

Improving culture, tourism and sport services in councils

Summary

At its last meeting the Board received an update report outlining the work of the Culture and Sport Improvement Programme over the last five years.

This paper builds on that background information and will be accompanied by a presentation by Richard Hunt, Chair of the National Culture Forum and Head of Service Development (Culture, Sport and Communities), Suffolk CC.

Recommendations

That members note the paper and presentation and comments on the questions raised in paragraph 12.

Action

Officers to take forward suggested actions.

Improving culture, tourism and sport services in councils

Background

1. At the January board meeting members received an update on the IDeA Culture and Sport improvement programme, which is funded by DCMS and the NDPBs. This paper provides further information on recent progress towards LAA improvement targets that fall within the board's interest, and makes suggestions for how the board might give more explicit focus to improvement issues.
2. As part of this item, members will receive a presentation by Richard Hunt, Chair of the National Culture Forum and Head of Service Development (Culture, Sport and Communities), Suffolk CC. Members are asked specifically to consider the role of the National Culture Forum and the importance of officer leadership in improving culture, tourism and sport services.

Improving the positioning of culture and sport services

3. The LGA, IDeA, DCMS and national quangos have, in recent years, been seeking to improve both the positioning of the culture and sport sector in councils and the performance of these services. By **positioning** we mean how well culture and sport is valued as contributing to the corporate priorities of councils and LSPs.
4. In the Comprehensive Area Assessment only one council, the City of London, was awarded a Green Flag specifically for its culture and sport services. However thirteen (18%) of the seventy-three Green Flags awarded to local authorities recognised a direct relevance or contribution by culture or leisure services, and a further fifteen (20%) recognised some relevance or contribution from culture or leisure services.
5. These results appear to confirm previous research that **culture and sport is now well positioned in about a third of single tier councils** but in the remaining two thirds positioning remains a challenge. In many two tier areas fragmentation and relationships remain barriers to better positioning and will need to be addressed if commissioning opportunities are to be taken. We know that good positioning occurs where:
 - Managers and staff have a good understanding of the strategic and corporate context in which they are providing culture and sport services;
 - **There is good political and managerial leadership;**
 - There is active and appropriate engagement in the right partnerships;

- There is evidence and good performance management to demonstrate the contribution the services can make to improving outcomes;

Improving performance

6. Locally, improved performance will be judged by achieving better outcomes for local people and communities as measured by the LAA improvement targets, where these exist. The current round of LAAs comes to an end in 2011.
7. Nationally, participation in sport and active recreation has increased by 0.7% over the last 3 years, the equivalent of about half a million people. However participation in culture has reduced over the last year, with arts engagement falling by 0.5%, museum and gallery visits by 1.7% and use of libraries by 2.3%. See the graph at **Annex A**. Cumulatively, there are 118 LAA improvement targets linked to culture and sport. Of these only 12 are showing a statistically significant increase, and 5 are showing a statistically significant decrease.

National Culture Forum

8. The National Culture Forum (NCF) was established in 2005 to bring together all the professional bodies and officer networks representing those working across the cultural services in the public sector. The Forum runs an officer improvement programme funded by central government; this has two strands: the Forum has commissioned papers on the value of culture and sport to wider agenda (the first looks at how the sector can support adult social services), and it runs conferences and seminars for NCF members.
9. The NCF also manages the Leading Learning programme, which aims to build capacity amongst officers working in local government cultural services. The Programme currently has 29 participants and is in its second year (there were 30 participants in the first tranche), and is supported by Creative and Cultural Skills (the Sector Skills Council), the DCMS, IDeA and NDPBs.
10. Evidence has shown that officers in the sector often lack the right skills to engage “at the top table” in local authorities. This means the NCF, as the forum in which officer leaders from across the sector can develop common positions, has a key role to play in improving services. The Forum can help overcome the tendency towards silo thinking in culture, tourism and sport services, and to create a shared offer for council Leaders and senior politicians that shows what the sector can achieve for the councils as a whole.

Role of the LGA Board

11. In January 2010 the LGA Executive agreed to create nine programme boards, in place of the LGA policy boards, to deliver the LGA Group business plan priorities through more active engagement with councils, and to **strengthen the link**

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between improvement and policy/lobbying. These changes will be voted on at the Group General Assembly in July 2010.

12. Lead Members, at their meeting on 11 February, agreed to appoint Cllr John Commons as the board's **improvement champion**. Cllr Commons will provide an initial point of contact on Improvement issues, for example in liaising between the Board and the IDeA or the National Culture Forum.
13. In light of the issues raised in this paper, and in the accompanying presentation by Richard Hunt, members are asked to comment on:
 - What does a mature culture and sport sector look like, and what does it need from its officers?
 - and from this, what do members see as the role for the National Culture Forum in progressing this agenda?
 - How should the LGA Group progress work to improve officer leadership in the culture, tourism and sport sectors?
 - and how would the Board like to engage with the Culture and Sport Improvement Programme in the future?
 - How might the LGA Group reflect the Executive's direction that future Programme working should promote the Group's priorities, "*through more active engagement with councils and [through]...strengthen[ed]...link[s] between improvement and policy/lobbying*"?

Financial Implications

14. None for the LGA. The IDeA will contribute £150,000 to the improvement programme across 2010-11.

Implications for Wales

15. The improvement programme is mainly focused on England, particularly where funding is provided through DCMS and English NDPBs. However, material available on Knowledge is accessible to Welsh authorities and a number of Welsh councils receive the IDeA newsletter.

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National Participation Rates

