

## Commission on Culture and Local Government: update

### Purpose of report

For information.

### Summary

This paper provides an update on the Commission on Culture and Local Government, following the detailed paper which was discussed with the Board in January, a written update in March and verbal update in June. The CTS Board is asked to note the paper and share their views on the key findings and headline areas of recommendation of the Commission.

Is this report confidential? Yes ☒ No ☐

### Recommendation/s

That CTS Board Members note the contents of the report and share their views on the key findings and headline areas of recommendation.

### Action/s

Officers will incorporate the Board's views as they develop the Commission report, working towards publication in December.

<b>Contact officer:</b>	Lauren Lucas
<b>Position:</b>	Adviser- Culture, Tourism and Sport
<b>Phone no:</b>	0207 664 3323
<b>Email:</b>	lauren.lucas@local.gov.uk

## Commission on Culture and Local Government

### Background

1. The independent [Commission on Culture and Local Government](#) was established by the Local Government Association earlier this year, to explore the contribution local council funded culture can make to Levelling Up and resilience to COVID-19 and what is needed to achieve this.
2. The purpose of the Commission on Culture and Local Government is to bring together national, regional and local actors in the publicly funded cultural realm to discuss:
  - 4.1 The unique role of council funded and supported culture in our recovery from COVID-19 and building back better, including its contribution to economic growth, levelling up and addressing regional inequalities; and
  - 4.2 A vision for the future of council funded and supported culture in the context of place.
3. Baroness Lola Young of Hornsey has been chairing the Commission, which is running from March to December 2022.
4. A group of 16 [commissioners](#) has been leading the work of the Commission. They represent a range of national funders, local government leaders, arts and culture practitioners and sector experts.
5. Cllr Peter Golds has been representing the LGA Culture, Tourism and Sport Board as a commissioner, supported by Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson, who has held meetings with the Chair and attended the most recent meeting on key findings and recommendations. The LGA Culture, Tourism and Sport Team is providing the Secretariat.
6. Lord Neil Mendoza, Commissioner for Cultural Recovery and Renewal has agreed to act as Advisor to the Commission, providing advice and insights on the work of the Commission at key points in its programme. This appointment was formally confirmed by the then Minister for the Arts Lord Parkinson and Secretary of State for Culture Nadine Dorries, representing very positive engagement from DCMS.
7. The Commission focuses on cultural organisations and projects that are funded or otherwise supported by local authorities. Full details can be found in the Commission's [Terms of Reference](#).

### Update

8. This report follows a detailed discussion of the Commission at the Board in January 2022, a written update in March and a verbal update at the meeting in June.
9. Evidence gathering for the Commission took place between March and July 2022:

- 18 organisations gave oral evidence over the course of four roundtable sessions
- More than 80 organisations were involved in wider focus groups and interviews

- Over 50 case studies have been received as written evidence
- 16 commissioners have contributed to the delivery of the report

10. The four evidence sessions were held as roundtable discussions between March and July and each focused on one of the four themes of the Commission: economic renewal; health inequalities; social mobility and place. Each session featured three presentations from local authorities and partner cultural organisations and was supported by a detailed literature review and briefing paper.
11. A follow up meeting with Commissioners was held in September 2022 in which outline findings and recommendations were discussed. A more complete draft is now under development and has been shared with commissioners for comment ahead of a final draft at the end of October. We are working towards publication of the report in December 2022.
12. The commissioners have been clear that they wish to see outputs other than a final report, to support the widest possible access to Commission materials.
  - 12.1. We published [illustrations](#) based on the discussions after each of the four roundtable sessions.
  - 12.2. We are producing four short films featuring case studies on how culture is being used to support local places, one of which was shown at the LGA annual conference in June.
  - 12.3. We have developed a [case study database](#) to sit alongside the final report, which was publicised earlier this month.
  - 12.4. We are exploring options for sharing the report findings, including infographics and 'pen portraits' on individuals who have benefited from engagement with council cultural services as part of the final report.

## Key findings

13. The Commission found evidence that investment in cultural services offers an effective, tested and practical means of building back local economies and communities following the pandemic and in response to the subsequent cost of living crisis. Besides their unique intrinsic value, they also deliver against many wider challenges we face as a society. They help to:
  - 13.1. Build resilient, adaptive, networked communities in place, supporting civic pride and revitalizing town centres
  - 13.2. Promote local economic growth, supporting levelling up through the development of creative clusters, an experiential offer on high streets and providing a foundation for the wider visitor and night-time economies
  - 13.3. Develop creative thinking, build cultural capital and provide high quality jobs that are resistant to automation
  - 13.4. Promote better health and wellbeing, particularly addressing challenges of loneliness, isolation and mental ill health arising from the pandemic
14. Councils remain the biggest public investor in culture, spending over £1 billion a year in England alone. This local cultural infrastructure of libraries, museums, parks, theatres,

archives, heritage sites, arts centres and more, underpins our national cultural offer and feeds into growth in the burgeoning commercial creative industries.

