

By: Chief Executive
To: Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority – 13 June 2013
Subject: MEMBER ATTENDANCE AT CONFERENCES
Classification: Unrestricted

FOR DECISION

SUMMARY

This report seeks Members' consideration and approval to a change in the existing arrangements regarding Members' attendance at conferences.

RECOMMENDATION

Members are requested to:

1. Approve the proposed revised arrangements for Member attendance at conferences and other key events (paras 4 and 5 refer).

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: Director, Finance and Corporate Services – Charles Kerr
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BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

COMMENTS

Background

1. The arrangements for Members' attendance at conferences and other key Fire and Rescue Service events were last reviewed in 2008. Since then there have been a number of changes to the way in which fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) deliver their services and, given the more constraining financial climate, it is now opportune to reconsider the Authority's approach.

Current Position

2. The main events attended by Members in recent years are set out below. This list already reflects a reduction from previous years when events included attendance at the Annual Assembly of Standards Committees, the Irish Fire Conference and the LGA Rural Conference.
 - LGA Annual Fire Conference (March)
 - LGA Annual Conference (July)
 - LGA seminars (various)
 - Combined Fire Authorities' Conference (October)
3. Generally, attendees have been Chairman and/or Vice Chairman of the Authority together with Leaders of the other political groups or their representatives. This has meant that on occasions the Authority has been sending up to four Members together with a number of officers, normally comprising the Chief Executive, at least one Director, and a Member Support officer.

Proposed Arrangements

4. From experience, many of these events are becoming less relevant to the Authority and a more targeted approach is proposed focussing on what has become the 'market leader' for FRAs, namely, the LGA Annual Fire Conference. This is usually held in March and it is suggested that attendance should be in line with previous levels. It is proposed that in future there should be no Member attendance at any other Conference, including the LGA Annual Conference and the LGA General Assembly meeting which always forms part of it. It is recognised that it may be prudent to permit some flexibility around this approach and it is therefore recommended that the existing discretion exercised by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman be retained.
5. It should be noted that, at the last review, delegated approval was given to the Chief Executive to make decisions, in consultation with the Chairman, on attendance at conferences and similar events outside Europe. It is proposed that, in future,

attendance at any such events should be subject to approval by the Chief Executive in consultation not only with the Chairman, but also with the other Group Leaders.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6. The targeting of resources based on the revised approach set out above will reduce overall costs by approximately £5k.

RECOMMENDATION

7. Members are requested to:
 - 7.1 Approve the proposed revised arrangements for Member attendance at conferences and other key events (paras 4 and 5 refer).