

Item 7

MLA / Arts Council Transfer

Purpose of report

For discussion and direction.

Summary

This paper updates the Board on preparations for Arts Council England to take on new national responsibilities for museums and libraries from October 2011.

Recommendation

Members are invited to consider the implications of the MLA / Arts Council transfer for local government nationally and locally and to give any further steer on the suggested next steps for the Local Government Group – in particular the outline proposal for councils to be invited to form local museum partnerships.

Action

To be taken forward by officers as directed by Members.

Contact officer: Laura Caton
Position: Business Manager, LGG
Phone no: 020 7664 3154
E-mail: laura.caton@local.gov.uk

MLA / Arts Council Transfer

Background

1. As part of the Coalition Government's plans to rationalise non-departmental public bodies, it was announced in July 2010 that the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) would be abolished.
2. In December 2010 it was confirmed that Arts Council England (ACE) would take on the following functions relating to museums and libraries:
 - 2.1 the Renaissance in the Regions programme for regional museums, including completing the re-design of its content and operation;
 - 2.2 regional museums improvement and development agenda, including the Accreditation Standard and the Designation Scheme and projects relating to the 2012 Cultural Olympiad;
 - 2.3 libraries improvement and development agenda;
 - 2.4 cultural property functions including, for example, export licensing, Government Indemnity, acceptance in lieu and security advice.
3. Most of these changes will take place in October 2011. There are significant implications for local government's relationship with ACE nationally and locally and for the support that is available to councils to drive up and maintain high quality libraries and museums at a time of unprecedented budget pressures. ACE will have fewer resources than MLA so it will not be possible to sustain the current level of activity. The LG Group's response also needs to be shaped by wider discussions about the future cultural improvement offer.
4. MLA and ACE jointly published a road map in February 2011, setting out key transition milestones. Between now and the end of June the Arts Council is consulting with libraries, museums and relevant national and professional bodies on how best to take forward its new responsibilities, how to manage the funding process for 2012–15 and the longer term direction of libraries and museums. ACE has also commissioned Baroness Estelle Morris to advise them on how their current strategic framework, *Achieving Great Art for Everyone*, could adapt and expand to reflect libraries and museums.
5. The MLA's responsibilities for archives will transfer to The National Archives and Members are discussing this under item 2.

Implications for local government

6. The transfer from MLA to ACE will have significant implications for local government locally and nationally, including:
 - 6.1 **Managing and influencing the transfer.** ACE is currently the national development body for the arts and its responsibilities include supporting theatre, music, literature, dance, photography, digital art, carnival and crafts. Whilst ACE has a body of expertise and experience in those areas, taking on responsibilities for supporting public libraries and museums is a significant challenge. A process is underway to consult with relevant organisations on how best to discharge those new functions and to ensure that ACE has the necessary expertise. A significant issue for councils is capturing and transferring knowledge and experience as new systems are set up.
 - 6.2 **Forging a new relationship between Arts Council and local government.** Nationally and locally, local government needs to forge a new relationship with ACE that reflects both the radically different service landscape that councils face and exploits the benefits of aligning the arts, museums and culture in a single conversation.
 - 6.3 **The extent and shape of future national improvement support for local museums and libraries.** There are two key issues. Firstly, the future of the MLA-led Renaissance in the Regions programme that invested in regional and local museums. The Culture Minister has already said that he wants to completely re-design the Renaissance programme and the resources available have been reduced by 15% to £43.4 million.
 - 6.4 The Arts Council has said that it supports the vision for a reshaped Renaissance and 2011/12 will be a transitional year. ACE will consult with the museums sector between now and the end of June before taking final decisions on the new shape of Renaissance in autumn 2011 and how it can be part of a coherent cultural offer that also encompasses the arts and libraries. Applications for Renaissance funding for 2012-15 will open in September and funding decisions will be announced by the end of 2011.
 - 6.5 Secondly, how ACE intends to support the improvement of public libraries and in particular the Future Libraries Programme (FLP). The FLP is currently supporting 36 councils involved in ten projects to develop creative solutions to delivering modern and efficient library services, and to capture and share the learning across the local government sector. Members have previously agreed on the importance of a second wave of FLP projects as being the best way to support councils in both meeting their statutory duty and ensuring communities have library services that

Item 7

meet their needs, and that has been agreed between Councillor White and the Minister as an appropriate way forward.

