
REPORT 4
(1215/52/IM)

COMMONWEALTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE – REPORT BACK

1. Purpose of Report

This paper is a report back on the Commonwealth Local Government Conference (CLGC) 2007.

2. Executive Summary

The Mayor and Councillor Gill, accompanied by Michael Webster, attended the fourth CLGC in Auckland, from Monday 26 March to Thursday 29 March 2007. The theme of the Conference was *Delivering development through local leadership*. The Conference was attended by over 600 participants from 54 countries, including central government ministers of local government, mayors and councillors, officials from international organisations (including the Commonwealth Secretary-General), and a number of Prime Ministers and the President of Uganda.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. *Receive the information.*

4. Discussion

Through a combination of keynote addresses, plenary sessions, break away groups and study visits, the conference explored a number of topics under the theme of delivering development through local leadership.

The Conference recognised that as well as delivering key services, councils also provide strategic leadership for their communities. This community leadership role is increasingly recognised not only in promoting the wellbeing of citizens, but in tackling, from a local perspective, global issues such as disaster management, climate change and poverty.

The CLGC has previously asserted that effective leadership is central to strong democracy and to enable local government to deliver quality services to the community. The Conference highlighted recent innovations in community leadership across the Commonwealth, and gave participants the opportunity to discuss issues and principles around local leadership and development.

Prior to the Conference, many overseas local government leaders took the opportunity to visit New Zealand councils, to learn from our experiences, and to share what is going on in local government in their own countries. Wellington City hosted mayors from South Africa and Namibia. At the conference there was a strong degree of interest in how Wellington City Council went about its business.

Points of interest to note from the Conference include:

- the New Zealand Prime Minister made a strong statement underlining that local councils are not only about roads, rates and rubbish but are a fundamental part of the New Zealand system of democratic government, with a key role in providing strategic leadership. She highlighted the importance of local leadership working in partnership with their communities, with central government, and even across national boundaries. The Prime Minister also noted that it makes sense for central government to take local government into its confidence when it is designing legislation and policy
- a number of speakers touched on the increasing urbanisation of the world, and the implications this has for those who are responsible for running cities. Pressure on infrastructure emerged as a key theme, along with urban renewal. The latter was not confined to overseas countries, with examples of efforts by New Zealand cities to renew what were essentially failing suburbs, where crime, anti-social behaviour, lack of community infrastructure and transport links, and other factors were leading to the development of unhealthy neighbourhoods. In India, for example, the national government has established a city development fund (around US\$12 billion) to assist cities to engage in large-scale urban renewal
- financial sustainability is an issue facing local authorities in many countries. In Australia it is estimated that around a quarter of councils are at financial risk. The situation is not so bad for the major metro cities, but again there are problems in infrastructure development – some caused by lack of funding, but others caused by a lack of good financial and asset management systems designed to track what is required in terms of renewals
- the importance of a partnership approach was stressed. Issues faced by local government throughout the world are extraordinarily complex, and can best be dealt with through partnerships (including developers, government departments, and groups that make up civic society). In the same way, central government is looking to partner with local government to make headway on difficult national or global issues (e.g., climate change). In some

countries (e.g., Canada) progress is being made in integrated goal setting by central and local government, to ensure there is a shared focus on building sustainable communities and cities. Local authorities were increasingly flexing their influence through local Members of Parliament, emphasising the point that the voters are the same people, and that it is in everyone's interest to ensure positive outcomes for all, whether they are seen as citizens or residents, taxpayers or ratepayers

- in a number of countries, a significant effort is going into developing civic leaders, to ensure they are well placed to lead their councils in an increasingly complex environment (e.g. the UK Government has established a £100 million fund to train and develop local government elected members)
- there is, in some countries, on-going debate over whether local government is about participative or representative democracy. It was noted that community leadership is not just a numbers game, and that local elected members have a duty when making decisions to take into account the views of those who may be in the minority, or are too young to vote/yet to be born
- concern was expressed that some groups in societies (e.g. women, ethnic groups) are not participating in civic affairs at the level that is desired. A number of ideas were discussed as to how to make local government more inclusive. There was a strong degree of interest in the way Wellington City used advisory groups and forums to access such groups, and some surprise and delight that 40% of our councillors (including the Mayor) were women, and that our two community boards were also chaired by women
- there was a desire to engage more in civics education initiatives, to ensure communities and individual residents understand the importance and influence of local government in their lives, and how they can exercise a say
- there is a growing sense that the role of local government needs to expand, to meet challenges in areas such as environmental management, healthy lifestyles, connectivity (e.g. not just roading but things like broadband), and supporting the private sector in economic development.

The conference concluded with a session to finalise what has become known as the Auckland Accord (attached to this report). The Accord sets out, in broad terms, the agreements reached in terms of:

- making local governance more effective
- delivering a strategic vision
- service delivery in support of local development
- responding to national and global issues
- indigenous peoples and traditional leadership
- capacity-building for local leadership
- local government partnerships to promote leadership and development.

The Mayor spoke to this statement, noting the clear, realistic yet challenging goals contained in it, and noting the importance of there being a point in each

system of local government where devolution and decentralisation of decision-making must stop, and local elected leaders take accountability and responsibility for decision-making.

5. Conclusion

The CLGC was a valuable opportunity to hear about the challenges and opportunities facing our local government colleagues throughout the Commonwealth, and to share ideas and best practice.

Mayor Kerry Prendergast and Councillor Leonie Gill

Supporting Information
<p>1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome <i>This project supports Outcome 7.2.B – More actively engaged: Wellington will operate an open and honest decision making process that generates confidence and trust in the democratic system.</i></p>
<p>2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact <i>The project relates to C534: Elections, Governance and Democratic Process.</i></p>
<p>3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations <i>Not applicable</i></p>
<p>4) Decision-Making <i>This report does not seek a decision</i></p>
<p>5) Consultation a) General Consultation <i>Not applicable</i></p> <p>b) Consultation with Maori <i>Not applicable</i></p>
<p>6) Legal Implications <i>Not applicable.</i></p>
<p>7) Consistency with existing policy <i>Not applicable</i></p>