LESSONS FROM EUROPE: PLANNING AND DELIVERY OF CAPITAL WORKS AND THE IMPACTS OF AN ECONOMIC DOWNTURN.

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Abstract

The MEFV Overseas Study Tour to Europe 2012 is conducted to provide municipal engineers within Local Government exposure to the best practice and innovation within the public works sector across Europe. The purpose of my study was to undertake research into the planning and delivery of capital works and investigate the impacts that the economic downturn was having on European municipalities and their ability to plan and deliver public works infrastructure.

Over the period of 31 May 2012 to 22 June 2012 the study tour group visited local authorities in Finland, Estonia, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland and Austria. The tour also included attendance at the 2012 IFME Congress and visits to the Mind Lab in Copenhagen, Technical University of Munich, and the City of Vienna’s Waste Incineration plant.

Key Findings and Recommendations

From the experiences that the study tour provided I was able to ascertain three key findings or principles that can be embedded into the frameworks and plans used by municipalities and public works engineers and practitioners. These three principles are:

- Improve Productivity,
- Enhance the Liveability of our Cities and Towns, and
- Demonstrate greater Leadership.

To integrate these three principles into the frameworks and methods for the planning and delivery of public works, a number of recommendations are outlined, that if ratified and achieved, will help municipalities to ensure improved productivity, enhanced liveability for our communities and demonstrate greater leadership.

Conclusion

To effectively plan and deliver public works, good quality business planning frameworks, service plans, asset management systems and plans, capital evaluation frameworks, project briefs and procurement models are required. The findings from the study tour showed that underpinning these planning and delivery tools with improved productivity, enhanced liveability from the public works infrastructure being delivered and demonstrating greater leadership will ensure that the impacts of an economic crisis can be mitigated.

Key Words: Planning and Delivery, Public Works, Capital Works, Liveability, Productivity, Leadership, economic crisis, Europe