

2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games Task and Finish Group – report from Cllr Stephen Castle (Chair)

1. The 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games Task and Finish Group had its last meeting before Games Time on 30 May 2012. The Group was set up by the LGA Executive to make sure that the LGA supports councils to contribute to the success of the Games and ensure that they have the latest information and share experience of local operational issues. The work of the task group to keep councils informed of any key issues that arise will continue over the summer. The Task and Finish Group will have a final meeting in October.

Torch relay

2. Councils are vital to the success of the Olympic torch relay, which started in Lands End on 19 May 2012 and is travelling around the UK before arriving at the Olympic Stadium on 27 July for the opening ceremony. Andrew Dent, the Head of City and UK Wide Operations at the Government Olympic Executive (GOE), attended the meeting to update members on the key learning so far. He also provided information about the role of the GOE UK Wide Ops Torch Hub which is supporting local authorities by sharing best practice as the torch moves around the country. A weekly 'lessons learnt' report is being sent to local authorities so that they benefit from the experience of places earlier on the route. The torch relay had a very successful and positive first week with good media coverage. The main issue had been larger than anticipated crowds and the need for accurate reporting on crowd numbers. Councils were advised to consider stewarding arrangements around the torch bearer handover points (known as 'kiss' points) and to increase capacity at these pressure points if possible. The Chairman also shared his experience of going to see the torch relay in Gloucestershire and suggested that an informal visit to see the relay in action and talking to people on the ground was a very good way for members to understand the likely challenges ahead in their own areas.

Emergency Planning and Resilience

3. The Task and Finish Group also discussed activity underway to make sure that councils have emergency planning and resilience arrangements in place for competition venues, the torch relay and other events. The National Local Authority Olympic Resilience Programme which is supported by the LGA, London Councils, London Fire Brigade and funded by the Home Office, is providing advice and assistance to councils. As part of this programme, officers are working to ensure that there are adequate officers briefed and available to represent the LGA at the Olympic Secretariat. A staff officer will be located in the Olympic Secretariat for all key times and will liaise closely with the Government Olympic Executive.

A Green and Sustainable Games

4. The Task and Finish Group was updated on the discussions and actions agreed by the LGA Environment and Housing Board at their May meeting, which focused on the need to ensure that the knowledge gained through the hosting of the Games is transferred to local authorities to assist them in their local ambitions on sustainability and the environment. The Board would be writing to the Commission for a Sustainable London 2012 to raise concerns about their lack of engagement with councils on environmental issues, including minimising waste generated by visitors and spectators, which was a missed opportunity. The Task and Finish Group suggested that the Board may also want to consider the sustainability agenda in the new venues outside London, which had received much less attention than the sustainable development of the Olympic Park.

Transport

5. Transport is a standing item on the task group's agenda because it is an absolute fundamental to making the Olympic Games a success. The LGA Economy and Transport Board is working closely with London Councils and the LGA will lend support, as appropriate, about concerns at the pace at which local traffic management and parking plans are being brought forward. Timescales are getting very tight, particularly if there are any objections in the public consultation stage.

Progress report from LGA Boards

6. The Task and Finish Group has been receiving regular reports on activity underway across the LGA in connection with the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The latest update included information from the Culture Tourism and Sport Board about 'Join in Local Sport' a new charitable trust set up with Government support to encourage people to get active and support local sports clubs on 18/19 August, which is the weekend between the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The report also featured the publication of the LGA handbook for councillors on community events, and 'Top tips for holding a public event in your community' which includes a link to the London 2012 'Local Leaders' initiative to encourage people to get involved and celebrate the Games this summer.

Communications

7. The LGA media and communications plan for London 2012 is being put into action and a number of press releases have been issued, including examples of case studies highlighting the work of individual councils. A survey is currently being carried out to make sure that the LGA has all the information we need to promote the work that councils are doing to help people celebrate the Games this summer.

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