



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Northern Ireland Local Government Association
Date:	Friday, 4 th March 2011
Reporting Officer:	Gerry Millar, Director of Property and Projects
Contact Officer:	Kevin Heaney (ext 6202)

1.0	<u>Relevant background information</u>
1.1	Correspondence has been recently received from the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (copy attached at Appendix 1) setting out proposals for the 2011/2012 Annual Plan and requesting a subscription fee from of the Council of £107,462 (excluding VAT) for the same period. The BCC subscription fee requested by NILGA is based on a calculation of the relative penny rate base for councils and equates to approximately 25% of NILGA's total subscriptions received.
1.2	Members will recall that the Committee previously agreed to pay a reduced subscription fee to NILGA of £76,500 (approx) for the periods 2009/2010 and 2010/2011. The agreed subscription fee is calculated on population percentages of councils, which Members believed to be a more appropriate basis for calculation.
2.0	<u>Key Issues</u>
2.1	Whilst the Council has continuously advocated the need for a strong Local Government Association (LGA) which is focused on its core business of advocating on behalf of local government on regionally significant policy issues and facilitating engagement between central and local government, it is clear that the Council does not currently require nor avail of the support provided by NILGA to the same extent as the other councils.
2.2	The Council has successfully developed its own internal expertise, capacity and support mechanisms and has a strong in-house policy and communication capacity. It has successfully implemented Members' support and development programmes, developed and coalesced around corporate positions on emerging policy issues and has gained direct access to Ministers and Central Government officials as required.
2.3	Given the current financial pressures, the Council is committed to the implementation of an efficiency programme which places greater scrutiny on budgets and spend. All services are being asked to demonstrate value for money. Similarly, any subscription paid by the Council to a third party should be reviewed within the context of its value for money. Members have previously raised concerns about the 'added value' provided by NILGA to Belfast City Council.
2.4	It is important to note that NILGA are currently undergoing major organisational and structural changes with the recent appointment of the new Chief Executive, Derek McCallan and the pending withdrawal of substantial DoE funding which was linked to NILGA's supporting role for local government reform. This has resulted in the organisation having to downsize its staff compliment and refocus its activities.
2.5	A key component of the 2011/2012 Business Plan, attached at Appendix 1, is a commitment to undertake a comprehensive review, in liaison with councils, of the Constitution, structure and operations of NILGA in pursuance of a more effective and efficient Association. Clearly it will be important that the Council engages and informs this review process so as to ensure that NILGA is fit for purpose and adds value in moving forward. The Council currently has 17 elected members on NILGA and holds an office bearer position in NILGA's Executive Committee.

2.6	<p>If NILGA is to remain sustainable it will need to refocus its attention on those VFM services which will bring added value for the local government sector. It may wish to concentrate its efforts on those issues which may need regional coordination and consistency. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordinating sector responses to relevant regional policy issues ▪ Enhancing future central / local government relations
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3.0	Resource Implications
<u>Financial and Human Resources</u>	
<p>If Members decide to pay the proposed reduced NILGA Subscription fee (i.e. calculated on population base), this would equate to £76,500 (excluding VAT).</p>	

4.0	Recommendations
4.1	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) note the contents of the foregoing report; ii) agree that in line with previous decisions taken by the Committee, that the Council's NILGA subscription for the 2011/2012 period be calculated on the basis of its population base and not penny rate product; iii) agree to the payment of the reduced subscription fee of £76,500 (excluding VAT) iv) note the contents of the NILGA Annual Plan attached at Appendix 1.

5.0 Appendices	
Appendix 1: NILGA Subscription Fee and Annual Business Plan for the 2011/2012 period.	