

Update on work to support Sport, Leisure and Physical Activity Services

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This paper outlines:

1. LGA/Sport England Leadership Essentials Programme
2. Tennis Court funding
3. engagement with the Local Government Physical Activity Partnership (LGPAP)

Is this report confidential? Yes ☐ No ☒

Recommendation/s

That the Board note the report and responds to the question posed in para 12

Action/s

Officers to respond accordingly

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Update on work to support Sport, Leisure and Physical Activity Services

Background

1. This paper updates members on three areas of activity concerning sport, leisure and physical activity.

LGA/Sport England Leadership Essentials Programme

2. Since 2017 the LGA and Sport England have been working together to design and deliver a leadership programme for councillors and senior strategic officers with a remit for sport and physical activity within their council/organisation. The programmes are now delivered by the LGA's improvement team.
3. The programme equips participants with the essential knowledge and skills to champion sport and physical activity in their local areas and to respond to the changes in national and local policy objectives and strategies and to the needs of local communities.
4. The current programme embeds Sport England's new ten-year strategy "[Uniting the Movement](#)" and supports participants to respond to both historical challenges within the sector and to the changes to delivery models and funding pressures escalated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to the pandemic, the programme was delivered online, which enabled Sport England and the LGA to continue to provide improvement support and involved redesigning content to be appropriate for online delivery and reflect issues arising from the pandemic. The officer and councillor programmes both focus on systemic leadership in complex contexts. This includes joined-up thinking to form approaches to help tackle health inequalities and reframing existing thinking in terms of community need and behaviour. To support this, the programme puts a strong emphasis on networking and sharing good practice.
5. To date, 247 officers who are leaders and aspiring leaders from local authorities, leisure trusts and Active Partnerships have taken part in the officer programme. Since moving to the online format, two councillor programmes have been delivered, attended by 20 councillors. The online format supported officers and councillors with busy schedules to be able to attend the sessions, including individuals with childcare and other personal responsibilities. The LGA and Sport England are committed to continual improvement regarding equality, diversity and inclusion and at each

planning stage and will continue to seek views and identify ways in which EDI can be further improved.

6. The officer programme has recently been evaluated and the report is due to be published early this year. The report has been designed to support Sport England and the LGA to identify market need and future funding offers and will be made available as an interactive pdf and web version. A joint comms plan is also being developed. This version should be available in the coming weeks. The evaluation found:

“The Sport England/LGA officer Leadership programme has been highly valued by the participants enabling them to be more confident in their leadership approach in what they do and importantly ‘how’ they do it. They suggested that to continue to encourage this leadership approach that the programme and any future leadership activities could be taken forward in a wider and deeper way. More widely through increasing the numbers of people who have access and linking to more sectors, such as health, the environment, and deeper through more localised activity in places.”

7. An award extension has been agreed in principle with Sport England and we are awaiting a formal offer letter. The extension covers the period up to May 2022. The proposal is for the delivery of 4 x Alumni Events, 2 x Action Learning Sets, 2 x virtual alumni networking events, 3 x Leadership Essential Programmes for Officers and 1 x Leadership Essentials Programme for Councillors. This will involve online and face-to-face delivery.

Tennis Court Funding

8. The Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021 announced £21.9 million over the SR21 period to refurbish more than 4,500 public tennis courts in the most deprived parts of the UK including those in a poor or unplayable condition at more than 1,500 venues. It will help support a new generation of players to get into the sport.
9. The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) has provided an additional £8.4 million bringing the total package up to £30 million.
10. The funding is designed to open up tennis to people of all backgrounds, support the Government’s commitment to levelling up sports provision across the nation, and provide greater opportunities for everyone to follow the Chief Medical Officer’s guidance on physical activity, which says children should aim to carry out 60 minutes of physical activity a day, and adults 2.5 hours a week.
11. We have been in consultation with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) and the LTA about the scope of the renovations, funding available and the process for applying. We attended and supported the LTA with a roundtable event for

local government representatives on the 15 December 2021 to seek their views on the proposals. The main discussion points from the roundtable and further discussions with DCMS and the LTA were:

