



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Northern Ireland Local Government Association
Date:	Friday, 19 th September, 2008
Reporting Officer:	Peter McNaney, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Gerry Millar (ext 6217)

1.0	<u>Relevant background information</u>
1.1	Members will be aware of the ongoing discussions 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.
1.2	On 3 rd April 2008, an all-party deputation consisting of the Chairman of the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and Party Group Leaders meet with NILGA representatives to discuss the Council's concerns in more detail.
1.3	Whilst it was generally agreed that NILGA had made some progress in addressing the majority of issues identified by the Council, there were two areas for which further clarification was sought. Firstly, the Value for Money received by the Council from NILGA and secondly the level of Council representation on NILGA's Executive.
1.4	Subsequently, NILGA submitted a formal response, dated 17 th April 2008, to the Council outlining proposals on how the Council's representation on NILGA's Executive could be improved and indicating the value added by NILGA to the Local Government Sector generally and not Belfast specifically (a copy of the response is attached at Appendix 1).
1.5	In considering this paper, the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 23 rd May, agreed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) to seek to 2 additional places for Belfast City Council elected members on NILGA's Executive; b) to a Council official being designated as a NILGA liaison officer who would attend Executive meetings of NILGA in an observer capacity; c) to make payment of the outstanding 50% of its NILGA subscription charge for the period 2007/2008; d) to inform NILGA that the Council would be willing to pay an annual subscription sum of £79,230 (excluding VAT) in respect of the period 2008/2009, which would be proportionate to the percentage of the Northern Ireland population in the Belfast District Council Electoral Area. <p>Members will note that NILGA had initially requested an annual subscription fee of £104,324 (ex. VAT) from the Council in respect of the period 2008/2009.</p>
1.6	Accordingly, the Northern Ireland Local Government Association had been informed of these decisions.
2.0	<u>Key Issues</u>
2.1	The proposals put forward by the Council, as outlined above, had been considered by the NILGA Executive, at its meeting on 13 th June, and a letter had been received from the Chief Executive of NILGA, dated 17 th July, outlining the views expressed by the NILGA Executive (attached at Appendix 2).
	<i>Additional Places on the NILGA Executive</i>
2.2	NILGA's Executive agreed that Belfast City Council would secure two additional places (brining the total to five) on NILGA's Executive. These appointments will be agreed through discussions between NILGA's DUP and SF nominating officers and the Council's DUP and SF Party Group Leaders.

	<i>Belfast Officer Liaison</i>
2.3	The NILGA Executive agreed that Belfast City Council would have a designated liaison officer who would have the option to attend Executive meetings of NILGA as an observer. It is recommended that the Director of Core Improvement be designated as the NILGA liaison officer.
	<i>Belfast City Council subscription</i>
2.4	NILGA's Executive discussed the proposal made by the Council to pay an annual subscription for the 2008/2009 period of £76,230 which is proportionate to the percentage of the NI population living in the Belfast District Council area rather than the £104,328 subscription charge requested by NILGA which is based on the penny rate product.
2.5	NILGA raised concerns regarding the potential inequity of this proposal for other member Councils within the Association and noted that the current subscription model had been negotiated some time ago as part of the constitution of the Association. As stated by NILGA, it would be the intention that the current subscription system would be reviewed in 2010 in the context of the membership of the new constituent Council's post RPA.
2.6	NILGA has therefore requested that other options be considered with a view to reaching a joint accommodation in the interim period which balances the proposed reduction in the Council's annual subscription and the need to provide an equitable service to all its constituent members.
2.7	NILGA has suggested that consideration be given to the potential of the Council providing 'in kind' support to NILGA to offset the proposed reduction in its financial subscription. Members will note that the Council already provides support (e.g. Legal advice, policy and research support, professional support in terms of business planning and performance management) to NILGA on an ad-hoc basis in the context of both sharing best practice and the Council's continued engagement within the Review of Public Administration processes. However, the proposal put forward by NILGA would result in a more formalised process for the Council providing 'in kind' support.
2.8	Members will note that further clarity is required from NILGA in regard to the extent and type of 'in-kind' support required and consideration will need to be given to the impact on the Council in terms of officer time.
2.9	It would be the intention that a meeting would be held between officials from NILGA and the Council to further clarify what is intended by 'in kind' support. To date, this has been difficult to progress given the escalating work attached to the RPA and the established delivery mechanisms (e.g. Policy Development Panels) and the role of NILGA in supporting these structures.
2.10	It is recommended that Council officials engage with NILGA to further examine this proposal and the associated implications for the Council.

3.0	Resource Implications
	<u>Financial and Human Resources</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If agreed, there are Human Resource (i.e. officer time) implications attached to the provision of 'in kind' support to NILGA.

4.0	Recommendations
4.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) agree that the Director of Core Improvement be designated as the NILGA liaison officer; b) agree that officials from the Council liaise with NILGA to further clarify what is intended by 'in kind' support and the associated implications for the Council

5.0	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: NILGA Value for Money Paper submitted to Council
	Appendix 2: Correspondence from NILGA dated 11 th July, 2008