

Feedback Paper: Local Councils' Conference- 16th June 2010

The NCC sponsored Local Councils' Conference was held at Towcester Racecourse on Wednesday 16th June 2010. The event included the unveiling of the Northamptonshire Councils' Charter that had been developed in partnership with Northants CALC. The conference was a useful opportunity to focus on partnership working throughout the County and how Local Councils can work together to develop local delivery. During this current period of national financial restraint, partnership working is recognised as a key method of policy delivery within this community, and this conference aimed to further facilitate such an objective.

58 attendees submitted a conference feedback form and this report summarises a range of their comments. Responses are also provided to the points raised.

Overall Positive Comments:

- Conference facilitators with particular reference to Adrian Lee and Councillor Joan Kirkbride. "The chief constable was a very refreshing contrast and communicated brilliantly."
- "Very good" organisation of the event. "Ideal" networking opportunity
- Conference was recognised for highlighting the Charter, as well as NCC's acknowledgement of the "importance" of Parish Councils
- "Good" opportunity for acquiring and sharing information as well as outlining "concerns." Q & A session was regarded as "excellent."

Suggestions for Overall Improvement:

- More time required for individual workshops with a more "focused approach."
- Need to reform the content of workshops. The sessions were "too staged" without "allowing real consultation and discussion."
- Ensure all relevant paperwork is available on day (including copy of Charter.)

Comments made about specific workshops: *No specific comments made about Community Safety and Planning workshop.*

Community Development	Highways
Room infrastructure: One small flipchart and lack of roving microphones hampering workshop delivery.	Aims of workshop: Belief that session was "merely information gathering by NCC" and NCC "didn't really know that the workshops were geared around [sic] the charter."
Content of workshop: Criticism about the lack of pre information regarding session content. Some delegates wanted more detailed information about planning	Facilitator: Positive comments about the head of transport and "honest feedback was given."

Local Council's Charter: At least nine delegates wanted the Charter to be included as pre-conference reading in preparation for the workshops. One attendee questioned the amount of time that was spent on the public signing of the Charter.

The charter was not mentioned in the booking form for the workshops. It is clear this was an error although in the final invite letter the text reads: 'We will be holding three workshops which will give you a chance to discuss issues around the new Northamptonshire Council's Charter

Several delegates commented on the lack of a final agenda before the event, the non adherence of session times and that the conference ran late. Some attendees felt that the conference agenda was too full causing these time-related issues.

A final agenda was not available until the week of the conference due to changes being made to include as many representatives as possible from different organisations.

Comments about the Agenda, Venue/ Catering/ organisational issues:

Critical comments were received about the venue facilities including the “poor” PA system, workshop room temperatures and the lack of a bike rack. One comment highlighted the mixing together of vegetarian and non-vegetarian food.

All documents sent out to delegates were NCC branded and the invite was signed by Katherine Kerswell. The initial invite letter sent on 23rd March 2010 stated that the conference started at 4:30pm, and this was the case with every other subsequent letter. A 4:30pm start time has been traditional for the last two years (2007 and 2009) and this is the first comment about the event timing. Comments about the venue/ catering and PA system have been fed back to the relevant contacts. The workshop locations were clearly signposted and staff were on hand to direct delegates.

Selected Additional comments:

- Need for a financial/ economical cost analysis of event and location
- Event did not deal with issues associated with parish/ town clerk workload.
- Venue needed to be held in a more central county location.

The conference cost £49 per delegate as apposed to £56 last year. To save on paper, all the presentations are being up-loaded on to the Northants CALC website. The conference has been held in the past at Sywell and Wootton, hence the reason why a more southerly location was chosen

Feedback Scores (Average score out of 58 respondents.)

Question	How would you rate the pre-event	How would you rate the organisation of the event	Venue and Location	Car Parking	Food and Refreshments	Agenda Item 1: Training & Development for Local Councils	Agenda Item 2: Local Matters	Agenda Item 3: Working Together	Workshop: Community Safety & Policing	Workshop: Community Development	Workshop: Highways
Average Score	3	2	1	1	2	2	2	3	1	3	2
Score Meaning	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Excellent	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Good	Excellent	Good	Very Good

Conclusions: Ideas for future comparable events

- Ensure that future events can provide formal information-based workshops as well as more informal networking opportunities for delegates.
- Ensure that comprehensive pre-conference information is available to delegates in enough time before the event
- Ensure that conference facilities can cater for the number of attendees as well as conference food is accurately labelled.

