



**Belfast City Council**

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>Strategic Policy and Resources Committee</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Northern Ireland Local Government Association</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2008</b>
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	<b>Peter McNaney, Chief Executive</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Gerry Millar (ext 6217)</b>

<b>1.0</b>	<b><u>Relevant background information</u></b>
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 (NILGA) 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	Members will recall that the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 23 <sup>rd</sup> May, agreed to write to NILGA indicating that it would willing to pay a reduced annual subscription of £79,230 (excluding VAT) for the period 2008/2009 which would be proportionate to the percentage of the Northern Ireland population rather than the £104,328 subscription charge requested by NILGA which is based on the penny rate product.
1.3	At its meeting on 19 <sup>th</sup> September 2008, the Committee had been informed that NILGA had written to the Council, dated 17 <sup>th</sup> July 2008, to report that its Executive had agreed in principle to the reduced subscription fee and had set out proposals to further strengthen the Councils relationship with the Association including additional places for Belfast City Council on its Executive, the designation of a NILGA liaison officer and the provision of officer support to NILGA.
<b>2.0</b>	<b><u>Key Issues</u></b>
2.1	It is important to recognise that there is a high level of expertise and capacity which exists within the Council which could be used to inform the ongoing debate within NILGA. At present the Council is directly engaged, at both elected Member and official level, in a range of working groups and forums established by NILGA to take forward particular issues (please refer to Appendix 1). Members may wish to revisit the Councils current membership on the <u>working groups</u> and feedback to officers any proposed changes that they may wish to make.
2.2	<b>Strengthened role for the Council on NILGA's Executive Committee</b>
2.2.1	As previously discussed, NILGA's Executive has agreed that Belfast City Council would secure two additional places (bringing the total to five) on NILGA's Executive. These appointments will be drawn from the Council's overall membership on NILGA and agreed through discussions between NILGA's DUP and SF nominating officers and the Council's DUP and SF Party Group Leaders.
2.3	<b>Belfast City Council NILGA Liaison Officer</b>
2.3.1	Members will recall that the Committee, at its meeting on 17 <sup>th</sup> September 2008, agreed that the Director of Core Improvement would be designated as the NILGA liaison officer and would accordingly have the option to attend Executive meetings of NILGA as an observer.
2.4	<b>Current role of NILGA</b>
2.4.1	NILGA is firmly anchored within the established decision making machinery and implementation structures established to take forward the Review of Public Administration process. NILGA facilitated the nomination process for the RPA Strategic Leadership Board and Policy Development Panels and provide Joint Secretariat support, alongside DoE officials, to these structures. The Joint Secretariat is contributing also to the development of policy and discussion papers which are being submitted to the SLB and PDPs for consideration. NILGA has an established internal RPA Working Group on which the Council is represented.

2.4.2	It is important to recognise that whilst NILGA is one key component in supporting the RPA, local authorities (at both elected Member and Officer level) are a constituent part of the process as it is important that the implementation of the RPA is 'owned' by the whole sector.
2.4.3	It is suggested that the Council could use its strengthened role within the NILGA Executive and its direct Member and officer interface with NILGA to further reinforce the Council's engagement and overall influence within the RPA process.
2.4.4	The establishment of a more formalised link between NILGA and the Council and a structured approach to liaison between both parties, will enable the Council to inform and somewhat shape the ongoing agenda of NILGA and help raise the bar in terms of planning and policy development within NILGA and across the wider local government sector. Accordingly, the support and advice provided by the Council to NILGA will benefit the wider local government sector. This should be considered, in particular, within the context of the RPA process.
2.4.5	NILGA has also taken a leading role in advocating on behalf of the local government sector and in co-ordinating the development of sectoral position papers on key policy areas including, for example, Review of Public Administration, local government modernisation, European affairs, health and environmental issues, planning, e-government etc. NILGA has established a series of working groups to take forward detailed consideration of these important issues and the Council has been engaged within this process.
2.4.6	With a view to enhancing their capacity, NILGA has recently strengthened their senior management team with the appointment of a Director of Improvement, a Director of Policy and Strategy and Director of Communications. These posts have been funded by the Department of Environment (DoE).
2.5	<b>Future role of NILGA</b>
2.5.1	Members will accept that the future role and remit of NILGA post RPA is somewhat uncertain at this stage. NILGA themselves have indicated that the Association would be subject to review in the lead up to the new local government structures to be put in place in 2011.
2.5.2	The future role and remit of NILGA is being considered within the context of the ongoing discussions at RPA Policy Development Panel (PDP) A regarding the future of central / local government relations within Northern Ireland. PDP A is currently reviewing the Welsh Local Government Association model as part of this process.
2.5.3	The Council has previously documented the need for a remodelled Local Government Association which is highly attuned, responsive and accountable to its constitute Councils and which provides a coherent single voice for the local government sector within Northern Ireland. Within the context of a smaller number of constitute Councils post 2011, there is a real opportunity to develop a more focused and effective role for NILGA as the representative voice of local government.
3.0	<b>Newtownabbey Borough Council withdrawal from NILGA</b>
3.1	Members will note that Newtownabbey Borough Council has formally withdrawn from NILGA with effect from 1 October 2008. NILGA has indicated that they are currently assessing the impact of this decision on the Association and its role as the representative voice of local government.

