

## **Update on current issues**

### **Purpose of report**

For information/ noting.

### **Summary**

This report updates Members on current issues of interest to the Board which are not covered elsewhere in the agenda. Updates are included on:

- Libraries
- Culture and Arts
- The visitor economy and licensing
- Superfast Broadband
- Sport and Physical Activity
- Heritage

### **Recommendation**

Members are asked to note the update.

### **Action**

Officers to action as appropriate.

**Contact officer:**

Siraz Natha

**Position:**

Adviser

**Phone no:**

078999 74298

**E-mail:**

siraz.natha@local.gov.uk

## Update on current issues

### Libraries

#### Independent report on England's public library service

1. An independent report on the public library service in England has been commissioned from philanthropist, entrepreneur and publisher William Sieghart by Culture Minister, Ed Vaizey MP, and Local Government Minister, Brandon Lewis MP. Mr Sieghart will lead a panel to take evidence and report to Ministers by the end of the year.
2. The LGA has highlighted that public libraries are a service provided by democratically-elected local councils and we have offered to help William Sieghart's panel as it conducts its review. CTS Board Members are meeting Mr Sieghart on 8 April.

#### Annual state of the libraries report

3. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has published its first ever Government report to Parliament on libraries. The report says that local authorities remain best placed to assess the needs of their local communities and design services accordingly, within the requirements of their statutory duty to deliver a service which is comprehensive and efficient. The report further states that local authorities invested over £780 million in the library service in 2012/13.
4. The LGA and Arts Council England are jointly supporting council library services through leadership academies and peer support. Most recently 20 portfolio holders attended the latest seminar at the new Library of Birmingham.
5. The full report is available on the DCMS website at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-under-the-public-libraries-and-museums-act-1964-for-201213>

### Culture and Arts

#### Arts Council England

6. The Culture, Media and Sport Committee have launched a short inquiry into the work of Arts Council England (ACE). The LGA's response is attached at **Annex A**.

#### Warwick Commission

7. The University of Warwick has launched a two-year Commission, chaired by Vikki Heywood CBE, to undertake a comprehensive and holistic investigation into the future of cultural value. With a particular focus on the state of culture in England, the ambition is that the Commission will gather together the evidence and arguments to energise the debates about the future of investment and engagement in our cultural lives.
8. Councillor Flick Rea MBE gave evidence to the Commission and spoke about the investment that councils make to develop a rich cultural offer in their localities and how

the LGA was supporting councils to be more creative in linking cultural activities to other council priorities such as health improvement.

#### Creative industries boost UK economy

9. Official statistics have revealed that the UK's creative industries are now worth £71.4 billion per year to the UK economy. This grouping includes museums, galleries and libraries, performing and visual arts alongside film, television and music industries. This represents growth of almost 10 per cent in 2012, outperforming all other sectors of UK industry and accounting for 1.68 million jobs in 2012 (5.6 per cent of UK jobs).
10. The LGA is working with Arts Council England to enhance the contribution to growth that council cultural services makes and produced a joint publication.

#### **Visitor Economy and licensing**

##### Rewiring licensing

11. At the LGA annual licensing conference on 4 February, the 'Open for Business: Rewiring Licensing' report was launched. The report outlines the LGA's call for full reform of the licensing framework. This would deliver a deregulatory approach that frees up business and council time while maintaining important safeguards for local communities and businesses.
12. Licensing is an integral part of councils' broader regulatory services and are increasingly recognised as being at the heart of councils' approaches to economic growth; it is believed that over fifty per cent of a business's contact with a council takes place through regulatory services.
13. The impact of licensing is significant in the hospitality sector, particularly pubs and restaurants, which hold the greatest number of licences, permits or registrations. It is estimated that if the cost of fragmented licensing controls, unnecessary bureaucracy and related regulation were equal to just 0.1 per cent of annual turnover in the hospitality sector, this would equate to £90 million, offering scope for potential savings if these issues could be addressed through licensing reform.

