

Notes of Decisions Taken and Action

Culture, Tourism and Sport Board

29 March 2010

St James' Park, Newcastle upon Tyne at 17.00

Present

Chair:	Cllr Chris White (Hertfordshire CC, Liberal Democrat Group)
Vice Chair:	Cllr Ian Mearns (Gateshead MBC, Labour Group)
Deputy Chairs:	Cllr Stephen Castle (Essex CC, Conservative Group), Cllr Andrew Cooper (Kirklees MBC, Independent Group)
Conservative:	Sir William Lawrence (Stratford-on-Avon DC), Cllr Trevor Thorne (Northumberland CC), Cllr Kevin Carroll (Torbay); Cllr Geoffrey Theobald (Brighton & Hove);
Labour:	Cllr Mark Hackett (Manchester City), Cllr Simon Henig (Durham CC)
Liberal Democrat:	Cllr John Commons (Manchester City), Cllr Gary Millar (Liverpool City)

In attendance: Richard Hunt (National Culture Forum); Nigel Lynn (CLOA); Paul Raynes, Laura Caton, Steven Skelton, Paul Johnston (LGA Group)

Apologies: Cllr Henry Smith (West Sussex CC); Cllr Bryony Rudkin (Ipswich BC); Cllr Flick Rea (Camden LB)

1. Notes of the last meeting

The notes of the last meeting of the Board were agreed as a correct record. Cllr Hackett updated members on his study visit, representing the Board, to All Souls Church, Bolton, to see firsthand the work of the Churches Conservation Trust.

2. Improving culture, tourism and sport services in Councils

The Board received a presentation from Richard Hunt, Chair of the National Culture Forum (NCF), on the role of the NCF in improving culture, tourism and sport services in Councils, and the ways in which the LGA Group might work with the Forum.

Members agreed that the professional officer bodies represented by the NCF had a key role to play in improving cultural services, through ensuring officers were equipped with the right skills, and could ensure their services were contributing to local priority outcomes.

Members welcomed the appointment of Cllr Commons as the Board's Improvement Champion. In response to the paper, members said that a mature local cultural offer was characterised by a variety of services and events from across the sector, diverse in size and scale, which made clear contributions to strengthening communities and

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improving quality of life for people. These contributions should be acknowledged by, and embedded in, all local public services.

Members agreed that authorities that delivered cultural services well were often those with portfolio holders for culture, tourism and sport as senior Cabinet members. Political leadership was therefore equally important in promoting and supporting the local cultural offer. Some members felt that the political vision necessary to invest in and improve cultural services – such as was displayed in Gateshead – was only viable where vital, statutory services such as Social Services were seen to be delivered well first; cultural improvement should not therefore be looked at in isolation.

Members felt that the Leading Learning Programme, managed by the NCF, should also be aimed at Council officers working in other departments such as planning and licensing, to ensure that the benefits of culture were promoted as widely as possible.

Members thanked Richard for his presentation.

Decision

The LGA to continue to engage with the National Culture Forum to improve culture, tourism and sport services in Councils.

Action

The Chair to write to DCMS suggesting that improving cultural services be a future item for discussion at the Department's Local Government Network.

Officers to support NCF engagement with the Improvement Programme Management Board and to help ensure this is sufficiently focused on the actions and needs of councils.

3. Libraries modernisation review

Members noted that the Libraries modernisation review had been launched. Members said that they were disappointed about the proposed creation of a Libraries Development Agency, and expressed concern over the prospect of further regulation from central government on locally delivered libraries services.

The goal, set out in the review, of ensuring wider digital access was positive, but Members said that the scope of the review focussed too heavily on this. Councils had proven themselves capable of delivering innovative and modern library services that respond positively and flexibly to local demands – acknowledgement of this was not sufficient in the review. Members were in agreement that much within the review was a retrograde step, and that potential expansion of the MLA role should be opposed.

4. Member feedback from outside bodies

Members felt that, despite LGA communications, British Tourism Week had not been sufficiently publicised at the local level and councils had not been sufficiently considered as a target audience.

Cllr Theobald said that the issue of student visas had been discussed at the most recent British Resorts and Destinations Association meeting, and that the current student visa regime was felt to be overly restrictive. Members noted that visa restrictions were also proving detrimental to cultural events including performers from outside the European Union.

Action

Officers to raise concerns over the current visa regime with the Safer Communities Board.

5. Board update on current issues

Members noted the report.

Members welcomed the further funding for leadership and capacity building that Olympic and Paralympic Games legacy Beacon councils had received as part of the Local Leadership, Local Legacy project.

Members noted that the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee was to publish its report on the future for local and regional media on 6 April. [This report can now be found at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmcmds.htm>]

Decision

Lead Members to discuss the local authority relations with the BBC at a future meeting.

6. Any other business

Members agreed that arrangements for the 2011 Conference would be discussed at the next Lead Members' meeting.

Action

Officers to ensure that the 2011 CTS Conference is arranged as an agenda item for the next Lead Members' meeting.

Date of next meeting

1.00pm, 27 May 2010, Local Government House