- 11.1 It is expected that there will be some flexibility for councils to enhance the LTA's offer through other sources of funding.
- 11.2 We have raised with DCMS and the LTA that councils will need sufficient time to explore and secure additional funding and to go through their internal governance processes in order to make the most of this opportunity and by the end of the SR21 period.
- 11.3 At our request, the LTA will work with us on an FAQ document to help councils understand and navigate the process, especially for those councils who have less developed relationships with the LTA/improvement implementation plans in place to start the process. We will work to ensure this is circulated as soon as possible.
- 11.4 We fed back concerns about the absence in the programme to deliver on wider Government and council objectives for levelling up, tackling inequalities and improving health and wellbeing. Particularly we have argued for:
 - 11.4.1 The funding criteria to be widened to include wider infrastructure works, which could open up barriers to participation and improve accessibility for disabled participants.
 - 11.4.2 Following our request, the LTA has confirmed that it is possible for their digital booking platform to be amended to capture data on underrepresented groups. This would enable DCMS, LTA and councils to better understand if they are successfully targeting underrepresented groups and improving participation rates from these groups. The LTA is now considering implanting this, it will likely include a question on age range; ethnicity; gender; disability status but will be non-mandatory and data would be handled in line with privacy requirements.
- 11.5 We encouraged the LTA to work with other national governing bodies to deliver multi use courts which would help to make the courts more sustainable in the long term, reflect local need and appeal to a wider range of people.
- 12. We would welcome comments on members on any further or different data sets that would be helpful for the LTA to gather on participation rates in tennis to support councils' work to improve participation from underrepresented groups.

13. We are working with the LTA to hold another ‘ [Park tennis court consultation’ webinar for councils on Friday 28 January 2022, 10.30am - 12.00pm.](#) We will also continue to work with the LTA and DCMS on their plans and delivery.

Local Government Physical Activity Partnership (LGAP)

14. The LGA is a longstanding member of the Local Government Physical Activity Partnership (LGPAP). The officer group, which is convened and chaired by the Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association, has recently refreshed its purpose to reflect the post COVID-19 landscape. In addition to the LGA, membership includes: Active Partnerships; Ukactive; Sport England; Community Leisure UK, District Councils Network, Association for Public Service Excellence and an open invitation to the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities
15. The aim of LGPAP continues to be to support and improve local government physical activity provision. It recognises physical activity has a broad remit and LGPAP focus needs to reflect this, thinking further and wider than leisure facilities and physical infrastructure. It now has a sharper focus on being a collective forum that Government recognises and engages with. This reflects the recommendation in our report “[Securing the Future of Public Sport and Leisure Services](#)” which highlighted that the sector was fragmented and needed a strong, unified voice to advocate on its behalf.
16. LGPAP’s priorities for 2021/22 strongly align with the CTS Board’s work programme and priorities for sport, leisure and physical activity. Over the next year, LGPAP will focus on the following 5 areas::
- 16.1 Securing the future of public sport and leisure service, focusing on key recommendations, raising awareness in councils and with partners.
 - 16.2 Climate Change – leisure estate, continue and grow the good work that has been done already.
 - 16.3 Leadership development and upskilling the sector, including addressing the recruitment crisis.
 - 16.4 Addressing the wider role of physical activity, including understanding the new Integrated Care System, health prevention, health economics and social prescribing.
 - 16.5 Exploring Sport England’s Uniting the Movement – Implementation Plan
17. The group meets on a five weekly cycle and will next meet on 24 February 2022.

Implications for Wales

18. Sport and physical activity is a devolved matter.

Implications for inclusion, diversity and equality

19. We will continue to highlight to DCMS and LTA the need for the funding to deliver on its objective to open up tennis to people of all backgrounds. Particularly the opportunities the funding could provide to improve equality of access for disabled participants and increasing participation rates in underrepresented groups. We will also continue to work with Sport England to co-design more inclusive opportunities for officers and councillors to participate in the Leadership Essentials Programme both online and in person, as well as working to secure a more diverse representation of speakers, facilitators and delegates on the programme.

Financial Implications

20. None.

Next steps

21. Officers to respond accordingly as directed by the Board.