

THE EXECUTIVE

8 FEBRUARY 2005

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

ATTENDANCE AT THE INSTITUTE OF REVENUES RATING AND VALUATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2004	FOR INFORMATION
<p><i>This report informs the Executive of the attendance of two officers from Revenue Services at the above conference and of the benefits to the Council of their attendance.</i></p> <p><u>Summary</u> The Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation (IRRV) is the professional body for revenue & benefits practitioners and holds an annual conference each year. The Executive previously approved the attendance of two officers from Revenue Services and this report is submitted as requested outlining the benefits to the Council.</p> <p>The event was attended by the Head of Revenue Services and the Income and Collections Manager. It consisted of a wide range of lectures on topical issues, workshop sessions, specialist lectures, as well as exhibitions and demonstrations from commercial organisations supplying goods and services to the Revenues arena.</p> <p>Attendance contributes to the continued professional development of officers and ensures that the Council is well informed of current and future trends in this service area. Attendance also helps to raise the profile of the Authority and effective contributions to the events were made by both attendees.</p> <p>Information was also available from exhibits by various central government representatives, such as the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Department for Works and Pensions. There was also an Awards village where authorities that had been short-listed for the performance Awards displayed their successful entries as part of the IRRV's commitment to the dissemination of good practice.</p> <p><u>Recommendations</u> The Executive is asked to note the report.</p> <p><u>Reason</u> In accordance with agreed procedures governing the attendance of officers at conferences with a total cost in excess of £1,000, a feedback report to the Executive is required.</p>	
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1.0 The Role of the Institute and the Conference

- 1.1 The Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation is the only specialist professional organisation for officers engaged in Revenue Collection or Benefits Administration. The Institute is held in high regard in Local Government Finance circles and provides both technical and professional qualifications for officers. Both attendees at the conference are fully qualified corporate members of the Institute.
- 1.2 The institute holds a number of specialist conferences throughout the year on such issues as collection enforcement, benefits administration and fraud prevention. However, the main annual conference, with an emphasis on both strategic and operational issues across all Revenues and Benefits service areas, is recognised as being an important forum for senior managers in Revenue Services.

2.0 Lecture and Workshop Sessions

- 2.1 Subjects included the following
- The Lyons Inquiry into Council Tax
 - The Balance of Funding Review
 - The Impact of the Gershon Review of Public Sector Efficiency
 - The Future of Housing Benefits
 - Political Alternatives to Council Tax
 - The Progress of the Council Tax Revaluation
 - The Role of the Local Government Ombudsman
 - The Introduction of Business Improvement Districts, Small Business Rate Relief and Local Authority Business Growth Initiatives
- 2.1 Speakers included:
- Rt Hon Nick Raynsford MP - Minister for Local and Regional Government
 - Mr Chris Pond MP – Parliamentary Under Secretary for Work and Pensions
 - Mr Tony Redmond – the Local Government Ombudsman
 - Mr David Magor – Director of the Institute of Revenues Rating & Valuation (IRRV)
 - Mr Steve Freer – Chief Executive of Chartered Institute of Public Finance (CIPFA)

3.0 Exhibitions and demonstrations

- 3.1 Examples of the exhibitions and demonstrations throughout the conference include:
- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
 - Department for Works and Pensions
 - Benefit Fraud Inspectorate
 - Valuation Office Agency
 - Software suppliers
 - Bailiffs and enforcement agencies
 - Consultancy companies
 - Specialist staffing agencies
 - Mailing services

4.0 Best Practice and Performance Awards

- 4.1 The Conference also features a series of performance awards made to authorities that have achieved excellence in Revenue Services. This event is an important method of highlighting best practice and facilitating its dissemination to other authorities. In the past Revenues Services has invited winners of the awards to visit the Council and talk to staff about the way in which they achieved excellence. The Head of Revenues for East Riding of Yorkshire (Winners of the IRRV Revenues Team of the Year 2002 and IRRV Benefits Team of the Year 2003), gave a presentation to LBBD Revenue Managers at Stour Road in July 2004 on their experience and the transition they made from a failing service to award winners over a 3 – 4 year period.
- 4.2 The winner of the IRRV Benefits Team of the Year for 2004 award was Salford BC. Salford is one of the 2 Beacon authorities for Benefits administration (Blackpool being the other). Four of our managers from Revenue Services attended Salford BC's Beacon Open day in September. We also had a manager attend the Beacon Open day at Blackpool in October.
- 4.3 Attendees at both events have since produced briefing notes and carried out presentations to management teams sharing the learning points. This has improved overall understanding of the way in which the Council wishes to develop its services and of what/how it can be achieved.
- 4.4 A short article feeding back on both events was published in January 2005's edition of Members Matters.

5.0 Benefits to the Council

- 5.1 Attendance at the Institute's annual conference is viewed as an important aspect of the continued professional development of senior officers in Revenues Services. The Benefits Service is widely recognised as an area of regular and significant change and in recent years both Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates have seen major changes as the government continues with its agenda to modernise local government.
- 5.2 The conference provides a valuable opportunity for officers to keep up to date with current issues and also learn about forthcoming changes. There is also an opportunity to share experiences and good practices with peers from other authorities across the country.
- 5.3 Ensuring officers maintain their professional development and are abreast of developments in their field is an important aspect of providing a professional and modern service to Members and the public. In addition officers from the authority strive to make a positive contribution to the conference, for example by asking questions at lectures, and this helps to promote a positive image of the authority in the Revenues arena.
- 5.4 The learning gained from attendance is cascaded through the Revenues Division through management and team meetings. In addition a briefing note for all staff is currently in production and will be circulated in the near future.

6.0 Cost to the Council

6.1 The full cost to the Council is as follows:

Item	Cost £
Conference attendance fee for two officers	£1,220
Accommodation (3 nights) for two officers	£670
Car parking	£81
Total	<u>£1,971</u>

6.2 In addition to the above there is the cost of mileage claims at essential user rate for travel to Brighton.

Background Papers

- IRRV Annual Conference 2004 Programme
- Executive Report – Attendance at the Institute of Revenues, Ratings & Valuation Annual Conference (Minute 49, 20 July 2004)