



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Northern Ireland Local Government Association - Update
Date:	Friday, 18th April, 2008
Reporting Officer:	Gerry Millar, Director of Improvement
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1.0	<u>Relevant background information</u>
1.1	Members will be aware of the ongoing discussions within the Committee over recent months with regard to the Council's relationship with and engagement within the Northern Ireland Local Government Association and the concerns of Members in terms of the level of capacity within the Association, the subscription contributions sought from the Council, the value for money received and the lack of representation on NILGA's Executive Committee.
1.2	Members will recall that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 25 th January, 2008, had agreed that representatives of the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) be requested to meet with an all party deputation consisting of the Chairman of the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and Party Group Leaders to discuss the series of issues previously raised by Members with regard to the Council's continued engagement and funding of NILGA and explore the type of changes necessary in order to enable NILGA to represent and promote effectively the views and interests of the local government sector.
2.0	<u>KEY ISSUES</u>
2.1	Members will note that the Council is currently withholding 50% (£42,110) of its annual subscription to NILGA for the period 2007/2008 with payment only being made on the basis of NILGA clearly demonstrating that it has taken adequate actions to address the concerns previously raised by the Council.
2.2	Furthermore, NILGA has recently written to the Council proposing a 14.6% increase in its annual subscription income from Councils which would increase from £369.5K to £423.5K.
2.3	In terms of Belfast, the proposed subscription contribution for the period 2008/2009 is £104,324. This equates to 25% of NILGA's total subscription income and an 11% increase on the Council's subscription charge for the previous year.
2.4	Officers have been in discussions with NILGA officials over recent months to examine the concerns and issues raised by Members with the view to NILGA taking proactive steps to addressing them.
2.5	Whilst NILGA has made some progress in the majority of areas identified by the Council for improvement, the main outstanding issues are the reconfiguration of its governance arrangements, the representation of Belfast City Council on the Association and the annual subscription charges.
2.6	Members will note that a productive and positive meeting had taken place on 3 rd April between NILGA Office Bearers and an All-Party deputation from the Council. The two key issues discussed included:- <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Representation - the current process for nominating Members to NILGA's Executive (via a Party Nominating Officer) and the Council's current lack of representation on the Executive2. Value for money - what added benefit does the Council get for the contribution it makes to NILGA?

- 2.6 In terms of next steps, it was agreed that NILGA, in liaison with Council officials, would prepare a paper considering possible interim arrangements, leading up to reconfiguration of the Local Government sector resulting from the RPA, which would enable greater Council representation on the Executive Board of NILGA (i.e. representation could be based on population catchments which would mean that the Council would be given 15% of places on NILGA's Executive as apposed to 11% as is the current case). It was agreed also that NILGA would prepare a paper outlining the added value provided by NILGA to the Council for its substantial contribution to the association.
- 2.7 Whilst accepting that the scheduling of NILGA meetings, in some instances, conflicts with Council Committee meetings and recognising the time pressures placed upon elected Members, concern had been raised by NILGA's Office Bearers regarding the current levels of engagement and attendance of the Council's representatives on NILGA and the need for further consideration to be given to how this could be addressed.
- 2.8 A more detailed report addressing the aforementioned issues will be brought to the Committee for consideration at its meeting in May, 2008.

3.0 Resource Implications

Financial and Human Resources

There are no Financial or Human Resource implications contained within this report.

4.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to note the contents of this report and, in particular, that a further detailed report will be brought to the Committee in May, 2008.