

Meeting: Culture, Tourism and Sport Board

Date: 19th October 2022

Sport and cultural improvement programmes update

Purpose of report

For information

Summary

This papers sets out the delivery process of the LGA's improvement contracts with Arts Council England (ACE) and Sport England. They provide leadership training for councillors and officers, and peer support to councils on libraries and culture services.

Is this report confidential?

No

Recommendation/s

For information

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Sport and cultural improvement programmes update

Background

1. The LGA works with Sport England and Arts Council England to provide improvement support to local authorities. Since May 2021, the improvement offer has been managed by the LGA's Productivity team, which sits within the improvement division of the LGA. The team continues to work in close collaboration with the LGA's policy team to ensure that the latest policy content is included within the improvement offer to councils.
2. This transition has enabled the learning and approaches from other successful LGA improvement programmes to be built into this offer. We have also made strong links with complementary programmes such as the LGA's economic growth and behavioural insights programmes.

Update on sport and cultural improvement activity

Sport and physical activity improvement programme update to the CTS board

3. The LGA works with Sport England to deliver improvement programmes which support senior officers and councillors to help tackle complex issues, such as health inequalities – particularly relevant to levelling up activity.
4. The initial grant for this activity was made in 2018 and was extended to ensure programmes were able to continue during the pandemic in a repurposed online format. The underspend plus an additional grant award extended the work programme. Within the current grant there are two programmes remaining: a Public Narrative alumni session, which builds on learning from the Leadership Essentials officer programme (taking place at the end of September), and a further Leadership Essentials programme for officers (this is being planned and is expected to take place at the beginning of November).
5. Sport England has recently restructured and is in the process of mapping new priorities for place-based activity. In the interim, the LGA has been awarded a further grant of £169,128 to enable it to continue to support councils' improvement activity for the remainder of the financial year, but with the potential for the proposed activity to extend into the new financial year if scheduling is not practicable by the end of March. Currently the LGA is holding a waiting list of 78 people for the officer leadership programme. An update on the progress of this proposal will be provided at the next CTS board.
6. Since January 2022 the LGA has co-created and delivered the following programmes with Sport England:
 - 6.1. An officer action learning set, comprising 2 sessions (online, 3 participants)

- 6.2. Officer alumni session: 'Capturing Value' deep dive, comprising 2 sessions (online, 21 participants)
- 6.3. Leadership Essentials officer programmes 15 and 16 (face to face, 39 participants)
- 6.4. Leadership Essentials councillor programme 29 (face to face, 11 participants)
- 6.5. Officer alumni session: Political influence (a face to face test and learn session, 12 participants)
- 6.6. Officer alumni session: Public narrative (face to face, 11 participants)

7. Cultural improvement programme update to the CTS board

Background

- 8. This report provides an update to the board on the LGA's cultural services improvement programmes.
- 9. The LGA works with Arts Council England (ACE) to deliver improvement support to local authority cultural and library services. ACE has just awarded the LGA a grant of £124,188 for the period up to September 2023, which will operate in addition to remaining activity on the 2021-22 programme. An update on the new award will be provided to the CTS board once the programme planning has developed.
- 10. The grant period for the 2021-22 ACE grant for cultural services improvement programmes has been extended beyond the financial year end. The majority of the activity has been delivered with only a few final projects still to be delivered.
- 11. Updates have previously been provided to the CTS board regarding the Leadership Essentials: Culture programme and the retrospective evaluation.
- 12. To ensure programme continuity during changing national COVID guidance, all 2021/22 programmes are being delivered online.
- 13. The LGA's 2021-22 cultural services improvement programme comprises:
 - 13.1. Leadership Essentials: Culture for elected members (delivered – update previously provided to CTS board)
 - 13.2. 10 culture and library peer challenges (by 30th September 8 peer challenges will have been delivered - update provided below)
 - 13.3. Retrospective evaluation of peer challenges from previous years (delivered – update previously provided to CTS board)
 - 13.4. Leadership Essentials alumni event (to be rescheduled)
- 14. In addition to the 2021/22 main award, a further award was made for a senior officer pilot:

- 14.1. A senior officer training pilot for lead culture and library officers
(delivered – update provided below)

Peer challenges

15. This year we have delivered 2 cultural services peer challenges and we are liaising with a council to confirm the third. By the end of September we will have delivered 6 library services peer challenges. The peer challenges are conducted online and last between 1.5 to 2 days. The participating councils have been confirmed and are listed below:

16. Culture:

- 16.1. Reigate and Banstead Council - delivered
- 16.2. Mole Valley District Council - delivered
- 16.3. South Oxfordshire District Council – to be delivered on 7th & 8th
November 2022

17. Library:

- 17.1. Liverpool City Council - delivered
- 17.2. Newcastle City Council - delivered
- 17.3. Essex County Council - delivered
- 17.4. Bristol City Council - delivered
- 17.5. West Berkshire Council - delivered
- 17.6. Suffolk County Council – delivered
- 17.7. Lincolnshire County Council – no longer able to participate.

