

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

Spending Review

1. Within the context of another very tough spending round, we were delighted that the LGA's year-long focus on the link between investment in the arts and economic growth paved the way for Arts Council England (ACE) and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to secure the Treasury's support and limit the reduction in arts funding to five per cent, compared to a eight per cent average for DCMS. This is good news for councils because so many organisations are co-funded and less pressure from the ACE side means less knock-on pressure on councils.
2. Thanks to the plethora of case studies that councils shared with us, we were able to develop a compelling narrative that showed how councils up and down the country are investing in the arts to boost visitor numbers, attract businesses, create jobs, revitalise places and develop the artistic talent of the future. Ed Vaizey, Arts Minister, and Sir Peter Bazalgette, Chair of ACE, publicly endorsed our campaign at the LGA's Culture Conference in Chester in March, and Maria Miller's recent keynote speech on the arts reinforced further the arguments we first made a year ago. Of course councils still face very difficult decisions, but the spending review outcome for the arts is a positive example of how we can influence and protect local investment that drives growth.

The visitor economy

3. I chaired a full capacity workshop on the visitor economy at the LGA Annual Conference on 2 July. VisitEngland's Chief Executive, James Berresford, shared an overview of the visitor economy landscape and highlighted where the opportunities and challenges lie for us to increase tourism revenue. Cllr Wendy Simon, Liverpool City Council, and Cllr Ann Steward, Breckland District Council, shared their local experiences of how their councils are galvanising the visitor economy in different ways to help drive local growth.
4. This session was the culmination of the CTS Board's year-long focus on the visitor economy, which has raised the profile of councils' leadership role, and I was pleased to launch a new publication which shares good practice case studies illustrating how councils up and down the country are using their visitor economy as a catalyst for growth.

The arts and culture

5. I addressed the Theatres Trust Annual Conference on 11 June. This was an opportunity to highlight the LGA's work on the arts and growth and to encourage theatres to work in partnership with councils to help to achieve local growth priorities.
6. On 13 June I met Diane Lees, Chair of the National Museums Directors' Council, and Director General of the Imperial War Museum. I highlighted the importance of regional and national museums sharing learning and expertise with smaller museums. We also discussed the First World War commemorations and I emphasised the many ways councils are planning to involve communities in local commemorations.

Item 3 (c)

7. Councillor Andrew Lewer and I attended the Society of Chief Librarians' Annual Conference on 20 June. We both chaired extremely interesting workshops on the opportunities and challenges facing public libraries. The impact of Universal Credit on public libraries was a key issue throughout the conference and we are looking forward to discussing this further with the Culture and Welfare Reform Ministers.
8. I represented the LGA at the launch of The Reading Agency / Society of Chief Librarians Reading Well Books on Prescription theme on 4 June, which is also highly relevant to the Community Wellbeing Board. The scheme enables adults to borrow GP-approved books from public libraries to self-help with a range of conditions and there has been excellent take-up from public libraries.
9. The Books on Prescription project was one of the issues discussed at a roundtable on 26 June hosted by Ed Vaizey MP, Culture Minister, about the valuable contribution of public libraries to improving health outcomes. Anna Soubry MP, Public Health Minister, and Janene Cox, President of the Society of Chief Librarians, also attended. I emphasised the opportunities presented by local government's new public health responsibilities to really maximise the role of libraries in improving health.

Sport

10. I was pleased to speak at the fifth LGA / Sport England Leadership Academy on 26 June. The event supported 15 portfolio holders to lead transformational change of sport services and in total we've reached 30% of portfolio holders through our academies programme.

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