#### **4.0 Resource Implications**

##### Financial and Human Resources

- There will be Human Resources implications (in terms of Member and Officer time) attached to the Council's continued engagement with NILGA and associated working groups.

#### **5.0 Recommendations**

- 5.1 Members are asked to:
- a) note the contents of this report; and
  - b) consider whether they wish to make any proposed changes to the Council's current membership on NILGA's working groups;

#### **6.0 Documents Attached**

**Appendix 1: Belfast City Council support /representation on NILGA Working Groups**

**NILGA Full Membership**

Cllr Tom Hartley	Cllr Mrs Ruth Patterson	Cllr Francis McCann MLA
Cllr Danny Lavery	Cllr Patrick McCarthy	Cllr Jim Kirkpatrick
Cllr Bob Stoker	Cllr Tom Ekin	Cllr May Campbell
Cllr Jim Rodgers	Cllr Michael Browne	Cllr Robin Newton MLA
Cllr Tim Attwood	Cllr Cathal Mullaghan	Cllr Marie Moore
Cllr Sammy Wilson MLA MP		

*NB. The full membership has remained the same since the AGM.*

**NILGA Executive Members**

- Cllr Francis McCann, MLA
- Cllr May Campbell
- Cllr Cathal Mullaghan

*N.B: Two additional BCC (1 DUP and 1 SF) places has been secured and still to be confirmed*

**RPA IMPLEMENTATION STCUTURES**

**RPA Strategic Leadership Board**

- Cllr Alex Maskey, MLA
- Peter McNaney

**RPA Policy Development Panel A**

- Cllr Pat Convery
- Ciaran Quigley
- Gerry Millar

**PDP A: Community Planning**

- Marie-Therese McGlvern

**Policy Development Panel B**

- Cllr Janice Austin
- Cllr Bob Stoker
- Trevor Martin

**PDP B: Performance Management Working Group**

- Ronan Cregan

**PDP B: Customer Focus Strategy Working Group**

- Trevor Martin

**PDP B: Modernisation and Improvement Working Group**

- Rose Crozier

- Ronan Cregan

### **RPA Policy Development Panel C**

#### **PDP C: Human Resources Working Group**

- Jill Minne

#### **PDP C: Capacity Building Working Group**

- Jill Minne (Chair)

#### **PDP C: Finance and Estates Working Group**

- Cathy Reynolds
- Trevor Salmon

### **Regional Co-ordinating Group**

- Peter McNaney

## **WORKING GROUPS**

### **RPA Working Group**

- Cllr Tom Ekin
- Cllr Cathal Mullaghan
- Peter McNaney

### **E-government Working Group**

- Rose Crozier,
- Paul Gribben
- Marie-McCrory

### **Waste Working Group**

- Tim Walker

### **Planning Working Group**

- Robin Boyd

### **EU Working Group**

- Laura Leonard

### **NIJC**

- Trevor Salmon

### **JNC for CE's**

- Cllr Tom Hartley

### **Health and Environment Working Group**

- Cllr Cathal Mullaghan

## **EU Monitoring Committees**

### **PEACE II Monitoring Committee**

- Cllr Tim Attwood
- Cllr Bob Stoker

### **Peace III**

- Cllr Bob Stoker
- Cllr Tim Attwood

### **Competiveness & Employment**

- Cllr Robin Newton MLA

### **Outside Body - Commonwealth and Local Gov Forum**

- Cllr May Campbell

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