



Belfast City Council

Report to: Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject: Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA)
Date: Friday, 25th January, 2008
Reporting Officer: Gerry Millar
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1.0 Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 Members will recall that the Committee, at its meeting on 15 June 2007, had agreed that it would withhold its annual subscription to NILGA of £94,169 until NILGA had responded to the concerns the Council had raised at its meeting on 27 April 2007. Copy of the letter the Council sent setting out their concerns, dated 4 May 2007, is attached as **Appendix 1**.
- 1.2 Officers have engaged with NILGA over recent months to examine those concerns and the issues raised by the Members.
- 1.3 NILGA's ability to respond to some of the concerns was dependent upon funding being made available from the Department of the Environment to allow it to build its capacity. An announcement was made by the Minister for the Department of the Environment on 10 January 2008 agreeing a £2m funding package over a 3 year period for NILGA which will permit resources to be dedicated to addressing many of the concerns raised by the Council.
- 1.4 In addition it should be recognized that with the imminent announcement on the Review of Public Administration the Minister has indicated that much of the modernization and engagement work with local government as a sector will be addressed through NILGA.

2.0 Key Issues

- 2.1 NILGA has now submitted a formal response dated 14 January 2008 to the Council outlining how it intends to address its concerns. Local government has made significant progress in the majority of areas identified by the Council for improvement with the main outstanding issue being the reconfiguration of its governance arrangements and representation of Belfast City Council on NILGA.
- 2.2 NILGA has undertaken an analysis of the various options (refer to Annex A of **Appendix 2**) available regarding its representational arrangements and has concluded that the current arrangements which are based on '**Political Proportionality**' using the d'Hondt formula ensures that NILGA is truly representative of the local government sector and is based on best practice applied by the Local Government Association in Great Britain.
- 2.3 In applying this model, NILGA would argue that Belfast City Council is currently proportionately represented on the following basis:
 - BCC has 51 members (8.7% of the 582 members in Northern Ireland)
 - BCC has 17 members on NILGA (11% of the 152)
 - BCC has 3 members on the NILGA Executive (11% of the 28%)
- 2.4 Whilst NILGA has indicated that it remains committed and open to considering any suggestions to enhance the effectiveness of its governance system, it believes that the current arrangements are appropriate within the context of the uncertainties around the Review of Public Administration and Local Government Modernisation processes. NILGA welcomes further discussions with Belfast City Council as we move forward.

2.5 Strategic Plan 2008-2011 and Framework for Engagement with Constituent Councils

2.5.1 Working with officials from Belfast City Council, NILGA has prepared a draft ‘**Strategic Plan 2008-2011**’ and ‘**Framework for Engagement with Constituent Councils**’ (copies of which are attached at **Appendix 3**). Whilst both documents have been issued to Councils for consultation up until 28th March, NILGA has indicated that this is the start of a process of dialogue and discussion with its member Councils to refine and agree the future priorities and direction of travel for the Association.

2.6.2 NILGA are intending to visit each Council in the coming weeks to discuss, in detail, both its draft Strategic Plan 2008-2011 and Framework for Engagement.

2.7 NILGA’s Strategic Plan 2008-2011

2.7.1 Within the draft Strategic Plan 2008-2011, NILGA has defined their role as:

“to be the voice of strong, democratic local government and the champion of improved services to citizens”

NILGA seek:

“to work with councils and other stakeholders to champion and support the development of work class local government system in Northern Ireland which works in partnership with others to serve citizens”

NILGA have set out a series of activities which will support the delivery of the following six strategic themes:

1. Building Strong relationships
2. Providing effective and innovative communication across the sector and with stakeholders
3. Influencing government to support local government development
4. Facilitating and leading local government modernisation
5. Providing effective and efficient services to local government
6. Providing effective internal management systems and procedures

2.8 NILGA’s Framework for Engagement with Constituent Councils

2.8.1 NILGA are currently working on the development of a new Engagement Strategy which it intends to use as the basis of a formal service level agreement with Belfast and its other constituent Councils. The draft Framework of Engagement document sets out:

- The Vision, Mission and Objectives
- Business Planning Cycle and Subscription Rates
- Membership, Roles and Responsibilities
- Consultation Protocols
- Working with Partner Organisations

2.8.2 It is intended that a detailed response to both documents will be submitted to a future meeting of the Council’s Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for the consideration of Members.

2.9 Annual subscription contribution to NILGA

Based on the current direction of discussion and the draft frameworks which have been developed by NILGA which seek to address the concerns raised by the Council regarding its ongoing relationship with the Association, **Members are asked to consider whether it wishes to pay the Council’s outstanding annual subscription of £94,169 for the period 2007/2008.**

3.0 Resource Implications

3.1 Annual NILGA subscription fee of £94,169.

4.0 Recommendations

The Committee are asked to:

- (i) Indicate whether it wishes to make payment of the Council's outstanding annual NILGA subscription fee of £94,169; and
- (ii) in the context of the decisions emerging from the Review of Public Administration agree to consider NILGA's draft Strategic Plan 2008-11 and Framework for Engagement at a subsequent meeting of the Committee.

5.0 Documents Attached

Appendix 1 Correspondence from Belfast City Council to NILGA

Appendix 2 NILGA's response to the concerns/issues raised by the Council

NILGA's draft:

- Appendix 3**
- Strategic Plan 2008-2011
 - Framework for Engagement with Constituent Councils

