

Current Issues Update

Purpose

For information.

Summary

Due to the shorter Board timings, this information paper updates Members on the following issues:

- Visitor economy
- Sport and physical activity
- Libraries
- Culture White Paper

Recommendation

Members are invited to note the update.

Action

To be taken forward by officers as directed by Members.

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Current Issues Update

Visitor Economy

1. The Spending Review announced a three year £40 million Discover England Fund to drive inbound visits and spend and support the domestic market through delivering world class, stand-out, bookable tourism products in response to market opportunities and consumer needs.
2. Members welcomed the additional funding and the Chair wrote to Sally Balcombe, VisitBritain Chief Executive, to highlight the importance of councils and partners having the flexibility to further local growth priorities through the Fund. The Chair of the Board is meeting Sally Balcombe on 17 March.
3. VisitBritain is holding a series of briefings for councils, industry and others to share further information on the Discover England Fund and to seek views on the detail of its implementation. The purpose of the Fund is to create three to four world-class itineraries / groupings of product that meet the following criteria:
 - 3.1 Be made up of a number of bookable / consumable products
 - 3.2 Span regions / geographical areas to deliver a joined up approach and end to end experience for the customer
 - 3.3 Be tailored and respond to consumer needs – so could be thematic / Business Visits and Events / pricing
 - 3.4 Work for international consumers and benefit domestic consumers
4. The Fund will open for bids in August 2016 and the LGA will work to ensure that the fund is sufficiently flexible for councils and partners to boost local tourism priorities, allied to devolution deals where this makes sense.
5. It was also announced that VisitEngland and VisitBritain will work more closely together. In response, Members have highlighted the importance of English destinations having a strong voice on the new governance arrangements. The Chair's exchange of letters with the Tourism Minister and Sally Balcombe is attached at Annex A (confidential.)

Sport and Physical Activity

6. On 17 December 2015, the Government published its new sport strategy 'Sporting Future – A New Strategy for an Active Nation' <http://tinyurl.com/o58e2sk>. Over 3,000 consultation responses were submitted. The LGA's [response](#) made the case for re-balancing grassroots sport funding through Sport England away from national interventions and towards councils and their partners so that the contribution of National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and others can be better harnessed to meet local need.
7. The submission also highlighted the importance of understanding the reasons why people do and do not participate in sport and physical activity, so that national and local opportunities and support can be targeted effectively. Members were keen that we

emphasised the valued advice and tools that Sport England offers councils and the success of our joint Sport Leadership Essentials Programme for portfolio holders.

8. The strategy is positive about local government and many of the key points that the LGA made in its consultation response have been taken on board. In particular, recognising the importance of physical activity, a shift in focus towards wider social outcomes, more localised delivery and the opening up of opportunities for councils and others to apply for funding as well as a focus on inactivity using local insight data. The strategy also confirms that the Premier League will at least double its investment in grassroots football facilities, which follows a high profile campaign by the LGA and others.
9. The Government's new sport strategy has identified some 90 actions that it hopes will help achieve the five key outcomes. Sport England will be responsible for overseeing the majority of these actions and are in the process of bringing together over 300 current and potential partners, including councils, to help shape and influence their new strategy for 2016-2021. An online consultation is open to all interested parties until 26 February. LGA officers attending one of the consultation events and there was a good turnout from councils.
10. The LGA's response will shortly be shared with lead members for clearance.
11. We are speaking to Sport England about the scope of next year's improvement offer, within the context of their new strategy and priorities for councils.

Libraries

12. On 16 December, the Leadership for Libraries Taskforce published a good practice [toolkit](#) to help councils with transforming their library service. The Chair and the Culture Minister wrote to Leaders and Portfolio Holders to share the toolkit (Annex B). Separately, Department for Culture Media and Sport has published [guidance](#) on the 1964 Act.
13. The Spending Review confirmed Taskforce funding for up to the next four years. The Taskforce's next 6-month report is due to be published in March. Officers are arranging for the Chair of the Board to meet the Culture Minister to discuss progress and forthcoming priorities.
14. Libraries up and down the country marked National Libraries Day on 6 February and the LGA issued a supportive [quote](#).
15. Funded by Arts Council England, the LGA delivered library peer reviews in Surrey, Middlesbrough and Calderdale during January and February. We have also commissioned independent research into previous peer reviews to help shape next year's improvement offer.

Culture White Paper

16. The LGA has submitted a response to the Government's consultation on the first Culture White Paper in 50 years (Annex C). The letter to Ministers highlighted the funding pressures that local government faces and the potential impact on councils' ability to fund and support culture. It also set out a shared approach to supporting cultural services,

including opportunities from devolution and reform, culture adding value to wider agendas, supporting effective local political leadership and developing our partnership with ACE.

17. The Culture Minister wrote to the Board Chair (Annex D) to thank him for the LGA's response and the Culture White Paper will also be discussed when they next meet.
18. The LGA and a number of councils attended roundtables hosted by DCMS. Overall, local government had a strong voice in the consultation and we are hopeful that the White Paper will reflect some of our key points when it is published later on this year. We are in touch with DCMS officials on the timeframe.