

## Public affairs and communications work

### Purpose of report

For information.

### Summary

An update on the LGA's lobbying and communications work.

### Recommendations

That the Board notes the report and offers recommendations on taking our lobbying work forward.

### Actions

Officers will identify further opportunities to engage with parliamentarians, including through relevant All-Party Parliamentary Groups.

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## Public affairs work

### Select Committees

1. We submitted written evidence to the [Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee inquiry on sport in our communities](#). In our evidence, we highlighted local government's role in supporting and maintaining sports facilities and leisure centres and the importance of central government investing in these ageing facilities so those disadvantaged communities who need the infrastructure most continue to have access. We also stressed the importance of physical activity on mental and physical health, and how councils are integral in rebuilding the health of the nation.
2. We have been called to give oral evidence to the [House of Lords Committee on the National Plan for Sport and Recreation](#). The Board's Chair, Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson, will be giving evidence to the Committee on Wednesday 16 November at 4.30pm. We are waiting to hear the focus of the session, and will update the Board in the new year when the session has taken place.

### Debates and oral questions

3. [Briefed MPs ahead of a Westminster Hall debate on COVID-19 restrictions on gyms and sport](#). In the debate, [MPs recongised the importance of gyms and leisure centres on mental and physical health](#). LGA Vice-President Catherine Mckinnell MP (Labour, Newcastle Upon Tyne North) highlighted that while the £100 million for leisure centres is welcome, there are questions around whether councils will have the freedom to provide help where it is needed most. Responding to the debate, the Minister for Sport, Heritage and Tourism, Nigel Huddleston MP, paid tribute "to all the hard work carried out by sports' governing bodies and clubs across the country to ensure that we were ready for the return of sport—from gyms, leisure centres and pools".
4. [Briefed MPs ahead of a debate on spending of DCMS on support measures for the DCMS sectors during and after the COVID-19 pandemic](#). In the debate, DCMS Select Committee member Damian Hinds MP (Conservative, East Hampshire) highlighted the work of his council supporting local cultural and sporting assets, including Grayshott Concerts, the Phoenix theatre and Petersfield rugby club.
5. We briefed MPs ahead of a debate on the contribution of theatres, live music venues and other cultural attractions to the local economy. LGA Vice-President, Andrew Lewer MP (Conservative, Northampton South) [quoted our briefing and called on the Government to "adopt a place-based approach to recovery"](#) by ensuring that councils are at the table for discussions". He added that councils are one of the biggest investors in cultural activity, spending around £1.1 billion a year, so they should be part of future discussions.

## Other

6. The Chairman, Cllr James Jamieson, and Cllr Brigid Jones, member of the LGA's Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, took part in a Devolution APPG meeting on fiscal devolution, where the idea of a Tourism Levy was discussed. (Full details of this meeting can be found at the bottom of this page: <https://connectpa.co.uk/devolution-appg/>)
7. Briefed LGA Vice-President Catherine West MP (Labour, Hornsey and Wood Green) with our lines on the leisure sector, following a briefing call with Parliamentarians on the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR).

## Events

8. Cllr Vernon-Jackson chaired a joint event with the Football Foundation on '[Unlocking the power of football investment](#)' on 19 November 2020. The event marked the culmination of two years work by the Foundation to develop a [local football facilities plan](#) for every council area. These were published on the day, and the event explored how areas could access the £100 million being made available by the Foundation to deliver the plans, and the benefits of working in partnership to improve facilities.
9. Attended by 275 delegates, the event featured presentations from Gareth Southgate, Tim Hollingsworth, Martin Glenn, Cheshire West and Chester Council, and Sunderland City Council.
10. The CTS team also supported delivery of the '[Irrecoverable losses on income generating contracts](#)' event on 27 November. This briefed councils on the Government's 75% income match promise, along with wider LGA work on supporting contracts. The CTS contribution focused on the issues relating to public leisure contracts.
11. The team has also delivered a range of improvement webinars as part of our contracts with Arts Council England and Sport England. These are covered in the separate improvement paper.

## Press and media

12. Cllr Vernon-Jackson wrote two articles for the October edition of *First* magazine:
  - 12.1. [Just do it](#) explored the key role of sport and physical activity in supporting and leading communities through Covid-19.
  - 12.2. [Supporting economic recovery](#) explored the way in which libraries can support an economic recovery, through their CV writing and job clubs, business and intellectual property centres, and free internet access – which was recognised as an essential service during lockdown and granted an exemption to keep operating.

13. [COVID-19 has devastated councils' park services](#) - Parks proved to be a lifeline for local communities during the COVID-19 crisis but the pandemic has had a devastating impact on councils' park services.
14. [Councils one of the top investors in culture, sport and leisure](#) - Councils remain one of the biggest investors in culture, sport and leisure - spending over £2 billion a year.
15. [LGA responds to further details around £1 billion COVID-19 funding for councils](#) - Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the LGA's Resources Board, responds to the details around the further £1 billion announced for councils by the Government earlier this month, including £100 million for leisure services.

### **Implications for Wales**

16. Culture, tourism and sport services are devolved to the Welsh Assembly, although there remains significant cross-over in practice and need.

### **Financial implications**

17. None.

### **Next steps**

18. The CTS and Public Affairs teams are meeting to discuss further opportunities to influence parliamentarians, including seeking the input and expertise of the LGA's Vice-Presidents.