

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:

- Culture and Arts
- Gambling
- Superfast Broadband
- Libraries
- Sport and Physical Activity

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

Culture and Arts

Arts Council England funding

1. Arts Council England (ACE) has opened the application process for their national portfolio of arts organisations and museums for 2015 to 2018. The arts budget for 2015/16 includes three main funding streams:
 - 5.1. A national portfolio for arts organisations programme budget of £271 million of grant-in-aid and approximately £60 million.
 - 5.2. An increase to the Grants for the arts budget to £70 million Lottery funding to support individual artists, community and cultural organisations.
 - 5.3. A strategic fund budget of £127 million Lottery funding to support the wider development of arts organisations, participants and audiences across England.
6. The museums budget for 2015/16 will also include three main grant-in-aid funding streams:
 - 6.1. Major partner museums will increase to £21.5 million a year in 2015/16 to encourage a greater geographical spread in keeping with arts funding.
 - 6.2. The museums strategic budget will work alongside MPM funding to target particular challenges, opportunities or gaps.
 - 6.3. For the first time, a new open access grants fund will invite applications from museums to support diversity and the development of resilience in the sector at a time of enormous change. These funds will total £20.5 million.
7. The deadline for submitting applications is 12.00 noon on 17 March. Final decisions will be announced in July 2014. For more details about the funding - <http://tinyurl.com/ow54rb5>
8. The LGA, in partnership with Arts Council England, has this year delivered 2 cultural leadership academies which have supported 16 portfolio holders to lead transformational change of cultural services in the current fiscal climate.

Visits to museums and art galleries hit record high

9. New figures from the Taking Part survey show that visits to museums and galleries in England have remained at their highest levels, with over half of all adults in England visiting a museum or art gallery in the last year.

10. During the same period, 78 per cent of all adults attended or participated in the arts, a 'significant increase' since 2005/06; and 73 per cent of adults visited a Heritage site.
11. More details of the survey results - <http://tinyurl.com/nkb9rce>

City of Culture 2017

12. Hull has been chosen as the UK City of Culture 2017. Hull is a city rich in maritime heritage. Its world-class aquarium, The Deep, won a gold award for accessibility in the 2011 VisitEngland Awards for Excellence, and the city is the gateway to Yorkshire and the North East for many European visitors. This cultural badge of honour is a tremendous opportunity for Hull to thrive as a tourist destination and attract important inward investment.
13. The LGA is continuing to support councils to make cultural and sporting assets a key feature of generating growth in their localities.
14. For further details of Hull's UK city of Culture award - <http://tinyurl.com/m9hfulz>

Gambling

Fixed odds betting terminals

15. The LGA briefed MPs for the Opposition Day debate on Wednesday 8 January 2014. The LGA's concerns were raised by Ed Miliband at Prime Minister's Questions. In the following debate, the LGA key issues were heavily referenced, especially on the issue that councils do not have enough powers to protect community concerns and the clustering of betting shops on the high street.
16. Changes in technology have led to a change of offer in the type of machines available in premises. The numbers and types of machines that can be operated are strictly regulated by type of premise, but there are concerns that Fixed Odds Betting Terminals, in particular, can be habit forming.
17. A growing number of councils are running campaigns against Fixed Odds Betting Terminals (FOBT), which are increasingly the primary source of income for high street betting shops. Anecdotal evidence suggests that residents losing money through these machines frequently turn to payday loans and loan sharks to fund their gambling.
18. There are mixed views on whether FOBTs are contributing to the clustering of betting shops, which is causing a significant problem for some councils. The high income secured from FOBTs may provide an incentive for chains of betting shops to open multiple premises in close proximity.
19. Read the LGA briefing - <http://tinyurl.com/orappk9> and Prime Minister's questions - <http://tinyurl.com/ocmxmyr>

Superfast Broadband

New funding to pilot alternative technologies

20. 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. He will take on delivery of the whole Broadband Delivery programme including the fund.
21. By March 2014, the new £10 million fund will enable a range of pilot projects to be undertaken up and down the country, as the Government seeks the most effective way to ensure that the most remote areas are included in the broadband transformation taking place across Britain.
22. Potential technologies that could be piloted under the new fund for remote areas include: using 4G mobile signal to deliver 'fixed wireless' superfast broadband'; using fibre direct to premises; taking fibre from broadband cabinets to a distribution point further down the network; and increasing speeds by reducing the reliance on copper and Satellite technology.
23. The fund will open on 17 March 2014 and the Government is asking local authorities to offer support to the pilot projects. Suppliers and councils who are interested in taking part can register their interest on <http://tinyurl.com/o83oc4y>
24. The LGA is supporting councils to take full advantage of this new funding and ensure it compliments existing roll out of Superfast Broadband.

Libraries

Libraries report record figures

25. The Reading Agency has reported that a record 810,089 children took part in the 2013 Summer Reading Challenge in 98 per cent of local authority libraries, a 9 per cent increase on participation on 2012. 66,760 children joined the library to take part and 3.5 million children's books were borrowed from libraries during the summer period.
26. The LGA supported by Arts Council England is supporting councillors through peer reviews and academies in order to further enhance the role libraries play towards council priorities. A second libraries seminar is planned for 11 February 2014 at Birmingham Library.
27. For more information on the Summer Reading Challenge, including how to get involved, and resources for schools, go to www.readingagency.org.uk/summerreadingchallenge

Sport and Physical Activity

2012 Games legacy report

28. In November 2013, The House of Lords Committee on Olympic and Paralympic Legacy published its report on whether a legacy is occurring post the 2012 Games. The report questions whether the Games have had a lasting impact so far and makes a number of recommendations of what should be undertaken including the London Legacy Development Corporation working with local authorities to ensure that local people can access employment opportunities on the Olympic Park.
29. The report also highlights that with future major events in the UK, such as the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games and Rugby Union World Cup in 2015, there are significant opportunities to keep the positive momentum from the 2012 Games alive and further increase participation rates in sport and physical activity.
30. The LGA has highlighted to the Cabinet Office Legacy Unit that a physical activity legacy will be delivered at the local level and therefore they need to work more closely with councils.
31. Read the full report - <http://tinyurl.com/ko4eprz>