

Corporate and Social Inclusion Select Committee

Review of Membership to Outside Bodies

ASSOCIATION OF NORTH EAST COUNCILS
SPEAKING FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE REGION



apse Association for Public Service Excellence



Every child deserves a family



6 September 2012

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Committee thank the following contributors to this review:

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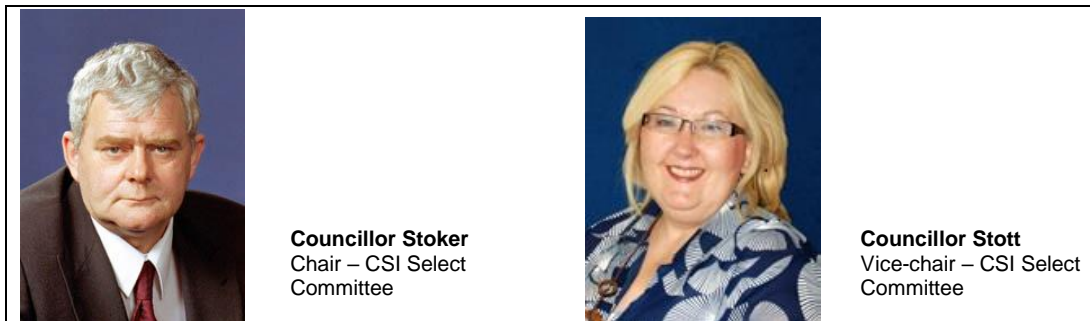
Foreword

Stockton Council's Executive Committee, having been requested by Cabinet to investigate the Council's continued membership of the Local Government Association, asked that the CSI Select Committee undertake a quick review. It quickly became apparent that to single out one organisation amongst many that the Council subscribe to would not be the best use of the Committee's resources so alternative criteria was used when scoping this review which resulted in the six organisations focused on in this report.

Even this proved inadequate when considering the amount of Council spend on memberships, journals, portals, and licences which is why we recommend even further work to ensure the Council operates with financial acumen. Having completed three years of reviews primarily focused on achieving value for money for council services it was incumbent on the Committee to apply the same scrutiny to this topic.

Stockton Council is not alone in this task as other councils have preceded us in reviewing its arrangements especially for the LGA some going further than we recommend having withdrawn completely from the LGA. What can also be seen is that this position tends to be overturned so continuation of the Council's current course of action is prudent and advantageous having already secured a reduction in membership costs.

We are grateful to the councillors and officers who have provided us with evidence of the bodies being reviewed, enough to arrive at the recommendations detailed in this report. This is never the end of the process as we will monitor the resulting actions until satisfied that everything that can be achieved, has been achieved.



Original Brief

Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address? Organisational and Operational Effectiveness – Enhance Local Democracy
What are the main issues? The Council has completed a three-year programme of efficiency saving reviews in which the select committees contributed by examining a range of services. This review contributes by examining the overall spend on Council membership to outside bodies as well as determining value for money.
The Thematic Select Committee's overall aim / objectives in doing this work is: Determining the level of use of outside bodies Determining value for money Determining level of representation for SBC (especially at national level)
The possible outputs/outcomes are: A better understanding of the benefits and added value that being a member of outside bodies provides. Possible financial savings (but must be measured against time/costs of getting equivalent information in-house) Possibility of joint working/shared information with other local authorities

Key Responsibilities

Chair / Member Sponsor	Councillor Mick Stoker
Scrutiny Officer	Graham Birtle, Scrutiny Officer
Link Officer	Kate Fulton, Business Support and Improvement Manager
Finance Officer	Garry Cummings, Head of Finance and Assets

1.0 Executive Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 A request was made to Stockton Council's Executive Scrutiny to consider including a Task and Finish review of the LGA benefits as part of the Scrutiny Work Programme. The full Corporate and Social Inclusion Select Committee undertook this task looking also at other outside bodies to which the Council subscribes.
- 1.2 As well as examining the financial element of membership the Committee was able to learn from officers and Members with direct involvement of the outside bodies perceived strengths and weaknesses of such membership to determine a view for the Council's continued involvement.
- 1.3 Having considered the evidence the Committee recommend that:
 - R1 Stockton Council maintain its membership to the six outside bodies scoped in this review
 - R2 Stockton Council continue to use the system of a rolling notice for membership to the LGA and that the Chief Executive write informing the LGA annually
 - R3 Specific criteria is developed and applied to determine the membership of all outside bodies and professional organisations
 - R4 Negotiations with ANEC are undertaken to address value for money concerns of the Committee
 - R5 A review of the management and effectiveness of NEPO activity is pursued by appropriate officers of this Council
 - R6 Improvement to the circulation and sharing of information and learning from membership to outside bodies is developed utilising all available resources such as the Council's Intranet

