

Culture, Tourism and Sport Board – report from Cllr Flick Rea (Chair)

Superfast Broadband

1. On 7 September, the Government announced a package of temporary relaxations of planning requirements, which it believes will make it easier for communications providers to deploy broadband infrastructure. In response, the LGA's press release and on the day briefing for councils highlighted that the real barrier to broadband roll out is the fact the Government does not have the EU's permission to spend the £530 million it wants to allocate to broadband. In the absence of state aid clearance there is no superfast broadband programme and resolving this blockage must be the main focus for Government. The Government's proposals are also a significant erosion of people's ability to influence their local environment. The current planning requirements are a vital part of the democratic process that seeks to weigh up the economic benefits of new infrastructure with the impact on quality of life, the local environment and businesses as a result of disruption due to road works.

Libraries

2. I have written to all library portfolio holders to update them on how the LGA and Arts Council England (ACE) are continuing to work in partnership to provide councils with valuable support in the re-design of their library services. As part of this we have invited expressions of interest in bespoke two-day peer support, as well as offering several upcoming free library political leadership seminars to be run throughout the country. The letter also included a copy of the LGA's recent publication "Local solutions for future local library services" which contains a plethora of good practice case studies.
3. Ahead of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee's report into library closures, I have also written to the Chair of the Committee to highlight why modernising the 1964 statutory duty to provide public libraries will help councils to ensure libraries continue to thrive in tough financial times. The LGA is calling for a twenty-first century Libraries Act: one that puts local accountability to the citizen and service user first, recognises that the library service is valuable for its outcomes and awards national government its true role as strategic leader, not superintendent.

2012 Games and Sport

4. As sporting fervour gripped the nation on the back of Team GB's gold medal haul, councils reported to us that leisure facilities were bursting with people wanting to get involved with sport. In response to the Prime Minister's comments about legacy, the LGA Chairman wrote to highlight that councils are ready to seize the opportunity to use the Games to make a long term difference to participation in physical activity and would welcome contributing towards the Government's plans on legacy. Councils are the biggest public sector funder of community sport, spending £1.8 billion a year. They

are also uniquely placed to encourage greater connectivity locally between National Governing Bodies, County Sport Partnerships, voluntary sports clubs and schools.

5. On July 18, I spoke at the third LGA / Sport England Leadership Academy. The event supported 15 portfolio holders for sport to develop further their understanding of the opportunities and challenges faced by local government funded and supported sport. Once again we received very positive feedback from delegates and we look forward to building upon our partnership with Sport England this year through a programme of leadership events and peer support.

Street Play

6. Following on from my interview on BBC Breakfast about the Street Play scheme in Bristol, I met with the scheme's founder and Play England's Director on 17 August. Street Play is a community-led project which works with the council to temporarily close roads to traffic in order to allow children to play safely in the street. This is an inexpensive and simple way for councils to support outdoor play and the LGA will share case studies to illustrate how it could work in other suitable places.

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