

Culture Tourism and Sport Board – report from Cllr Chris White (Chair)

Joint letter with Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport

1. At the end of December I wrote a joint letter with Jeremy Hunt to leaders of councils to highlight some of the innovative approaches councils are developing to providing local cultural and sporting services in a tough financial climate, and to emphasise that councils are best placed to lead modernising cultural services generally. We also highlighted some of the early learning from the Future Libraries Programme, where 36 councils have come together in 10 projects to pioneer new ways to deliver library services more efficiently, including using new technology, sharing back office functions and co-locating libraries with other local services.

Meeting with Ed Vaizey, Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries, 8 December

2. The Minister and I discussed progress with the Future Libraries Programme and the implications for councils of Government's decision to give the Arts Council responsibility for most of the functions currently carried out by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), which will be abolished by April 2012. I argued that councils and their local partners must lead improvement and efficiency in museums, and that the maximum amount of funding available must be devolved to the frontline, to keep museums open and engaged with their local schools and communities.

Meeting with Martha Lane Fox, UK Digital Champion, 1 December

3. I met with Martha Lane Fox, UK Digital Champion, to discuss the local government role in tackling digital inclusion and getting the 9 million people in the UK who have never used the internet online. I also emphasised how increasing internet access offered councils significant opportunities to transform the way they deliver local services, and the strong linkages to the roll-out of superfast broadband.

Superfast Broadband

4. I attended a Ministerial meeting on superfast broadband on 9 December. This followed-on from the Government's announcement that there will be a second wave of superfast broadband pilots and a digital hub in every community. In response, I have asked officers to develop a proposal for an LG Group offer to support councils in developing their on-line capability and sharing good practice.

2012 Games Nations and Regions Group

5. On 2 December Cllr Stephen Castle attended the Nations and Regions Group which met to discuss the latest preparations for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The group also discussed what will happen to the regional 2012 partnerships, most of which are funded and hosted by Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), once RDAs wind down. UK-wide engagement with the 2012 Games, including local government, is currently achieved through these partnerships. Cllr Castle emphasised the importance of finding a way for this engagement to continue when we are so close to the Games. This will vary between regions, depending upon the RDA's appetite for continuing with this work during the wind down phase, and partners' capacity to put in place temporary arrangements.

2012 Games National Resilience Team Steering Group

6. Following the establishment of the Home Office funded National Resilience Team to help councils meet the resilience challenges of hosting the 2012 Games, Cllr Stephen Castle attended the first meeting of the Steering Group, which will oversee progress. He emphasised the importance of the team working with councils who are hosting Olympic and Paralympic events outside London, and those councils outside London who will play a role in the Torch Relay, Cultural Olympiad and other significant events related to the 2012 Games.

Institute of Sport and Recreation Management (ISRM) Conference

7. I spoke at the ISRM Conference on 18 November on the topic of the future of sport and leisure in a new financial and political landscape. I argued that at a time of unprecedented budget pressures for discretionary services, it is vitally important that strong political and officer leadership positions sport at the heart of a council's efforts to create healthier, stronger and more prosperous communities.

Culture, Tourism and Sport Programme Board

8. The Board met on 17 November. Members received a presentation from the Youth Libraries Board about encouraging more young people to visit libraries, debated a proposal for local community banks to simplify the allocation of lottery funding to the local voluntary and community sector and discussed the LG Group's response to Government's consultation on the publicity code of conduct for councils.

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