

## **NATIONAL CONFERENCES BUDGET**

**ITEM 11  
OSCPR190106**

### **Background**

- 1.1 Members will recall that this Committee was asked to review the allocation of funding for attendance at national conferences.
- 1.2 A series of preliminary options was put forward to Members at their meeting of September 2005 and the consensus was that Members would prefer to consider a flexible option which would earmark funding for essential conferences, but allow an element of flexibility for other conferences subject to criteria and available resources. Members equally felt that the Town and Country Planning Summer School should come under Member Training.
- 1.3 The current list for national conferences is as follows:  
  
Local Government Association Annual Conference x 2 delegates  
LGA Economic Development conference  
Chartered Institute of Housing  
The Town and Country Planning Summer School x 2 delegates  
Cumbria County Council Conference  
Regional Housing Strategy Consultation
- 1.4 The current budget is £6,712.

### **Proposal**

- 2.1 Taking into account recent actual expenditure, it is proposed that £1,500 of the budget is allocated to the Local Government Association Annual conference, attendance at which, Members felt, was essential for any local authority. This would cover two delegates.
- 2.2 It is further proposed that £1,500 is transferred to the Members Training budget for the Town and Country Planning Summer School (2 delegates), leaving a balance of £4,712 to be flexibly allocated.

- 2.3 It is considered that a similar process to the 'urgent item' procedure be adopted for the allocation of the balance of the budget. This would suggest that approval of expenditure should be subject to endorsement by the appropriate Head of Service, by the Monitoring Officer, by the Head of Finance and Business Development, by the Leader or Deputy Leader, and by the Chair or Deputy Chair of OSC PR. All signatories would be required for approval to be given. Such a process would provide the robustness needed to avoid any allegations of 'junketing', but equally ensure flexibility.
- 2.4 Furthermore, it is envisaged that those seeking to attend a conference will fill out a form arguing the benefits of attendance to the Council in delivering its Corporate Plan through learning, networking, lobbying or access to funding opportunities to give those asked to endorse the expenditure the necessary information on which to form an opinion.
- 2.5 A condition of approval will be that following attendance, dissemination of learning and evaluation of the conference should be included in the Portfolio Holder's report to full Council, or by independent report to full Council in the case of a non-executive Member.
- 2.6 It is envisaged that, as is the case with urgent items, that Member Services administer the procedure.

Appendices:            Proposed Request Form.