
Report to

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

18th March, 2009

Report of

Councillor Crookes

Title

Report Back on the Work Of Outside Bodies – Local Government Information Unit – Management Committee

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 At their meeting on 10th May, 2005, the Cabinet approved a process of reporting back to the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee on the work of those outside bodies appointed to by the City Council. This reports sets out details of the work of Local Government Information Unit (LGiU) over the preceding twelve months and details of attendance by the City Council's representatives.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To continue to make a nomination to the Management Committee as contrary to last years report the City Council remains a member of the LGiU (until December 2009) therefore this is still appropriate.
- 2.2 To request that the Cabinet Member takes the opportunity to revisit the previous decision to determine whether it is still appropriate in the light of the information in para. 3.1 below.

3 Information on Work of Outside Body

- 3.1 The organisation's principal activities are concerned with assisting affiliated authorities and trade unions in the cost effective collection and dissemination of accurate information and related material on central government proposals and other matters relating to local government. It provides numerous courses and seminars available to all Local Authority Officers and Elected Members. However, those attending from member organisations receive a substantially discounted rate.

Coventry is a Premium level member, which means that we agree a bespoke package, using the LGiU's policy work and channels of influence, to support and promote the work of our authority. This level of membership provides a platform for influence and for showcasing good practice. Any discussion around this package can be conducted with our Relationship Manager from the LGiU, Jonathan Carr West. Jonathan is the Head of Centre for Local Democracy, but he can call on any of the LGiU's policy expertise on our behalf. The LGiU believes that Premium is the appropriate level for a council such as Coventry, however other levels of membership are available, and it can provide fee information for these if required.

Premium members receive all the benefits of affiliation in addition to the negotiated package. These are:

- Access to all 'policy products'. In addition to the Policy Briefing service, which provides clear and concise information on relevant topics, the LGiU now also produces Policy Intelligence, Horizon Scanning, Stakeholder Briefings and Policy Round Ups to higher level members. This provides an invaluable way of keeping abreast of new developments, and also a substantial library of policy information. 273 people are registered to receive this service in Coventry.
- A lower price is charged to affiliates for attendance at LGiU events, such as our popular seminar series held in our offices, and occasional national policy conferences. In 2008 41 people from Coventry attended, giving you a saving of approximately £3,000.
- **C'Ilr** magazine is delivered to all Councilors and any interested staff. This is produced every two months, and highlights the work of affiliates and items of particular interest to Members. The LGiU always happy to promote examples of good practice on behalf of our affiliates, so do let it know if there is anything it could work with Coventry on.
- All services such as consultancy, learning & development and publications are provided to affiliates at preferential rates. Affiliates also receive three copies of all new publications at no additional charge.

It is important to note that LGiU affiliation is for the local authority, not individuals. So any Councilor or member of staff can receive the policy briefings and receive preferential rates for events etc. The greater the usage the better the value for money, and the LGiU are always happy to help us spread the word. For example, we might put something on our intranet about accessing our services, and we'd be happy to provide some text for you. Any attached pdfs can be circulated around the Council as well to tell people how to register.

As a membership, rather than a profit making, organisation the focus is to help affiliates get the best value from their membership. The LGiU is always keen to discuss this, and to explore new ways of helping Members to obtain better value for money. For example, if one affiliate wants to maximize value on their conference budget, and by guaranteeing a given number of places at LGiU events, the LGiU was able to further reduce its prices.

In addition, against all the other organisations the LGiU was awarded the "Public Relations News" Think Tank of the Year for 2009

4 Benefits to the City Council of the Appointment

- 4.1 Although some of the information received from the LGiU is now available from other sources, **at no cost**, the benefit in continuing membership of this organisation lies with the ease of accessibility to information, in depth knowledge and the ability to input into the LGiU's direction.

5 Attendance Record and Remuneration for the Appointment

- 5.1 The City Council's representative for the Municipal year 2008/09 is Councillor G. Crookes. This year to date, four meetings and a training weekend event have been held, of which Councillor Crookes has attended three.
- 5.2 Members receive no remuneration for the appointment.

List of background papers

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Schedule of City Council Appointments to Outside Bodies