

Libraries

Purpose of report

For discussion and direction.

Summary

This report updates Members that the Culture, Media and Sport (CMS) Committee has launched an inquiry into library closures. The LGA has written a draft position paper responding to the Committee's inquiry, this is attached as **Annex A**.

Recommendation

Members are asked to comment on the draft position paper (attached as **Annex A**).

Action

Officers to amend the draft position paper to reflect Members' comments, and subject to final sign-off by Lead Members, submit the LGA's response to the CMS Committee by 20 January.

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Libraries

Summary

1. The Culture, Media and Sport Committee has launched an inquiry into library closures. The Committee is inviting written submissions and requesting views on the following issues:
 - 1.1. what constitutes a comprehensive and efficient library service for the 21st century
 - 1.2. the extent to which planned library closures are compatible with the requirements of the Libraries & Museums Act 1964 and the Charteris Report
 - 1.3. the impact library closures have on local communities
 - 1.4. the effectiveness of the Secretary of State's powers of intervention under the Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964.
2. This also gives the LGA an invaluable opportunity to provide key points on the library sector more generally. In the December CTS bulletin, the LGA invited local authorities to share their views with us to help form the LGA's response.
3. The LGA's position is that innovation, coupled with the energy and expertise of local authorities themselves, is the best way to provide better library services whilst responding to unprecedented budget pressures. Our response also includes an Appendix of case studies to showcase the innovative work local authorities are doing on re-designing library services.

Background

4. The LGA and Arts Council England (ACE) recently launched the Libraries Development Initiative (LDI) – a national sector led improvement programme building upon our already highly successful Future Libraries Programme. £200,000 of funding will support around 10 projects from March 2012 until March 2013.
5. Projects will explore the benefits of embedding arts and culture in libraries and new ways of working that will enhance libraries' sustainability and relevance as vibrant hubs in their local communities. We received over 100 expressions of interest for the Libraries Development Initiative. Successful applicants have been invited to submit full bids by 20 January.

6. In addition, the LGA is taking forward a number of other actions to support councils. During December 2011 we ran a successful libraries seminar with portfolio holders to share good practice arising from the Future Libraries Programme. Due to the success of this event we are re-running it in February in Leeds. We are supporting councils who want to peer review their library services through a bursary scheme and will shortly be launching an online tool to assist councils who want to explore different ways of delivering library services.