chair of Finance and Resources to attend this conference with the Authority Treasurer. In the event the Treasurer was unable to attend and therefore the Strategic Director of Finance and Resources accompanied the Chair.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 The theme of this year's conference was "The Turning Point" specifically looking to address the economic downturn and the anticipated reductions in public spending. Speakers included
 - Rt Hon Charles Kennedy MP;
 - Matthew Elliott – taxpayers alliance;
 - Ben Lucas – 2020 Public Services Trust;
 - Goran Perrson – ex Prime Minister of Sweden.
- 2.2 There were a number of plenary sessions the highlight of which was undoubtedly Goran Persson the ex prime minister of Sweden who gave some interesting political insights into making huge reductions in budgets and in particular those involving health and education. His message was that the challenge of public office is not to be elected but to be re-elected and so whatever you need to do; do it now. When asked about the Chancellors June 8 announcement about consultation his remark was "Ah, the Canadian experience. Yes you can do that if you have time but believe me you don't." His view was that Europe need not worry about Ireland, Spain, Italy, or Greece but about the UK as the UK economy is much more significant even than that of France.
- 2.3 Bobby Duffy, the managing director of IPSOS MORI, also provided an interesting insight into expectations by setting out that the British public still do not accept the need for deep cuts. There is a feeling of denial and the public in general believe that public services have deteriorated since 2001. This is despite the fact that on all known measures public services have actually improved significantly.
- 2.4 Ed Cox of the Institute for Public Policy Research said that finance professionals are stifling innovation by being too risk averse and Ben Lucas of 2020 Public Services Trust agreed but pointed out that the Public Accounts Committee and Auditors are often very critical when things go wrong. What is

required is more consideration of what will happen if no innovation takes place.

- 2.5 The highlight speakers on the second day were Colm McCarthy, the advisor to the Irish government on their financial crisis and Sir Nicholas Montagu a leading civil servant for some 20 years. Both of their messages were essentially about communications and getting risk planning right. When questioned about the likelihood of Ireland leaving the Euro, Colm said “Can you imagine it? The prospectus for the new currency would be “we’ve been fiddling the figures, we’ve got huge debts and as soon as we set up our new currency we are going to devalue it., so how much would you like to hold?””.
- 2.6 Heather Wakefield from Unison pointed out that there was no such thing as a positive redundancy and that all redundancies were personal tragedies. Her point was not that there is no scope for savings in Local Government but that much of this could be achieved by “in sourcing” rather than paying excessive sums to private contractors and consultants. She also pointed out that Local Government has already shed 23,000 jobs as a result of drives for efficiency.
- 2.7 This was a very challenging conference in many ways and considering that it had been organised long before the General Election was exceptionally topical and gave delegates much to think about.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost of attending this conference, including accommodation for two nights was contained within the £850 allocated for the purpose. This will be met from the budgetary provision for Members Conference Expenses.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no implications for human resources arising from this report.

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An initial equality impact assessment has identified no specific aspects relating to a disproportionate effect in respect of the key equality strands.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Being aware of current events and thinking within the public sector is essential to the good governance of the Authority. The attendance by the Chair of Finance and Resources at a conference of this nature increases his awareness of the wider aspects of the public sector and allows and appreciation of the challenges being faced during these difficult times.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of this report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Cllr Malcolm Wood
VICE CHAIR OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY
FORMER CHAIR OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE