

Open Report on behalf of Tony McArdle, Chief Executive

Report to:	Councillor M J Hill OBE, Leader of the Council (Executive Councillor: Governance, Communications, Commissioning, Finance and Property)
Date:	16 March 2017
Subject:	Membership of the Local Government Association
Decision Reference:	I013313
Key decision?	No

Summary:

This report sets out the case for discontinuing membership of the Local Government Association to produce an annual saving of £77,957.

Recommendation(s):

That the Leader of the Council approves the serving of 12 months' notice of termination of the County Council's membership of the Local Government Association so that such termination takes effect from 1 April 2018.

Alternatives Considered:

1. That the Council does not serve notice of termination of its membership of the Local Government Association at an annual cost of £77,957.

Reasons for Recommendation:

The Council will have to make savings for the year 2018/19 in excess of £30m. Membership of the Local Government Association costs the Council £65,757 per annum. Membership of the County Council's Network, a Special Interest Group of the LGA, costs the Council a further £12,200. While there have been some benefits from membership of this body over the years, increased pressure to find savings brings continued membership into question.

1. Background

The Council has been a Member of the Local Government Association (LGA) since its formation in 1996. The Association exists to promote the interests of the sector

as a whole and to do so on behalf of all of its Members, which include County Councils, Metropolitan Unitary Authorities, London Boroughs and District Councils.

According to the LGA website all local authorities are currently members with the exception of the London Boroughs of Barnet, Bromley and Wandsworth.

It is not disputed that such a national body is of value. Local Government has shouldered more than its fair share of austerity in addressing the need for reductions in public spending, and the LGA has sought to represent our interests in respect of that burden over recent years.

The LGA also provides other services and benefits including:-

- Support and advice to councillors
- News and briefings
- Discounts on selected services including improvement support and leadership programmes
- Free or discounted events
- Legal advice and representation on complex issues
- Opportunities to join special interest groups such as the County Council's Network
- Free and discounted research and strategy consultancy services

The Council has taken up some of these services in the past. Principally, however, the LGA's value to the Council comes from it being a lobbying body.

Increasingly, however, it has been unable to maintain a balance in ensuring that the needs of the different types of Council within its membership are properly met. County Councils have suffered particularly. Most notably, there is an imbalance in the outcomes achieved in respect of the funding of counties vis-à-vis the cities and the districts, this imbalance is growing, and the structural issues that underpin it are not being addressed. Worryingly, there is a lack of recognition at the LGA that counties continue to receive a lesser service than other parts of the sector. Indeed, despite regular efforts to draw this disparity to the attention of the LGA leadership, the rhetoric at the LGA is continually assertive of the case that counties get a good deal.

The situation cannot continue. It is important that this Council is able to point to value for the subscription that it pays to the Association, and that value is not presently being returned. In the circumstances where the LGA as a body does not recognise the concerns of County Councils, this Council would be better to put its energies into other means of making those concerns known to the government.

As the County Council's Network is a Special Interest Group of the LGA, withdrawing from membership of the LGA will also mean that the County Council will not be entitled to be a voting member of the County Council's Network (CCN). This does not prevent the Council developing a separate relationship with the CCN.

The rules for discontinuing membership from the LGA require one full municipal year's notice to be given of the intention. Notice must therefore be given before 31 March 2017 in order for membership to cease at 31 March 2018.

It is important to be clear that the service of notice is not irrevocable. If before the expiry of the years' notice the issues referred to above were addressed by the LGA so that the County Council was getting value for its subscriptions the notice could be withdrawn or the Council could apply to be readmitted as a member.

It is therefore recommended that the Leader of the Council approves the giving of notice to discontinue the Council's membership of the Local Government Association at the earliest opportunity which will be in April 2018.

Membership of the LGA costs the Council £65,757pa. Membership of the County Council's Network costs the Council an additional £12,200. The Council is not receiving full value for this subscription at present. In the light of the need to make savings in excess of £30m in the financial year 2019/19, continued membership of an organisation that is not returning full value cannot be justified.

2. Legal Issues:

Equality Act 2010

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- * Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
- * Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- * Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The relevant protected characteristics are age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- * Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic
- * Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it
- * Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low

The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities

Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to tackle prejudice, and promote understanding

Compliance with the duties in section 149 may involve treating some persons more favourably than others

The duty cannot be delegated and must be discharged by the decision-maker. To discharge the statutory duty the decision-maker must analyse all the relevant material with the specific statutory obligations in mind. If a risk of adverse impact is identified consideration must be given to measures to avoid that impact as part of the decision making process

This decision does not have any differential impact on people with a protected characteristic.

Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS)

The Council must have regard to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Joint Health & Well Being Strategy (JHWS) in coming to a decision

This decision does not have any impact on the JSNA and the JHWS.

Crime and Disorder

Under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Council must exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment), the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in its area and re-offending in its area

No crime and disorder issues are likely to be affected by this decision.

3. Conclusion

Membership of the Local Government Association and County Council's Network costs the Council £77,957 per annum. As the Council looks to make estimated savings of in excess of £30m in 2018/19, continued membership of the organisation comes into question.

4. Legal Comments:

The Council has the power to be or to not be a member of the Local Government Association. The decision whether to remain a member or to give notice of termination is an executive function.

The decision is consistent with the Policy Framework and within the remit of the Leader of the Council.

5. Resource Comments:

Acceptance of the recommendation in this report will produce a base budget saving of £78k pa from April 2018.

6. Consultation

a) Has Local Member Been Consulted?

n/a

b) Has Executive Councillor Been Consulted?

Yes

c) Scrutiny Comments

This report has not been considered by scrutiny.

d) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

Yes

e) Risks and Impact Analysis

The need to make further savings outweighs the potential risk caused by not being members of the Local Government Association. Any issues that arise will be managed by officers.

This report was written by Tony McArdle, who can be contacted on 01522 552840 or tony.mcardle@lincolnshire.gov.uk .