

POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 28 March 2022

Title: Membership to Supporting/Advisory Organisations

Contact Officer: Town Clerk - Sharon Groth

Background

The purpose of this report is to give an overview of what subscriptions and memberships the Council currently has to supporting and advisory organisations, and to review whether they are still relevant, offer value for money and the support the Councillors/Officers need.

Current Situation

Details of a few of the current subscriptions/memberships are as follows:

Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC) and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC)

The Town Council has been in OALC/NALC for many years along with the majority of larger Town Councils in Oxfordshire. Twice per year OALC hold a meeting for the larger Councils and this is very beneficial and relevant. They hold an annual AGM with a topical speaker. It is more relevant to supporting the Council and Councillors on democratic processes and NALC lobby parliament on behalf of Councils to shape legislation and matters relevant to the local parish and town council sector.

Whilst the subscription is significant – the cost/benefit and relevance is such, that it is a worthwhile investment. Within the subscription the Council is able to get free legal and financial advice – and has access to a suite of legal topic notes via a members only website (both locally and nationally).

Attached is an email from the Chair of OALC – but the Town Clerk would urge Members to agree to the continuation of this most vital membership/advisory organisation.

Rural Market Town Group

Members will recall that David Inman from the Rural Services Network came to a meeting last year to give a presentation to Councillors on the benefits of being in this membership. We were afforded a free trial which ran until September 2021, and then we have been charged £50 per quarter thereafter. So far the Officers have not had reason to use this membership for advice or topics of relevance, and would therefore suggest the membership is terminated.

Co-operative Council's Innovation Network (CCIN)

The Council joined this as an Associate Member in July 2021. Whilst it is an active network the relevance does seem to be pitched more at the higher tier authorities rather than Town and Parish Councils. Although the Town Clerk does acknowledge that the Officers are trying to encourage more input from the local level.

Communication is attached – and Members will note that due to some technical/administrative errors free membership is being offered for the Town Council to continue with its membership. What does concern the Town Clerk is the time required for her as an Officer to input into the group – being asked to write Case Studies etc.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

As custodians of the public purse scrutiny of expenditure forms part of the Council's due diligence and budgetary control ensuring that funds are spent appropriately and it received value for money.

Financial implications

The Council has a budget of £6,000 to cover its subscriptions. The current level of fees are provided below.

Organisation	£	Comments
Information Commissioner	55	Requirement to be registered with the ICO
Community First	85	Offers training/advice rural/community issues
CCIN	500	New subscription in 2021
OPFA	268	Advice on Playing fields/offer training
South East Employers	349	Secondary Employment Advice - used in 2021
SLCC	552	Training cheaper, advisory
STRI	970	Pitch advice/inspections
OALC [NALC]	3261	Training cheaper, advisory
	6040	

As the membership to CCIN has been offered free this will save the Council £500 and will bring the expenditure within that budgeted.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the relevance of the subscriptions/memberships

1. Authorise the payment of the membership fees to OALC/NALC;
2. Cancel the membership to the Rural Market Town Group;
3. Continue for another year with CCIN, as its free, but review nearer the renewal date.