2.0 Evidence and Findings

Introduction

- 2.1 Cabinet agreed on 3rd November 2011 (see Cabinet report at appendix 1) to:
 - Issue a 12 month notice to the LGA to withdraw subscription.
 - Request Executive Scrutiny be asked to consider including a Task and Finish review of the LGA benefits as part of the Scrutiny Work Programme.
- 2.2 Notice to withdraw the LGA subscription was given on 20 December 2011 (see appendix 2). Stockton Council is not alone in taking this approach. On 5 May 2011 LocalGov.co.uk (the web site of the Municipal Journal and Local Government News) reported that Europe's largest local authority, Birmingham City Council, was now among a group of local authorities on notice to quit the Local Government Association in 2012.
- 2.3 Five London boroughs had also handed in their notice which would allow them to leave the LGA in 2012. However, many councils were now using a system of rolling over their notice to keep their options open on spending commitments for the future.
- 2.4 Councils on notice: Amber Valley; Barnet; Bassetlaw; Birmingham City; Brighton and Hove; Broxtowe; Cotswold; Elmbridge; Greenwich; Kingston Upon Thames; Richmond; Rochford; Rossendale; Rutland; Sefton; Southampton; Sutton; Test Valley; West Lancashire; and West Sussex.
- 2.5 Councils no longer in the LGA: Bromley; Doncaster; King's Lynn and West Norfolk; North Somerset; Torridge; Slough; and Windsor and Maidenhead.
- 2.6 The scope of this short review was subsequently widened to encompass membership to other outside bodies. Having completed a three-year programme of efficiency saving reviews this review, although not part of the EIT (Efficiency, Innovation, Transformation) process, contributes by examining the overall spend on Council membership to outside bodies as well as determining value for money.
- 2.7 The Council pays membership fees and subscriptions to a range of organisations on an annual basis which was reviewed to determine which organisations should fall within the scope of this review. The criteria that needed to be met:
 - An external organisation / body
 - Requires membership of the organisation (i.e. excludes subscriptions to journals)
 - Membership has exceeded 2 consecutive years.
 - Total spend per annum exceeds £3000
- 2.8 Evidence was taken and collated from web sites, existing reports / materials, and a series of interviews with officers and Members who utilise the organisations or are Council representatives to inform a value for money exercise.

- 2.9 To determine value for money and the benefits of membership specifically for Stockton Council for each of the organisations identified in the scope of this review work was undertaken to identify:
- What services they provide and to what level
 - What benefits individuals, the whole organisation, Tees Valley and where appropriate any regional benefits from membership.
 - How information or knowledge is shared across our organisation.
 - A breakdown of costs
 - Future opportunities for joint membership
 - Future opportunities for electronic means of sharing information e.g. teleconferencing, webinars etc.
 - Alternative means of receiving the same or similar service / information and associated costs
- 2.10 Reviewed against the criteria the following bodies were scoped within this review – Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE); British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF); North East Purchasing Organisation (NEPO); North East Regional Employers Organisation (NEREO); Association of North East Councils (ANEC); and Local Government Association (LGA).

Services and Benefits

- 2.11 **Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE)**
 APSE is a not for profit local government body. It provides a support service and specialises in local authority front line services. (Membership Fees 2011/12 - £3,159)
- 2.12 Services include:-
- Briefings
 - Networking
 - Advisory groups
 - Presentations from leading speakers throughout the UK
 - Principal Advisor support and advice
 - Access to geographic groups covering, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Northern, Central, Southern and South West of England
 - Regular copies of Direct News, APSE's own publication
 - A CD containing all APSE briefings, press releases and email query responses
 - Access to the APSE website
 - Press and media releases and briefings on request
- 2.13 APSE members also receive preferential rates on the following services:-
- Seminars and events at special membership rates on the latest topics
 - Best value consultancy
 - Interim solutions which offers interim management support to local authorities
 - Lifelong learning and development
 - Performance networks benchmarking
 - Research and publications