18. As noted, one council notified us it was unable to participate, so we are liaising with other councils to identify an appropriate alternative.

19. As a result of the peer challenge applications, five key themes have emerged as areas that councils want support with:

- 19.1. Post-Covid recovery/sustainability of cultural venues
- 19.2. Engagement and consultation with the local community regarding the future of cultural services
- 19.3. Re-procurement of services
- 19.4. How culture can contribute to the wider council agenda; for example, economic growth and health of local communities
- 19.5. Better use of data.

20. We have been working with the political group offices to source member peers for the peer challenges. All political group offices have a limited pool of member peers with experience of culture or library responsibilities and on a couple of occasions this has caused delays in being able to agree peer teams and dates. We encourage councillors with known expertise in these areas to volunteer as peers, including Board members.

Senior officer leadership pilot

21. This online programme comprised 6 sessions plus an informal icebreaker and a closing session.

22. Aims:

- 22.1. To deliver a pilot learning programme designed to support senior officers/heads of service to become exceptional leaders of place
- 22.2. To support senior officers/heads of service to advocate for their services at a senior level in their authority.
- 22.3. To help identify the career support and skills needs of senior cultural and library officers working in strategic roles, aiming to inform future LGA/ACE work.

23. Objectives:

- 23.1. To support lead/senior officers for culture and libraries to:
 - 23.1.1. Develop a greater understanding of the role of cultural and library services in the future economic growth of the local area
 - 23.1.2. Develop skills to lead entrepreneurial thinking within their services and the confidence to apply those skills
 - 23.1.3. Build and strengthen their peer networks, share information, knowledge and expertise. The pilot will be attended by both library and culture senior staff supporting a unique opportunity for peer to peer learning across these specialisms.
 - 23.1.4. Develop a vision about how their services can contribute to tackling social challenges in the post-COVID context, for example, mental health challenges and social isolation
 - 23.1.5. Develop an understanding of change theory and how to apply it
 - 23.1.6. Refresh the tools and knowledge officers have to be cultural and library leaders through peer to peer learning.
 - 23.1.7. Learn from a wide range of inspiring case studies presented by LA peers and external speakers.

- 23.1.8. Be more aware of the strategic work of ACE and the opportunities to work more closely
 - 23.1.9. Explore the potential for arts, culture and libraries to work with officer and political stakeholders to deliver across council agendas
 - 23.1.10. Access a learning pathway through the LGA (for officers who have taken part in a Peer Challenge or Recovery and Renewal Panel).
 - 23.1.11. Identify how to share their learning within the organisation and with partners
24. Feedback was collated in quick polls during the sessions, in post-session feedback forms and in an end of programme feedback form. Key feedback:
- 24.1. 86% of attendees said the training fully or part met their learning objectives
 - 24.2. 100% of attendees said it was more convenient to attend the training online
 - 24.3. 50% of attendees said that the online format made it easier to engage with content and connect with other attendees (23% said it was more difficult and 27% said it made no difference)
 - 24.4. 100% of respondents said they had sufficient information to prepare for sessions
25. The most relevant topic areas for attendees' work were identified as: collaborative placemaking, influence and political interface and leveraging culture for cross-cutting outcomes
26. There was lots of positive qualitative feedback. The key themes were the high quality of speakers, case studies and facilitation, the themed topic areas and the opportunity to connect with other culture and library professionals from other councils.
27. *"I thought the programme was excellent - really useful case studies and great to be able to sense check and discuss issues with peers. The six themes were spot on."* (Programme attendee)
28. As a pilot we were keen to understand areas for improvement. The key themes were:
- 28.1. Greater time for reflection between each session
 - 28.2. Group size – due to demand we piloted a cohort of 40 (rather than the initial plan of 25). Feedback suggested that this impacted the quality of discussion in the main group sessions
 - 28.3. Pre-session briefings were deemed to be very useful, but anecdotally we were made aware that because these could be quite broad topic areas it

was important that the briefings remain tightly focused on the topics being covered during the individual sessions, so that expectations were framed.

Next steps:

29. ACE has confirmed a further grant award of £124,188 to September 2022, to include:

- 29.1. a Leadership Essentials: Culture programme,
- 29.2. a senior officer leadership programme (online),
- 29.3. 10 peer challenges,
- 29.4. a bespoke Leadership Essentials: Culture for economic growth portfolio holders.

30. We will update the CTS board when the programme outlines have been developed.

31. Following a suggestion from the CTS board have sent an email to all portfolio holders for culture and libraries to understand the key topics they would like to cover in future training.

Implications for Wales

32. None. These programmes are funded by England-only organisations.

Financial Implications

33. Sport and cultural improvement programmes are grant funded by Sport England and ACE. Future programmes are dependent on grant awards from Sport England and ACE.

Equalities implications

34. We review the programmes on an ongoing basis to identify continual improvements that can be made to all stages of programmes.

Next steps

35. Please can the board encourage councillors with relevant experience to both put themselves forward to be member peers and to highlight to the relevant political group office that they would like to be actively considered in any upcoming peer challenges.