

Open Report on behalf of Debbie Barnes OBE, Head of Paid Service

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Board
Date:	28 February 2019
Subject:	Membership of the Local Government Association

Summary:

In March 2018 the Leader of the Council served 12 months' notice of termination of the Council's membership of the Local Government Association. This report sets out the background to that decision and invites the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board to comment on how it feels this matter should be progressed.

Actions required:

- 1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board considers the background to the decision to serve notice of termination of the Council's membership of the Local Government Association and
- 2) Comments on how it feels the Leader of the Council should progress this matter.

1. Background

- 1.1 In March 2018 the Leader of the Council gave notice of the Council's intention to leave the Local Government Association (LGA).
- 1.2 If nothing intervenes to alter this course of action, it will take effect on 1st April 2019.
- 1.3 Before considering the options available to him, the Leader of the Council has invited the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board to comment on the Council's membership of the LGA.
- 1.4 The Council has been a Member of the 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.

- 1.5 The decision to serve notice was taken on the basis of concerns that the Council was not receiving full value for its £77,757 annual subscription. Faced with having to find savings of £30m, it was felt that continued membership of the organisation could not be justified.
- 1.6 Since the serving of the notice the LGA has recognised the Council's concerns and has made efforts to engage with us to ensure that we have the fullest opportunity to participate in the development of policies and programmes on relevant matters.
- 1.7 The LGA say it has frozen subscriptions for the seventh consecutive year. It also claims that through its work, including lobbying, it has helped to secure a number of benefits for councils in the following areas:
- Removal of the Housing Borrowing Cap, which will allow councils to invest in the homes that people need and help solve the national housing crisis.
 - Additional powers to increase the Council Tax premium on empty homes - up to 200 per cent on homes that have been empty for five to ten years and up to 300 per cent on those empty for ten years or more.
 - £13,747,000 in 2018/19 to tackle potholes, repair damaged roads and invest in bridges, along with £3,457,324 for winter weather repairs.
 - Additional new burdens funding to extend personal adviser support to looked-after children aged 21-25. The County Council will now receive an extra £20,978 per annum.
 - An additional £3,065,722 over 2018/19 and 2019/20 for schools' high needs funding.
 - An additional £1,076,388 capital funding in 2019/20 for special educational needs provision.
 - New powers to fine householders who dump rubbish illegally up to £400 and access to a £10 million fund to support innovation in waste and recycling.
 - £175,000 for Brexit preparations, including £87,500 upfront in 2018/19 and again in 2019/20.
 - Lincolnshire County Council is also involved in the Blue Badge & Local Land Charges Register Transfer collective action with the LGA.
- 1.8 The LGA also provides other services and benefits including:-
- Support, training 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

- 1.9 However, on the most important and pressing matter, fairer funding of local government, there has been limited progress. It is potentially very important to the Council that the LGA take a principled and robust line on this. While there have been positive tones from the LGA in relation to their response on fairer funding, it remains to be seen whether the organisation will satisfy the Council's wishes in this respect.
- 1.10 Historically there has been an imbalance in outcomes achieved in respect of the funding of counties. Therefore the LGA's response to this document will be crucial if it is to illustrate that it can ensure that the needs of the different types of council within its membership are properly met.
- 1.11 There are three options to be considered by the Leader in deciding how to progress this matter.
- A) The Leader could take no further action, which will mean the Council will leave the LGA with effect from 1st April 2019
 - B) The Leader could withdraw the notice, which will mean the Council will continue its membership of the LGA.
 - C) The Leader could withdraw the notice and replace it with a further 12 months' notice to terminate membership of the LGA, which would mean the Council could leave the LGA on 1st April 2020.
- 1.12 Options B and C will require the payment of the annual subscription to the LGA.

2. Conclusion

It has been 11 months since the Council last served notice to terminate its membership of the Local Government Association. In determining the next steps the Leader of the Council is inviting comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

3. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

No

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

Not Applicable

4. Background papers

Title	Where available
Executive Councillor Report: Membership of the Local Government Association 16 th March 2017	Democratic Services

This report was written by Nigel West, who can be contacted on 01522 552840 or nigel.west@lincolnshire.gov.uk .