- 2.14 **British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF)**
Main activities and areas of work included: Family finding, Advice, consultancy, conferences, publications, training, campaigning. (Membership Fees 2011/12 - £3,316)
- 2.15 Services include:
- Publications
- Six mailings a year.
 - Two or more copies (depending on agency size) of each edition of the peer-reviewed quarterly journal Adoption & Fostering.
 - Two or more copies of four new books, good practice guides or training materials, essential reading for professionals and carers.
 - Discount prices on family placement forms
 - Policy statements, practice & advice notes.
 - BAAF News, with developments in fostering and adoption, six times a year.
 - Regular email bulletins with details of new publications, research, legislation and policy developments.
 - Regular information about publishing and training activities.
- 2.16 Training, Information and Advice
- Expert training tailored to the agency's needs, with substantial discounts.
 - Expert information and advice.
 - Discounts on our frequent national and regional seminars, workshops, symposia and conferences.
 - Access to the resources in the members' area of BAAF's website.
 - A professional consultancy service, with substantial discounts.
 - Expert advice on child placement dilemmas.
- 2.17 Linking Services
- Receive copies of the monthly Be My Parent newspaper, featuring profiles of children in need of new adoptive or permanent foster families.
 - Substantial discounts on featuring children's profiles in Be My Parent.
 - Free access for all member organisations, including independent fostering agencies and voluntary adoption agencies to Be My Parent online.
 - Free space on our web site to promote adoption and fostering services.
 - A referral management service, including consultation with a regional child placement expert.
 - Independent members of adoption and fostering panels.
 - National Adoption Week.
- 2.18 Opportunities to be involved
- Membership to Health, Legal and Research Groups for professional advisers and relevant staff, providing networking opportunities and support.
 - A national and regional voice, to influence public policy development and help promote a positive understanding of adoption and fostering.
- 2.19 **North East Purchasing Organisation (NEPO)**
NEPO coordinates the procurement needs of North East local authorities and looks to create savings through combining contracts where possible and to standardise tendering procedures to simplify the process particularly for local

suppliers and small and medium enterprises. (Membership Fees 2011/12 - £37,843)

2.20 **North East Regional Employers Organisation (NEREO)**

NEREO represents the 12 local authorities in the North East of England in Human Resource Management, Management Practice, and Employee Relations. (Membership Fees 2011/12 - £15,680)

2.21 Services include:

- advice on all workforce matters, including recruitment and selection, Employee relations, conditions of service, employment legislation, equal opportunities, health and safety and all training and development matters
- Recruitment and Selection
- Learning and Development
- Job Evaluation
- Discipline and Grievance
- Other Consultancy Services
- Learning opportunities for Elected Members.
- Support in-house training programmes.
- Assess authorities for the National Member Charter and Charter Plus Awards.
- Member Development Officers' Network to share best practice across the region

2.22 **Association of North East Councils (ANEC)**

ANEC represents the interests of local authorities and the communities they serve in the North East. This includes aspects such as the level of funding coming to the region, transport, the environment, health, tourism, housing or economic development. It makes the case on behalf of the region to Government and other important decision-makers, regionally, nationally and internationally. (Membership Fees 2011/12 - £64,700)

2.23 Services include:

- Develop, shape and implement policy
- Lobby and make effective representation
- Build and strengthen relationships with opinion formers and decision-makers at every level
- Develop a range of membership services which will add value
- Facilitate the delivery of the local government improvement agenda in the North East
- Make a positive and effective contribution to regional leadership and governance
- Encourage, support, share and communicate best practice in local government
- Demonstrate how local government represents the interest of communities
- Develop the image, perception and reputation of local government

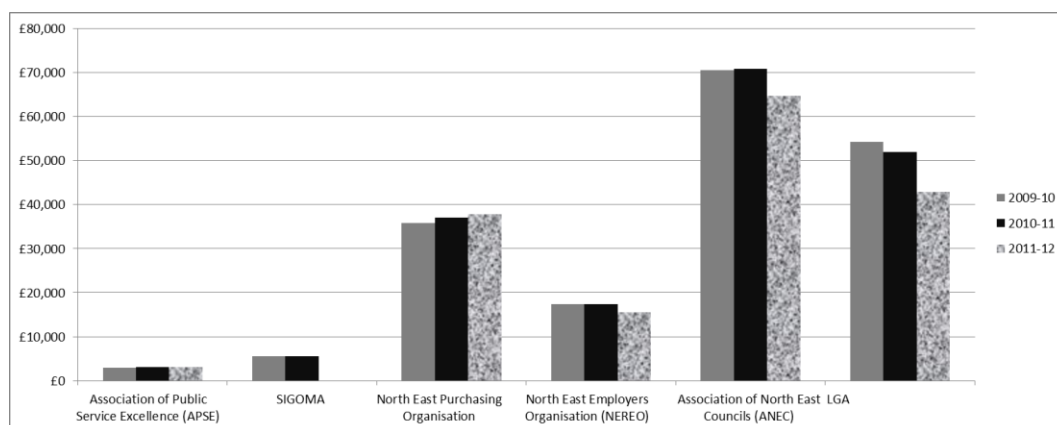
2.24 **Local Government Association (LGA)**

