

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

3 NOVEMBER 2011

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Leader of the Council – Councillor Cook

FUTURE MEMBERSHIP OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

1. Summary

The Local Government Association (LGA) lobbies and campaigns for changes in policy, legislation and funding on behalf its member Councils. Whilst the membership costs have reduced since 2006/7 they are currently £42,870 for the financial year 2011/12. Withdrawal from this annual subscription requires a 12 month notice period. This report outlines the background to the LGA and the benefits currently provided through the annual subscription and recommends we serve the 12 months notice required, using this notice period to review the value for money, role, function and effectiveness of the LGA.

2. Recommendations

Members are recommended to:

1. Issue a 12 month notice to the LGA to withdraw subscription.
2. Request Executive Scrutiny be asked to consider including a Task and Finish review of the LGA benefits as part of the Scrutiny Work Programme.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

1. A decision is required before April 2012 to determine if we are to serve 12 months notice, otherwise a further 24 months subscription will be required.
2. A thorough examination and understanding of the services currently received from the LGA and what would cease should we decide to withdraw our subscription, will better inform a decision on value for money and effectiveness of our LGA subscription.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to

prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.

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SUMMARY

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:

1. Issue a 12 month notice to the LGA to withdraw subscription.
2. Request Executive Scrutiny be asked to consider including a Task and Finish review of the LGA benefits as part of the Scrutiny Work Programme.

BACKGROUND

3. In 1997, local government created the Local Government Association (LGA) to be its voice in the national arena. The LGA is based in Westminster and lobbies and campaigns for changes in policy, legislation and funding on behalf of its member councils. It works closely with its members to target its efforts to the issues which matter most to them.
4. The LGA is a voluntary membership body; its members include county councils, metropolitan district councils, English unitary authorities, London boroughs and shire district councils, along with fire authorities, police authorities, national park authorities and passenger transport authorities. There are 419 member authorities, of which 54 are English unitary authorities and 198 are shire district councils. The 22 Welsh unitary authorities are in corporate membership through the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) which retains full autonomy in dealing with Welsh affairs.
5. The LGA is part of the wider Local Government Group that is made up of the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA); Local Government Employers (LGE); Local Authority Coordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS); Local Partnerships; and the Local Government Leadership Centre.
6. Councillor Sir Merrick Cockerill (Conservative Kensington and Chelsea) is the chairman of the LGA, who acts as an ambassador for local government and an advocate for elected members

and their councils. John Ransford is currently the Chief Executive of the LGA but is about to be replaced by Carolyn Downs, former chief Executive of Shropshire County Council.

LGA MEMBERSHIP

7. The LGA membership offers a number of resources, discounts and opportunities as part of the membership package. To inform a decision about our future membership, it is suggested that a Task and Finish Review, as part of the Scrutiny Work Programme, possibly through CASSI, consider the benefits, value for money, role and function of the LGA.
8. Member councils receive allocated places on the General Assembly of the LGA, which meets annually in July prior to the annual conference. There are also opportunities for councillors and officers to join one of the Association's task groups or advisory networks and to join one of the LGA's Special Interest Groups. Councillors may be nominated to join a UK-wide local government delegation to lobby at the EU and other international institutions or to take a UK seat on one of the EU's formal consultative bodies to sit on one of the Association's boards, panels or commissions.
9. The LGA offers advice, support and information for councillors, including regular e-mail bulletins, via the political group offices. A LGA weekly news magazine is delivered for free, direct to the homes of all councillors and first online is e-mailed at the beginning of the week providing a weekly preview of the main events of the forthcoming week and is sent to all leaders and chief executives.
10. A daily press cuttings service summarising the major local government stories is e-mailed to registered users by 10.00am each morning. And the LG alerts provide a weekly information service which is e-mailed directly to Chief Executives.
11. LGA members can sign up for a research and analysis bulletin summarising the outcomes of any research studies and analysis which has been undertaken. The members area of the LGA website gives access to all briefings, consultations, research studies, publications, legal advice and parliamentary, pre-election and public affairs briefings.
12. There is a direct phone and e-mail information service via LGConnect Support. The LGA provides advice to councils on dealing with the media through the LGA media office, with the opportunity to be highlighted in the LGA's national media campaigns or responses to emerging stories.
13. Member authorities receive a 36% discount on all one day full price events and 20% off residential events.
14. Members are given the opportunity to join PANet – the public affairs network, which provides parliamentary monitoring and intelligence service through an email alerting service and face-to-face briefings
15. Members are free to use of facilities at Local Government House (in Westminster) including an informal "touch down" space for individual councillors or officers, use of the councillors' business centre and bookable LGA meeting rooms by arrangement.
16. The LGA is currently developing a package of support on Self Sector Regulation. This would be available for all member councils as part of the annual subscription.
17. To withdraw from the LGA, members are required to give a years notice however it is anticipated that members can retract their withdrawal in the notice period.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial

18. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has paid fees of £42,870.00 for the current year's membership (2011/12) this was a reduction from the previous year 2010/11. The fees which have been paid in previous years are listed below:

2006/7	£64,838.80
2007/8	£64,464.09
2008/9	£54,285.64
2009/10	£54,285.64
2010/11	£51,880.00

Legal

19. There are no legal implications arising as a direct result from this report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

20. This report is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

21. This report is not subject to Equality Impact Assessment as it makes no proposals for service development or policy change.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

22. There are no Sustainable Community Strategy implications arising as a direct result from this report.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

23. No consultation has taken place on this report.

**Contact Officer: Lesley King, Head of Policy, Improvement and Engagement
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Background Papers

None

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

None

Property

This report has no implications for the Council's Capital Programme and Asset Management Plan.