Local Government Group response

7. The LG Group is representing councils' interests in the transfer through the Chair of the CTS Programme Board's regular meetings with the Culture Minister and representation on key groups set up to oversee the transfer.
8. Our aim is to secure a new relationship with ACE that:
 - 10.1 responds to the radically different service landscape; namely financial challenges, localism, a commissioning approach to cultural services and councils taking collective responsibility for their own improvement; and
 - 10.2 furthers our key aims around strengthening local accountability of cultural services, better aligning the public subsidy to culture with the priorities of local communities and achieving better coordination of funding from central and local sources.
11. The LGG has developed a vision for what that relationship might look like, based upon the principles listed below. Councillor Chris White set these out in more detail in an exchange of letters with Dame Liz Forgan, Chair of Arts Council England (**Annex A**):
 - 11.1 **Partnership** – there is an opportunity for a “single conversation” between ACE and local councils, spanning libraries, museums and the arts. More joined-up conversations about key issues including commissioning, assets, reaching marginalised communities and the contribution of culture to the overall priorities of a place will lead to a more efficient use of resources and better outcomes.
 - 11.2 **Self improvement, innovation and modernisation** – we want to ensure that the public continue to have access to high quality local museums and libraries. This means driving down costs whilst maintaining front line provision. ACE can help by actively supporting councils to develop imaginative solutions that are locally appropriate, and owned and driven by councils themselves. Working with the LG Group, we can capture and share that learning with other councils. The Future Libraries Programme provides a model.
 - 11.3 **Leadership** – we need to harness political and professional leadership to ensure that culture has a strong voice at the top table. ACE can help to build leadership capacity and visibility by supporting councils to break down silos and encourage the development of a ‘whole culture’ approach to strategic planning and investment in culture.

Item 7

Recommendations and Next Steps

12. We need to build upon the principles set out above and develop specific proposals to discuss with ACE during the consultation phase.
13. In relation to museums, the **priority is to submit a response to ACE's review of the Renaissance programme by the end of June.** It is suggested that our response builds upon the Board's previous discussions on museums improvement, and makes the case for councils to be invited to form new local museum partnerships that will drive locally appropriate solutions for improving performance and ensure that resources are devolved to the frontline to keep museums open.
14. **Members are asked to comment on an outline model attached at Annex B.** The model is based on the key principles that have previously been agreed between the MLA and local and national government as the basis for a successful, sector-led approach to improving services.
15. Subject to a steer from Members, the next step is to **work in consultation with the professional bodies on a detailed costed proposal that also reflects the outcome of current work to determine LGG resources to support cultural improvement in the new organisation.**
16. On libraries we already have a clear offer in the form of the Future Libraries Programme and our immediate priority is to get clarity on the following:
 - 16.1 Precisely what the Arts Council's role in relation to libraries improvement will be, and what budget will support this activity;
 - 16.2 The timeframe and shape of a second wave of Future Library projects;
 - 16.3 Clarity about what role the Arts Council will play in the discharging of the Secretary of State's statutory powers in relation to libraries.
17. **It is suggested that the Chair of the Board writes to the Chair of the Arts Council underlining our commitment to the Future Libraries Programme and setting out initial thoughts on phase 2 and how the FLP can be part of an integrated cultural offer.**

Financial implications

18. The LG Group financial contribution to FLP and any contribution to museums improvement needs to be taken forward in the context of discussions about the overall culture improvement offer.