The LGA is a voluntary lobbying organisation representing local government in England and Wales. The LGA seeks to promote better local government; it maintains communication between officers in different local authorities to

develop best practice. It also represents the interests of local government to national government and seeks to improve the image and reputation of local government. (Membership Fees 2011/12 - £42,871 (£1,099 early payment discount 11-12))

Membership Costs – 3 Year Trend

2.25 The table below provides a representation of the amounts paid in each of the last three years.



2.26 As can be seen three organisations have reduced their fees this year and SIGOMA is free during 2011-12. As a result the total spend has reduced from £186,407 in 2009-10 to £164,253 (-12%) for 2011-12.

Consultation

2.27 In an attempt to know more about the reasons for either leaving the LGA, or being on notice to quit, known councils were contacted to gather more information. The following provides some limited information as few were able to supply council decision records.

- Torridge District Council voted on 17 January 2011 to rejoin the LGA following information provided by their Solicitor identifying benefits for membership.
- Bromley LBC withdrew its membership of the Local Government Association with effect from 31st March 2003.
- Doncaster Council's Mayor was not against the idea of an organisation representing the interests of local government at national level but thought that the LGA was inefficient and carrying inappropriate costs. On 23 March 2011 the Cabinet took the option to:
 - Respond to the letter from the Chief Executive of the LGA emphasising the Mayor's views on the organisation's inefficiencies and waste but note that reforms are underway.
 - Maintain the notice of intended withdrawal whilst watching and assessing the appropriateness and impact of the reforms.
 - Commit to a further stocktake in 6 months.
 - Make the LGA subscription payment for 2011/12.
 - Seek to make an equivalent saving from the Local Government Yorkshire and Humber (LGYH) fee

The reason given for Doncaster's decision was that it was considered an appropriate way forward in the context of the Mayor's concerns, and retained an ability to withdraw from the LGA without further notice if the promised further reforms of its operation were not delivered satisfactorily.

- 2.28 A number of consultation exercises were also undertaken to determine the views of Members and officers regarding the membership to outside bodies. A short questionnaire was devised for, and agreed by, the Committee to provide feedback from those Members appointed by the Council to represent SBC at an outside body. Responses were also sought from senior officers with direct dealings with the outside bodies being considered for this review.
- 2.29 A Task & Finish Group established by the Executive Scrutiny Committee carried out a review of Member involvement in external organisations in December 2010. Members were subsequently invited to consider their nomination to such bodies for a four year period and were formally appointed to them by Council and Cabinet in April/May 2011.
- 2.30 One of the agreed actions arising from the review was that, after their first year of appointment, all Members would be invited to provide feedback on the external organisation(s) they are involved in. This would help identify whether Members needed any further support, how valued they considered their involvement to be, and whether they had identified any information from or about the organisation that they would wish to share with other Members, to help raise awareness of each external organisation's activities.
- 2.31 Their responses have also been utilised here to give further perspective from the remainder of councillors not appointed to outside bodies by the Council.
- 2.32 A summary of findings showed:
- Information/ learning from the memberships is not widely circulated or shared.
 - Many of the organizations have a lobbying role which is valued, however the impact to drive change is not well known or understood.
 - Discounts for members attending conferences – often not widely utilised because of the focus of London for conferences/ events. Regional organizations were better at this e.g. NEREO, NEPO, ANEC.
 - Through the EIT and other value for money exercises, duplication of information received through these and other organizations has in some cases already been eliminated.
 - Capacity to replicate the information from some organizations, will pose a problem.
 - Potential for reputation, relationships regionally and collaborative working to be affected by the outcomes of this review.
 - Some memberships deliver cost savings. For example, NE recruitment portal is free to members and saves SBC money, Self-Sector regulation/ peer review challenge comes free with membership.
- 2.33 More detailed responses from councillors and officers for the outside bodies included in the scope of the review were:

2.34 **BAAF**

- The organisation is held in high regard and provides a model of good practice for local authorities.
- Advice, guidance, practices and standards act as a good quality kite mark e.g. in court.
- BAAF paperwork and forms are used in adoption and fostering procedures – the membership gives significant discount on procuring the necessary paperwork.
- Discounted rates on national and tailored events.
- Concern was expressed that the offer/ package from BAAF is not replicated elsewhere.

