

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Council Membership of the Local Government Association</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>15 March 2012</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Strategic Director for Resources</b>		
<b>Lead Cabinet Member:</b>	<b>Leader of the Council</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Emma McDermott</b>	<b>Tel: 29-6805</b>
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<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Forward Plan No:</b>	
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 The Council affiliates, on a corporate basis to the Local Government Association (LGA).
- 1.2 In January 2011 Cabinet took the decision to give the 12 months notice, required by the LGA, to withdraw its membership.
- 1.3 Following budget planning for 2012/13 and 2013/14 membership of the LGA has since been reviewed in terms of value for money, in light of the year on year reduction in cost of the membership.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That Cabinet gives approval for the council to affiliate to the Local Government Association for 2012/13; rescinding its notice to withdraw.
- 2.2 That Cabinet instruct officers to write to the LGA, communicating the resolution at 2.1.
- 2.3 That Cabinet, also instructs officers to give notice of the Council's intention to withdraw its membership with effect from the renewal date in 2013; enabling the council to maintain sufficient flexibility to allow the council to annually review the value for money of the membership and respond accordingly.

**3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:**

- 3.1 The Local Government Association (LGA) was formed on 1 April 1997 and represents the local authorities of England and Wales. It works closely with member authorities to ensure that its efforts are targeted on the issues that

matter most. The LGA works with its members to deliver a shared vision of an independent and confident local government sector where local priorities drive public service improvement in every city, town and village and every councillor acts as a champion for their ward and the people they represent.

- 3.3 The LGA also represents fire authorities, police authorities, national park authorities and passenger transport authorities.
- 3.4 Through participation in the LGA and its policy development, campaign, lobbying, media and public relations work member councils have the opportunity to influence national Government policy developments and decisions.
- 3.5 Member councils can appoint representatives to LGA boards, panels, commissions and specialist advisory groups. This provides the council with opportunities to:
  - directly influence the sector's position on particular issues,
  - access Government ministers and officers in terms of influence
  - obtain early information/warning about impending changes.

Currently the council is involved in groups on welfare changes and settlement changes. This has allowed the council to model and plan for change, effectively, efficiently and well in advance.

- 3.6 The Council appoints 4 representatives to the LGA who attend the Annual Conference in June of each year. The current representatives are Councillors Matt Follett, Jason Kitcat, Geoffrey Theobald and Gill Mitchell.
- 3.7 The LGA also seeks appointments to the Urban Commission and Rural Commission. These too are made at the Annual Council Meeting. Councillors Matt Follett and Amy Kennedy are the council's representatives on the Urban Commission and Councillor Pete West is the council's representative on the Rural Commission.
- 3.8 In addition, through participation in LGA activities member councils have access to a network of other local authorities for sharing of information and best practice. This has proved extremely valuable in relation to concessionary fares.

### **3.9 Elected Member Support**

There are four political groups at the LGA – Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat and Independent – each supported by a Group Office.

Elected members benefit from the groups in the following ways:

- the provision of information, support and advice on national policy, legislation and sector developments including specialist training.
- profile in LGA campaigns, policy, media and public affairs work

### **3.10 General support**

The LGA provides regular briefings and alerts on national Government consultations, whitepapers and Bills. Teams across the council find the briefings useful and time saving – for example, finance, housing, health and policy. With the volume of changes being introduced by national Government the briefings are a valuable and cost effective resource for keeping up to date. As is access the LGA's specialist teams in particular its finance team.

Member councils also have access to:

- Research publications and reports
- EU funding tracker
- Approximately 80 free/subsidised events, conferences, seminars each year.
- Legal advice
- Media advice and support
- Free access to informal and formal meeting space in Local Government House in London

3.11 The subscription for 2010/11 was £64,820, for 2011/12 it was £55,585 and for 2012/13 the LGA is offering a year's subscription at £51,622.

#### **4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION**

4.1 Members of the Corporate Management Team were asked to identify which LGA services they used and whether their service areas have benefited from the LGA membership.

#### **5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

##### Financial Implications:

5.1 The subscription cost of £51,622 set by the LGA based on a type of authority and population includes a 2.5% prompt payment discount for payment in full by 30 June 2012. The subscription is equivalent to 20p per head of population in line with neighbouring authorities. Provision for the 2012/13 cost has been made within the Resources budget.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Anne Silley*

*Date: 06/02/12*

##### Legal Implications:

5.2 The decision as to whether the council affiliates to the LGA is an executive function. Due to the corporate nature of the decision, Cabinet is the appropriate executive body to consider and pass a resolution on the matter.

*Lawyer Consulted: Oliver Dixon*

*Date: 02/02/12*

##### Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 Through its lobbying and campaigning work LGA helps meet a diverse range of communities needs. In particular the city council has benefited recently from being involved in an LGA working group on the impact of benefit reforms, which are having a significant impact on residents in the city.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Through its lobbying and campaigning work the LGA promotes the role of local government in building sustainable communities and local councils ability to influence and prepare for changes to national policy and legislation on sustainability.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 Through its lobbying and campaigning work the LGA promotes the role of local government in tackling crime and disorder, and local councils ability to influence and prepare for changes to national policy and legislation on these issues.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 There are no risk implications and being a member of the LGA provides the council with opportunities to influence policy development, gain support from other organisations and forward plan for major national policy/legislative changes.

Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 Through its lobbying and campaigning work the LGA promotes the role of local government in promoting public health, and local councils ability to influence and prepare for changes to national policy and legislation around public health.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 Many different service areas across the council benefit from the services provided by the LGA and therefore withdrawal from the Association at this time, of reduced public funding and significant legislative change, will have implications corporately and for the city in particular, in being prepared and proactive about change.

**6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

- 6.1 The council has the choice not to affiliate to LGA, and it is proposed that a review of the membership benefits is undertaken annually to determine whether the subscription is value for money. As well as fees from local authorities the LGA receives a grant from central government. This has been substantially reduced and is having an impact of the services the Association can offer. Therefore it would be prudent to review the council's membership each year as changes to the LGA take effect.

**7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 The reason for the recommendations is to maintain sufficient flexibility to allow the council to annually review the value for money of membership of the LGA and respond accordingly.