##### Gambling

14. The support of two major players from the gambling sector has greatly strengthened the LGA's position in pushing for controls to restrict the numbers of betting shops and gaming machines, in line with our Rewiring Licensing proposals. Paddy Power has also contacted the LGA to seek a meeting on this issue, albeit noting that their perspective differs from the perspective offered from others in the industry.
15. The LGA proposal, subject to member agreement, is the establishment of a member led joint LGA-betting industry task and finish group, as suggested by BetFred. The objective of the group would be to explore the options for regulating the number and activity of betting shops, with a view to agreeing an industry / sector led response and making jointly agreed recommendations to government as required.

16. Lead members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board are due to meet with officials from BetFred, Paddy Power and from William Hill in early March, with the intention that a workshop on this issue should be held at the annual conference in July.
17. The LGA's future activity on licensing reform will be two-pronged, focusing both on working with councils to explore what they can do independently of legislative reform and on lobbying government to implement reform.
18. The LGA's proposals are intended to benefit the hospitality and tourism sectors, particularly through the single application form and licence for life.

### **Superfast Broadband**

#### £10m 'pot' to pilot alternative broadband technologies

19. A £10 million fund will be available to alternative technology providers who come forward with innovative ideas to help superfast broadband reach Britain's most remote communities. The announcement coincides with the appointment of a new Broadband Chief Executive, Chris Townsend, who helped to deliver the hugely successful London 2012 Games.
20. He will take on delivery of the whole Broadband Delivery programme including the fund announced today. The additional funding is focusing to enable broadband provision in the hardest and most remote five per cent of premises in Britain.
21. The LGA is pressing BDUK to address the concerns of councils relating to data sharing and delays in provision of information, which has the potential to delay the achievement of implementation timescales and achieving value for money on government investment.

### **Sport and Physical Activity**

#### Physical activity legacy

22. The Chairman of the LGA, Sir Merrick Cockell and Councillor Flick Rea met Lord Coe, the Government's legacy ambassador, to discuss ways to tackle the increasing levels of physical inactivity within England. Following a very positive meeting, it was agreed that the LGA would work closely with the Cabinet Office Legacy Unit to identify ways in which the two organisations could support councils to further increase physical activity levels.

#### Community Sport

23. Nick Bitel, Chair of Sport England, writing in the LGA's First Magazine stated that community sport can help councils save money and get more residents active. Mr Bitel also mentions that with councils facing budget cuts, it is vital to work more in partnership and Sport England has developed toolkits on procurement and affordable facilities to help councils plan for the future. The article is attached at **Annex B**.

24. The LGA continues to work closely with Sport England in delivering the political leadership programme, which includes leadership academies, peer reviews and alumni events.

#### Inspired by 2012 brand

25. Councils which have projects or initiatives inspired by or linked to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games or their legacy can apply for the 'inspired by 2012' brand. Below is a link to the guidelines which show the brand and provide information on how to use it.
26. Getting the brand is straightforward – email [Olympiclegacy@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Olympiclegacy@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk) with a short description of your project, how it is linked to the 2012 Games or its inspiration and how you would like to use the brand. There is no charge but use of the brand is governed by a simple licence agreement.
27. Further information at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspired-by-2012-brand>

#### Local authority obesity data released

28. New local authority excess weight data published by Public Health England (PHE) confirms that 64 per cent of adults are overweight or obese. For the first time local data is available on the Public Health Outcomes Framework [data tool](#) for each local authority and includes data on physical activity and inactivity rates.

#### **Heritage**

##### LGA response English Heritage New Model consultation

29. The LGA has responded to a Department for Culture, Media and Sport consultation on the future of English Heritage and, in particular, a New Model for the management for the National Heritage Collection. In January, the Government announced the creation of a new charity arm of English Heritage, 'Historic England', to manage the National Heritage Collection, which includes Stonehenge, parts of Hadrian's Wall and Dover Castle, supported by an investment of £80 million. The public were consulted on the New Model and the management of the National Heritage Collection.
30. The LGA welcomed the New Model, emphasising the importance of English Heritage as a key strategic partner for local government and local councils in the management, conservation and promotion of local heritage. The LGA's response encouraged the continuation of close working with councils, particularly on planning, which play a vital role in supporting heritage through neighbourhood planning, wider civic engagement and linking heritage to local growth.
31. The LGA's response is attached at **Annex C**.