2.35 **NEPO**

- Delivered £160,000 worth of savings in 2011/12.
- Management arrangements have recently changed and the organisation is in a transitional period
- SBC representation on NEPO's board/ committees.
- SBC has realised large savings through NEPO tenders, for example the Lyreco stationary contract.
- Concern was expressed over the efficiency of the organisation however 2012/13 will be a key year where savings will be expected.
- The relationship SBC has with the other local authorities who are part of NEPO may be damaged if SBC was to withdraw.
- An officer led organisation chaired by someone with little experience of LA Members which can create tension.
- Projected savings aren't easily recognised.
- Issues about LA rebates – need to be applied for which adds to running costs
- NE schools procure from Yorkshire Procurement Organisation. Thought to be better than NEPO?
- What could a Tees Valley sub-regional group achieve?

2.36 **NEREO**

- Key negotiator for national pay terms and conditions.
- Provides useful information, best practice guidance for example recently with the public health changes, bulletins, training courses.
- The North East Recruitment Portal is free to advertise jobs to members of NEREO.
- Future plans include that NEREO will look into an electronic bulk CRB contract for the region.
- SBC representation on NEREO, officers and member.
- NEREO is useful as a sounding board to discuss preferred options as a region.

2.37 **LGA**

- Circulation of useful information including on the day briefings, alerts, circulars, research.
- Future use of the LGA's offer for sector self-regulation arrangements, which is expected to be available at a reduced cost for LGA members.

- Provides a national voice for local government
- Unable to determine how effective it is at lobbying government and whether it is southern centric

2.38 **ANEC**

- SBC representation on the board (Member).
- Contribution to regional campaigns such as Fresh North East
- Task and finish group work
- Provides a regional voice for the local authorities and useful for lobbying.
- Provides financial modeling on the impact of Government changes on Stockton and the Tees Valley for example the Budget – ANEC assessed the impact.
- Need ANEC or something like it to give the region representation at a national level.

2.39 **APSE**

- Performance networks and the provision of benchmarking information are useful.
- Offer a good set of training, workshops and network clubs.
- SBC involvement in APSE events and awards.

2.40 A few issues were raised. The London/South-East location of national outside bodies, it was thought, may not fully understand or represent the needs of SBC or the North-East. As such Members welcomed regional bodies that could provide additional emphasis for the needs of this region.

2.41 Members were somewhat frustrated at the way in which some bodies were organised which was thought to limit their effectiveness. Even with their involvement it was difficult to change the organisation.

Other Outside Bodies

2.42 Members did enquire about the proportion of the budget for membership to the highest cost outside bodies in relation to the remainder of the budget heading. Although £3,000 was used to determine what was within the scope of this review the cumulative totals of lower cost membership and supporting elements of membership could be significant. For example:

- Memberships - £76,180.26
There were approximately 81 membership fees paid in 2011/12. The fees ranged between £75 and £2800.
- Journals/ magazines/newspapers- £12,960.22
There were approximately 35 subscriptions to journals, magazines and newspapers paid in 2011/12.
- Portals - £28,146.49
Subscriptions to approximately 13 Portals allowed SBC to send information securely and access benchmarking information and national statistics.
- Licenses £ 18,736
The authority paid a license fee to some organizations to enable access to use their products. Approximately 10 different licenses were purchased.
- Professional body membership - £1,933.17

SWOT Analysis

2.43 A SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunities, threats) analysis was used to assist the Committee's approach to recommendations from the evidence provided for this review.

