

## ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

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| 1. | <b>Meeting:</b>     | <b>Member Development and Training Panel</b>                 |
| 2. | <b>Date:</b>        | <b>17 December 2012</b>                                      |
| 3. | <b>Title:</b>       | <b>Local Government Information Unit (LGiU) subscription</b> |
| 4. | <b>Directorate:</b> | <b>Resources</b>   |

### 5. **Summary**

The report requests a contribution from the member development panel budget to the annual LGiU membership costs for 2013. .

### 6. **Recommendations**

That Members are asked to:

- a. **Agree a contribution of up to £5,000 to the annual LGiU membership costs for 2013, the maximum total cost of which will be £11,350**
- b. **Request a full evaluation of the benefits of membership, which will be carried out in 2013 and be used to inform a longer term decision on membership**

## **7. Proposals and Details**

- 7.1 As part of the range of budget savings being implemented across the council, consideration has been given to cancelling LGiU membership, which cost £19,600 for the 2012 calendar year and was met from the Commissioning, Policy and Performance budget.

The LGiU, which currently has 128 local authority members, provides policy briefings and support, as well as access to a range of training programmes and events. The service has been particularly valuable in recent times, with a raft of national policy initiatives being launched and in-house capacity reducing as a result of staffing reviews.

- 7.2 Given the severe budget pressures and relatively high cost of membership, discussions have been held with the LGiU about more affordable options. It has been established that downgrading from “standard plus” to “standard” membership would reduce the cost to £11,350 for 2013. This would include:

- Briefings alerts (approx 200 new briefings per year)
- Briefings bank online (access to approx 1500 past briefings)
- Councillor magazine (bi-monthly to all members) and invites to Councillor Awards
- Training discounts (at LGiU or on-site)
- Policy reports

An additional discount of up to 10% may be available, possibly linked to payment by direct debit – we are awaiting confirmation from LGiU following their board meeting on 11th December. This will be reported to the meeting.

- 7.3 If the member development budget can make a contribution of up to £5,000; the Policy and Partnerships Team in the Resources Directorate; and Strategy, Standards and Development Service in C&YPS will make additional contributions to meet the reduced annual cost.

There are currently over 45 Elected Members on the briefings email list, which we will promote and update if membership is maintained.

Though the briefings service in particular is felt to be well used by officers and a growing number of Members, this is largely based on anecdotal evidence. If membership continues, it is recommended that a full evaluation is carried out next year to determine the overall benefits and inform a decision on continued membership beyond 2013.

- 7.4 It is also worth noting that discussions are underway between a local authority and the LGiU to provide member development sessions in the South Yorkshire region at low or no cost to subscribing organisations.

If events were hosted sub-regionally, these could supplement in-house provision and be built into future Member Development Programmes. Such events will provide a wider perspective on regional and national developments to enhance Members’ understanding of a rapidly changing policy field.

Rotherham Members and officers have attended LGiU events in previous years (usually in London) and feedback from these has been - on the whole - very positive, with the outcomes from many of the sessions being used to inform policy developments (e.g. the Council's approach to Councillor Call for Action).

## **8. Finance**

The annual cost of LGiU membership would be reduced from £19,600 to £11,350 for 2013, with a potential additional discount of up to 10% (to be confirmed).

It is recognised that this is still a significant amount in the context of ongoing budget pressures and an evaluation of the service provided should be carried out to inform a decision on longer term membership.

If approved, this expenditure can be met from the existing Member Development budget.

## **9. Risks and Uncertainties**

The evaluation should look at the full range of policy support available, including in-house capacity, which is largely concentrated in Resources Directorate's Commissioning, Policy and Performance Department and has been reduced significantly in the last two years.

Local government has faced unprecedented change in recent years. It is important to ensure that Members and senior officers are sufficiently well informed to enable them to respond effectively to the plethora of Government policy initiatives and understand the implications of these changes and their impact on the Council and wider borough.

## **10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implication,**

A thorough understanding of the national policy context is crucial for effective local policy development and implementation.

## **11. Background Papers and Consultation**

[LGiU website](#)

Consultation will be carried out with relevant members and officers as part of the recommended evaluation.

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