15. However, these services are under significant strain following reductions in core funding over the last ten years as a result of wider pressures on council finance, the impact of the pandemic, rising energy costs and inflation. In order to secure the future of this important national infrastructure local, regional and national government will need to work together with funding bodies, the cultural sector and communities to pursue an effective place-based approach to funding and supporting cultural capacity.

### Barriers

16. The Commission heard that despite the potential of culture to support our national recovery, there are barriers holding it back from fulfilling this role. The biggest challenges fell into the following categories:

- 16.1. Barriers to access (financial, physical, geographical, digital)
- 16.2. Leadership and representation (low levels of diversity in leadership of cultural sector)
- 16.3. Structural capacity (low levels of capacity and geographical inequalities in cultural teams and wider cultural infrastructure)
- 16.4. Funding (pressures on core funding over last decade and fragmentation of other funding sources)
- 16.5. Lack of policy alignment (between culture and other key areas such as health and education at a local and national level)
- 16.6. Evidence (inconsistent methodologies for capturing the benefits of cultural investment, affecting the quality and effectiveness of advocacy)

### Recommendations

17. Recommendations are still being developed with input from commissioners, but the headline themes are set out below.

18. The Commission calls for a pact between national, regional and local government and cultural arms-length-bodies to work together with cultural organisations and communities to deliver the following:

- 18.1. **Access.** Accessible cultural infrastructure for all, addressing the structural inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic.
- 18.2. **Capacity and resilience in place.** A levelling up of capacity for culture within place, targeting regional inequalities and enabling local authorities to develop and deliver meaningful place-led strategies for culture.
- 18.3. **Leadership and power.** A power shift towards place-led approaches that enable a greater diversity of communities and cultural providers to shape local decision making.

- 18.4. **Funding.** A coherent approach to funding culture in a place that supports the delivery of place-led strategies and addresses the immediate financial fragility of the sector triggered by the pandemic and cost of living crisis.
  - 18.5. **Creative learning and pathways to creative employment.** Access for all to a high-quality creative education and routes into the burgeoning creative industries from schools through to further and higher education and employment.
  - 18.6. **Creative growth.** Removal of barriers to growth of creative industry clusters and micro-clusters programmes to support the development of the creative sector as an engine of post-pandemic growth.
  - 18.7. **Health and wellbeing.** A strategic approach to health and wellbeing in place that recognises the preventative and health benefits of culture in supporting our national recovery.
  - 18.8. **Evidence.** A coordinated approach to developing an effective evidence base for culture in order to measure value and shape future investment.
19. The draft report is currently being considered by commissioners. Should each of the eight areas highlighted go forward, they will include a more detailed set of recommendations underneath them, including a focus on support for place-led strategic partnerships.
20. It is intended that the final report will be highly visual and incorporate many of the case study examples submitted to the Commission over the course of the year to illustrate the impact of cultural services on individuals, communities and places.

### **Implications for Wales**

18. The work of the Commission will have relevance to Welsh Authorities. Culture is a devolved matter, but we may include case studies from Welsh authorities in the work of the Commission.

### **Implications for inclusion, diversity and equality**

19. EDI is an important theme in the Commission, which has a strong focus on inequalities arising from Covid-19. We are incorporating this into the programme in several ways:
- 19.1. Representation – on both the core Commission and wider advisory group, which brings in a wider range of voices into the programme as well as the speakers invited to give oral evidence at the roundtables.
  - 19.2. Content – in the topics under discussion at each of the four roundtables
  - 19.3. Procurement – we commissioned several pieces of work to support the Commission and have included a strong EDI focus in the Requests for Quotations.
  - 19.4. Key findings and recommendations. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion have all come up as strong themes in our discussions and we aim to reflect those conversations in the recommendations of our work, with particular emphasis on access to cultural provision.

### **Financial Implications**

20. The core costs of the Commission are met from the Board's policy budget.

### **Next steps**

21. The report drafting will continue until the end of October and we aim to have a final draft completed by the 7<sup>th</sup> November. We will incorporate any feedback from the Board during this phase of drafting. Lead Members will be asked for their approval of the report.
22. The independent Commission on Culture and Local Government's final report will be released at a launch event from 4-6pm (TBC) on Thursday 8th December 2022.