<p>Strengths</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Saves Time and Money Work carried out by outside body saving officer time and money 2. Gives SBC a profile SBC profile promoted to other LAs and others nationally or regionally 3. Information Outside bodies work to produce relevant information 4. Quality Assurance Best standards of practice achieved 5. Level Of Expertise OB provides a level of expertise and knowledge not available in LA 6. Timeliness Information provided more promptly 7. Benchmarking Provides VFM benchmarking opportunities monitoring performance, self-regulation 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Limited Expertise Staff do not have access to full information 2. Loss of information Would lose access to information available to LAs
<p>Opportunities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More Informed Decision Making Information ensures best decision for SBC 2. Raise SBC profile Able to promote SBC when developing unique approaches 3. Training Provide training / development opportunities for staff 4. Value For Money Opportunity to share more information 5. Improved Information Sharing Better awareness and dissemination of information and developing an organisational culture for sharing 	<p>Threats</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lose Influence No longer have negotiation input 2. Reduce outside bodies effectiveness By not supporting outside bodies, especially at local or regional level could weaken bargaining / negotiating position 3. Relationships Damage to relationships with other LAs 4. Speed Of Change Regional consensus may limit the progress made and/or the outcome for SBC 5. Additional Charges SBC will incur additional costs for non-membership

2.44 With recognition of the strengths and opportunities that are afforded with membership to outside bodies and awareness of the weaknesses and threats then the following recommendations are made.

3.0 Recommendations

3.1 Having considered the evidence including the views of officers and Members with direct involvement of the outside bodies specifically examined during this review the Committee recommend that:

R1 Stockton Council maintain its membership to the six outside bodies scoped in this review

3.2 The action taken by Stockton Council to serve notice on the LGA thereby allowing termination of membership was supported by the Committee but it was felt that this was the limit of the action required at this time. The Committee was of the opinion that such action, also taken by other local authorities, had resulted in the LGA now identifying the value for money expected from its services whilst also delivering a reduction of 28.4 per cent in subscription fees since 2009. The Committee therefore recommend that:

R2 Stockton Council continue to use the system of a rolling notice for membership to the LGA and that the Chief Executive write informing the LGA annually

3.3 The Committee having recognised the cost to the Council of all outside body memberships, subscriptions to journals, magazines and newspapers, portals, licenses, and professional body memberships believes greater consideration should be given to their continuation. The Committee recommend that:

R3 Specific criteria is developed and applied to determine the continued membership of all outside bodies and professional organisations

3.4 A criticism levelled at the LGA was one of a perceived south east local authority focus especially in national negotiations and location for conferences and training. ANEC, it was thought, helps to rebalance that perceived focus. However, with membership fees at a third more than the LGA the Committee questioned the cost of an organisation undertaking a similar role to that offered by the LGA. The Committee recommend that:

R4 Negotiations with ANEC are undertaken to address value for money concerns of the Committee

3.5 Issues that had been raised during the consultation with officers and Members regarding NEPO were discussed by the Committee during its consideration of recommendations. Members were informed that through monitoring and governance arrangements the outcomes from NEPO were previously not being effectively delivered and that a revised organisational structure was put in place. Stockton Council Members and key officers are part of the governance arrangements involved in continuing to monitor and influence NEPO's progress and future service delivery model. The Committee recommend that:

R5 A review of the management and effectiveness of NEPO activity is pursued by appropriate officers of this Council.

3.6 The Committee believes a wealth of information is available through the variety and breadth of outside bodies but that this might not be easily accessible for everyone in the authority. To ensure value for money the sharing of information, ultimately purchased, should be shared widely and appropriately. The Committee recommend that:

R6 Improvement to the circulation and sharing of information and learning from membership to outside bodies is developed utilising all available resources such as the Council's Intranet.

4.0 Conclusion

4.1 Following Stockton Councils three year Efficiency, Improvement and Transformation (EIT) programme of reviews this short review has taken the EIT principles to identify how to get value for money for the Council as members of outside bodies.

4.2 The Committee is indebted to the officers and Members who provided evidence for the Committee to arrive at the recommendations in this report.

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APPENDIX 1

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

3 NOVEMBER 2011

REPORT OF CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CABINET DECISION

FUTURE MEMBERSHIP OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

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.

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
Telephone No. 01642 527004, Email Address: lesley.king@stockton.gov.uk**

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.

APPENDIX 2

Carolyn Downs
Chief Executive
LGA
Local Government House, Smith Square
London
SW1P 3HZ

20 December 2011

Dear Carolyn

LGA Subscription 2012/13

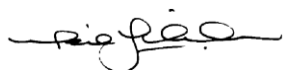
Further to your correspondence of 8 December 2011, I write to notify you we are serving the required 12 months' notice to terminate our LGA Subscription with effect from 1 April 2013.

This is following a Cabinet decision made on 3 November 2011, where Cabinet resolved that:

- The Council issues a 12 month notice to the LGA to withdraw our subscription.

I trust that receipt of this request will be acknowledged. Should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Neil Schneider
Chief Executive