

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

PORTFOLIO AREA: PROMOTING CARLISLE

Date of Meeting:	28 October 2002
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Public

Key Decision:	No	Recorded in Forward Plan:	No
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Outside Policy Framework

Title: THE VOICE OF CUMBRIA IN EUROPE

Report of: TOWN CLERK AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Report reference: TC. 214/02

Summary:

This report makes proposals for the case for Carlisle to have representation in Europe as part of a joint arrangement with other Cumbrian Authorities and the North West Regional Assembly.

Recommendations:

The Executive is recommended to support a financial bid of £6000 for the next three years to be considered as part of the budget process, to part fund an officer to represent Carlisle and Cumbria's European needs located in the Brussels office of the North West Regional Assembly.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Within the North West of England all sub regions have established a presence in Brussels to influence and seek assistance from the European Union except for Cumbria. With the advent of European enlargement and significant changes taking place to structural funds and European programmes, especially the Common Agricultural Policy, it is becoming more important to influence the European policies that affect Carlisle's people and businesses and to maximise the benefit from Europe for local people.

1.2 Specifically, there are a number of funding sources and opportunities available that require careful targeting and many new schemes require new partnerships with other organisations in Europe to be successful and benefit both parties. It is also important to seek to influence emerging legislation and regulation which affects business and economic development and the regulations covering the environment, equal opportunities, the single market and trade. Cumbria needs to be influential in representing its needs comprehensively and directly in Brussels. This is consistent with the objects of the Council's Corporate Plan, particularly in economic regeneration and promoting Carlisle.

2. NORTH WEST REPRESENTATION IN BRUSSELS

2.1 Background

2.2 The North West Regional Assembly now holds the Head Lease on Offices located at Rue du Marteau 21, Brussels, following a decision by the NWRA, the NWDA and other Regional Local Government partners to relocate from the Rue Breydell as of 1st March 2002. The Head Lease is operative for 9 years and all partners and sub-tenants are currently committed for a period of 3 years respectively.

2.3 The offices are ideally placed between the European Institutions and the City Centre.

3. THE CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 The NWRA, holder of the Head Lease, has now agreed sub-tenancy agreements with the following organisations:

Cheshire County Council

Association of Greater Manchester Councils (AGMA)

Merseyside Local Authorities

Lancashire County Council

Waterfront Consultants

French National Road Transport Federation

3.2 The NWRA have in post a professional Office Manager, Mrs Lee Walker, who is responsible for the smooth running of the office and liaison between partners and tenants and is line managed by the Director of Corporate Affairs, NWRA.

3.3 The NWRA and NWDA employ a Head of Office to represent both organisations on a strategic regional basis and Abigail Howarth

will take up her post on 1st January 2003. She was formerly employed by Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Assembly in a similar capacity.

3.4 The offices are in effect a centuries old Flemish House which has been modernised internally to present day standards and requirements, offering all means of communication both electronic and otherwise.

4. AVAILABILITY

4.1 At the time of preparing this short report there are 3 offices remaining to be let:

- 24.15 sq metres square shaped.
- 23.52 sq metres square shaped.
- 21.60 sq metres L-shaped.

4.2 The two square shaped rooms would, be suitable for occupation by the Cumbrian Local Authorities and would allow for expansion should a decision be taken at a later date to employ a Stagiaire or indeed anyone on work placement from a college or university.

4.3 There is also currently some interest from the City of Krakow in Poland who are looking to rent accommodation from 1st April 2003 in the lead up to the expected entry into membership of the European Union by Poland in 2004. It is likely that they too would like to occupy one of the two larger offices.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The rental for all offices available at the present time is 40 Euros per sq metre and this figure has been arrived at following advice from a local valuer and is therefore in line with similar properties in the locality. A medium size office would therefore cost € 940, approximately £625 per quarter.

5.2 The NWRA would be responsible for payment of all accounts, which are recharged on a quarterly basis and this includes all utilities including telephone accounts, electricity, water etc.

5.3 It is estimated that the salary levels for the appointment of an officer to represent Cumbria Local Authorities in Brussels is likely to be in the region of £30,000 per annum plus oncosts estimated at £5,100. The total cost of an officer and accommodation £37,600, which if shared between all seven local authorities would be approximately £6,000 per annum for a fixed three-year initial period. This is proposed as a budget bid.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 At the present moment, Cumbrian Local Authorities, are the only grouping from the North West of England without direct representation in Brussels. The Authorities in Cheshire, Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside have clearly recognised the benefits of representation and contact with the various European institutions.

6.2 Such a partnership approach would require management through a panel of participating Authorities and the agreement of a clear strategy and performance targets and benchmarks for the post holder. A full business case will be produced by the Director of the Cumbria European Liaison Unit to fully justify the proposals and demonstrate the benefits. The experience of Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Cheshire and Merseyside is that such an appointment is extremely beneficial in the provision of intelligence, lobbying, arranging contacts and meetings and identifying funding opportunities as well as in chasing the progress and removing blockages to bids submitted. The lobbying role is also becoming even more important as major reforms in European policy are underway and many such as the Rural Policy have major impacts on rural economies such as Carlisle.

7. CITY TREASURER'S COMMENTS

7.1 The City Treasurer has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

8. LEGAL COMMENTS

8.1 If approved the proposals in this report would be the subject of formal legal agreements.

6. CORPORATE COMMENTS

None.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT

7.1 Subject to the views of other authorities the proposal would be subject to a full risk assessment.

8. EQUALITY ISSUES

None.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

None.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

See front sheet.

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