

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

Spending Review Submission

1. The culture, sport and digital economy element of the LGA's spending review submission made the case for giving councils the necessary levers and flexibilities to maximise the contribution of cultural services to local growth priorities. We argued for a new approach to lottery funding, a funding solution for Universal Credit that recognises public libraries will be a key access point for face-to-face support, a partnership approach to keeping the broadband roll-out on track and investment in physical activity to tackle obesity and improve public health. It was very encouraging that Maria Miller's recent keynote speech on the arts recognised that many councils are already driving local growth through investment in the arts.

Superfast Broadband

2. Robert Sullivan, Chief Executive of Broadband Delivery UK – the unit in DCMS responsible for government broadband funding – updated the LGA's Executive in March on the progress of the superfast broadband roll-out. He was fulsome about councils' commitment to making a success of superfast broadband roll-out. The programme is now moving at pace. 15 contracts with suppliers have been signed and there are more to follow. Members discussed the importance of broadband as an enabler of economic growth and reinforced that councils want to work in partnership with government and telecommunications providers to keep the roll-out on track and achieve value for money.

Visitor Economy

3. I met Viscountess Penny Cobham, Chair of VisitEngland on 19 March. I updated Lady Cobham on the LGA's new arts and growth publication, which highlights the importance of the arts to attracting visitors and encouraging them to stay longer. VisitEngland is supporting this through a new partnership arrangement with Arts Council England (ACE), which will result in around £3 million funding to local arts organisations and events to help places develop a strong cultural offer and attract more visitors. We are encouraging VisitEngland to involve fully councils and Local Enterprise Partnerships in the allocation of the funding.

Local Government and ACE Area Councils

4. ACE has published its new non-executive governance arrangements, following an independent review which the LGA contributed to. ACE is replacing its 9 regional councils with 5 area councils. I am pleased that one-third of seats will be reserved for local government, in recognition of our vital role supporting and funding the arts locally, and that ACE has agreed with the LGA that local government should nominate its own representatives to the area councils. I have written to Sir Peter Bazalgette, Chair of ACE, to offer the LGA's full support with the transition to the new arrangements.

Sport

5. I have written to Nick Bitel to congratulate him on his appointment as the new chair of Sport England. The LGA works in partnership with Sport England to deliver a very successful joint leadership programme for portfolio holders – we are running our fifth leadership academy in June. In my letter to Nick I also emphasised the opportunities councils' new responsibilities for public health present for sport and physical activity.

The future of culture

6. I participated in a lively debate organised by the "What Next?" alliance of cultural organisations on 29 April. My participation was an opportunity to highlight the many different ways local government is supporting culture in tough financial times and the importance of making the links between culture and other community outcomes, especially economic growth.

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