

The Football Association – Parklife football hubs and working with councils

Purpose

As background to the Football Association presentation and subsequent discussion.

Summary

Since 2014, the LGA has called for more investment by the football bodies (The Football Association (FA) and Premier League) into grassroots provision, in particular facilities and the LGA welcomed the FA's commitment in their new football strategy to invest over £250 million in the next four years in grassroots football, including investment in the Parklife football hubs programme.

In January 2017, Councillor Stephens met with Robert Sullivan, Strategy and Communications Director, The Football Association to discuss the priorities of both the LGA and the FA towards increasing participation and investment in grassroots football. The FA have agreed to work more closely with the LGA to support councils develop grassroots football.

The Board will be joined by Mark Coulson, Parklife Programme Manager, The Football Association (see biography at Annex A).

Recommendation

Culture, Tourism and Sport Board members are asked to note the report.

Action

Officers will take forward actions identified.

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Background

1. The Football Association was formed in 1863 and is English football's governing body. The Football Association's management team, working together with The FA Board, Council and staff, aims to deliver an effective and professional organisation for the greater good of English football.
2. The Football Association has launched a new strategic plan, <http://www.thefa.com/about-football-association/what-we-do/strategy#uDXXeQFfbzt19xj7.99>, which began in August 2016 and will culminate in 2020 when Wembley Stadium will play host to the semi-finals and final of UEFA EURO 2020 tournament. The FA Board and management team have considered the short and long-term goals of the business in order to support and grow the grassroots game while continuing to strive for success at the elite level with the 24 England teams. By 2020, The FA will achieve:
 - 2.1. **ENGLAND TEAMS** – England men's and women's senior teams ready to win in 2022 and 2023 World Cups.
 - 2.2. **EDUCATION** – A world-leading education programme for a diverse football workforce.
 - 2.3. **FEMALE FOOTBALL** – A doubling of the player base and fan following of female football.
 - 2.4. **PARTICIPATION** – Flexible, inclusive and accessible playing opportunities for everyone.
 - 2.5. **DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT** – Direct engagement with every fan, player and participant.
 - 2.6. **REGULATION AND ADMINISTRATION** – Trusted regulation, efficient administration and world class competitions.
 - 2.7. **VENUES** – Wembley Stadium and St. George's Park as world leading inspirational venues.
3. Football is regarded as one of the most prominent national sports in the UK, in terms of participation, numbers of people watching, media coverage and income. Many professional football clubs also undertake considerable work in their communities in raising participation levels through to raising awareness of topical issues such as cohesion and wellbeing. Professional football clubs contribute to the visitor economy and place-making of a locality.
4. The attendance of a representative from the Football Association provides an opportunity for the CTS Board to further establish a working partnership with the FA. It is the first time that any member of the Football Association has attended the CTS Board and

comes at a time when the FA (along with the Premier League and Sport England) are increasing their investment into grassroots football, including the Parklife football hubs programme <https://www.sportengland.org/funding/parklife/>.

LGA priorities regarding grassroots football

5. Since 2014, the LGA has called for more investment by the football bodies (The FA and Premier League) into grassroots provision, in particular facilities and the LGA welcomed the FA's commitment in their new football strategy to invest over £250 million in the next four years in grassroots football. The LGA would like to see the investment spread across the whole of England and not just areas where football has good infrastructure.
6. During the meeting with Councillor Stephens, the FA confirmed that funding was available, outside of the Parklife programme, to all authorities. They envisaged that this funding would become more accessible to smaller authorities as a result of larger urban authorities benefiting from the Parklife funding. It was agreed that the LGA and FA could work together to raise awareness of the availability of this funding.
7. The LGA responded to the Government and Sport England strategy consultations and welcomed the new direction that both strategy's proposed. In particular, the LGA was keen to see a more co-ordinated localised approach to sports funding and provision. It is therefore vital that Governing Bodies of Sport, such as the FA (and County Football Associations) work closely with councils and other sport providers to ensure that resources are maximised and collectively a seamless sports offer is presented to participants to take part at whatever level they choose.
8. The LGA is working closely with Sport England to ensure that their strategy implementation takes on board council priorities and that the football facility investment strategy includes as many council areas as possible, especially those areas where football infrastructure is not well developed.
9. The LGA is keen to engage with the Football Association to ensure that councils and football bodies work more collaboratively in the years ahead to ensure that excellent infrastructure and support exists for people wishing to play football.

Parklife football hubs programme

10. The Sport England strategy included an action on the development of a football facility investment strategy in conjunction with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, the Football Association, Premier League and Football Foundation and local authorities.
11. In November 2016, the new £200 million Parklife programme was launched to improve grassroots facilities across the country, which will over the next five years build up to 120 hub sites across 30 of England's towns and cities providing changing facilities, clubhouses and artificial pitches.
12. Sheffield is the first city to benefit from the new investment, with two hubs already built. <http://www.thefa.com/news/2016/oct/25/parklife-launch-sheffield-graves-251016>.

13. Expressions of interest were sought up to 27 January 2017 from English towns and cities with a population of 200,000 or more. Sport England has indicated that local authorities with fewer than 200,000 population were able to apply provided they worked with another local authority to have a population above 200,000.
14. The funding of Parklife football hubs will involve the following stages:
 - 14.1. **Stage 1** – Expression of Interest submitted by 27 January 2017.
 - 14.2. **Stage 2** – Submission of Local Plan for football – successful organisations will be invite to develop a detailed Local Plan for Football.
 - 14.3. **Stage 3** – Successful organisations will be invited to develop individual grant applications on a site-by-site basis for consideration for a funding award via the Football Foundation.
15. There will also be a requirement on organisations receiving funding to raise a minimum of 40 per cent partnership funding of total capital costs per area. Alongside this, organisations receiving funding will need to establish a new charitable trust to provide strategic management and overview of the Parklife football hubs.
16. The Trust should be able to hold property through peppercorn lease arrangements, hold lifecycle funds for 3G pitch replacement and manage operator relationships across the hubs network at the local level. The FA and professional clubs (where relevant) will have the ability to appoint trustees alongside other key stakeholders. Any organisations applying that has concerns over the management and operational structure proposed have the ability to raise any concerns as part of their Expression of Interest submission.

Potential questions and next steps

17. At the CTS Board in December 2016, Members discussed the Parklife football hubs programme and discussed issues around funding and support for councils with fewer than 200,000 population and how the FA planned to support localities where football infrastructure was not as developed. The LGA has subsequently raised these issues with the FA, who have indicated they will be addressing these issues.
18. Members may wish to ask questions relating to:
 - 18.1. Progress in selecting future Parklife hubs.
 - 18.2. Progress on supporting localities where infrastructure is low.
 - 18.3. Communicating with rural and less densely populated council areas.
 - 18.4. Promoting diversity in participation, particularly among women and disabled groups.
19. Following direction by Members, officers will continue to liaise with the FA and other bodies responsible for football development, to ensure that councils and their partners receive further investment and support towards increasing participation levels.