

POLICY - ATTENDANCE AT CONFERENCES BY ELECTED MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

General

1. Recognising the importance of attendance at conferences by elected members and officers the corporate organisation shall take a positive attitude and make provision each year towards conference attendance.
2. Priority shall be given to supporting conferences organised by local government for local government.
3. All documents arriving with the Council for conferences arising through:
 - Local Authority Members Association
 - Association of Local Authorities for Northern Ireland
 - National Association of Councillors or
 - Local Government in Irelandshall be presented by way of the Corporate Services Committee of the Council for consideration.
4. Other conference material dealing with global or sector issues shall appear on the agenda of the appropriate committee following agreement by the Chair of the particular committee with the Head of Department.
5. In order that the Council does not fetter its discretion where special conferences arise which are not on the Council's annual calendar these shall appear by agreement between the Council's Mayor and the Chief Executive.
6. Prior to the commencement of each financial year members shall be circulated with a list of conferences supported regularly by the Council. The list shall be compiled by the Member Support Officer with material provided by Chief Executive and directors. Submissions for attendance at Conferences should be presented in written form and include the relevant factors and material, reasons for attending the

conference, the likely benefit to the Council and the likely cost to be incurred by the Council in meeting the expenditure.

- 7 Following the attendance at conferences a report shall be submitted on behalf of the group to the relevant committee or to the Council. Where an officer accompanies elected members the report shall be made by the officer and where there is attendance only by elected members the group shall agree the person to make the report. Reports should be in writing.

Members

1. The maximum number of councillors attending any particular conference shall not exceed 3. Where there are multiple nominations and consensus cannot be achieved then places shall be selected by lot.
2. Where appropriate the Council may delegate a named officer to attend.
3. Each year when annual budgets are being agreed the Council shall agree a ceiling of spend which shall be divided equally across all members. During the year members not wishing to use their allocation may transfer it to another elected member. This transfer shall be notified in writing to the Chief Executive.

Officers Attendance

1. The Chief Executive shall be permitted to bring forward recommendations for attendance at 3 major conferences per year which he wishes to attend.
2. Directors shall be permitted to bring forward recommendations for attendance at 2 major conferences per year which they wish to attend dealing with their particular field of work.
3. Each Deputy Chief Officer or Section Head shall bring forward recommendations for attendance at 1 conference per year which he/she wishes to attend dealing with his/her particular field of work.
4. An ad hoc arrangement shall continue to exist for employees lower down the organisation when conferences arise which are of specific interest, in such situations a recommendation for attendance shall again come through the Department Head specifying a particular

officer and the reasons for wishing them to attend. Such situations should arise less frequently than 1 per year.

5. In relation to conferences brought forward by the Chief Executive or other officers the Council where appropriate may nominate up to 3 councillors to attend with that officer.

Conference Attendance

Where the Council decides to send delegates to a conference the names of delegates must be decided no later than the Council meeting which ratifies the committee minutes.

Travel Arrangements

1. It shall be the responsibility of the PA to the Chief Executive to arrange travel which shall provide the most effective route to the conference venue, taking maximum advantage of the cheapest fares available.
2. In order that additional expenses do not occur members and/or officers should confirm their attendance at least 14 days in advance of travel.
3. When travel includes the use of a car, hired or owned by members or officers claiming mileage allowance, as far as fair and reasonable and is possible members and officers attending a conference should travel together.
4. As far as is possible delegates should be booked to travel on the day the conferences commences/ends - members or officers wishing to remain longer at a particular venue must do so at their own expense with no additional cost to the Council.

Hotel Accommodation

In liaison with those attending the Member Support Officer shall be prepared to book suitable accommodation for delegates. Where accommodation is booked, settlement should be made by delegates at the end of their stay and paid out of the advance payment of subsistence made by the Council prior to travel.

Subsistence

1. Delegates attending conferences shall receive 75% of the maximum recommended amount prior to travel. The remaining 25 % to be paid on the basis of receipts submitted; the maximum allowance for subsistence; and that expenditure was reasonably incurred in relation to the trip.
2. A claw back situation shall exist in relation to expenses which are not covered by adequate receipts.

William Beattie
Chief Executive

Final version April 2002