

Councillor Briefing

Making a difference - Guidance for new Culture & Leisure Portfolio Holders

This briefing outlines how you can best advocate for the contribution culture and sport make and includes information on the principle agencies that support Local Authorities in delivering high quality and effective services to residents.

Overview

Every local authority will have a portfolio holder for cultural services, but the role often forms part of a wider brief. The remit is likely to include the following:

- Forming close working relationships with key partners and providers.
- Ensuring that the contribution of culture is considered in all local authority functions, e.g. housing, planning, transport, education and social services – as well as broader objectives such as stronger, safer, healthier communities.
- Championing the contribution of culture in wider local partnerships such as the Local Strategic Partnership, Local Economic Partnership and the Health & Well-being Board.
- Monitoring performance and leading service improvement.

The portfolio holder is responsible for strategic leadership of cultural services. The managers of your council's cultural services will ensure that services are provided effectively, efficiently and economically. Together the portfolio holder and senior managers share responsibility for driving change and innovation in line with the aims of the political administration as a whole. Forming strong working relationships, particularly with the director or head of service responsible for these services, is the surest way of fulfilling a council's cultural ambitions.

In addition, the voluntary and community sectors are essential partners for every authority. This is particularly crucial in the context of Big Society and the role of the portfolio holder is to promote volunteering and encourage the involvement of civil society in the provision of cultural services.

Why it Matters

Making an effective contribution to a council's strategic aims cultural services can:

Achieve key outcomes relating to physical and mental health, educational attainment, economic vitality, community cohesion and safety.

Secure external funding - agencies sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (including the lottery distributors) provide support to local authority led projects.

Help the council reach out and engage communities and are particularly effective at involving hard-to-reach groups and promoting community cohesion.

Cultural assets such as heritage sites, museums, galleries and theatres make an important contribution to the visitor economy.

Services such as libraries, museums, sports, arts and play have a particularly strong contribution to make to the Children and Young People's Plans required of County and Unitary authorities.

Yet the statutory responsibilities for culture within local authorities are relatively few:

- Public library service (County and Unitary councils).
- Protection of the historic environment, through the planning process.
- Licensing Act 2003 makes unitary and district/borough councils responsible for licensing premises.
- Gambling Act 2005 gives the same authorities responsibility for licensing gambling premises.

Background

In 2009-10 Local Government net spend on culture and sport services was £3.46 billion¹. However, the Comprehensive Spending Review has seen significant cuts in non-statutory services with arts, sports development, sport and leisure facilities, parks & open spaces taking a far greater proportion of the reductions².

At a time when authorities are looking to support community development, it is essential that the council as a whole understand the vital role culture and sport plays, so that the benefits of these services can be fully realised and embedded in the corporate planning process.

¹DCMS and local government

²Culture & Leisure Impact Survey, March 2011

Key Messages

- Cultural services may be discretionary, but they make a significant contribution to corporate priorities and have a high public value, influencing residents' perception and satisfaction of their council.
- Perhaps more than any other portfolio holder, you will need to engage voluntary and community organisations in the development and delivery of services.
- There is a range of support agencies, part of whose role it is to provide you and your authority with advice on the provision of cultural services.

The Role of the Cultural Agencies

These independent bodies act at arms length from the government to help deliver the strategic aim and objectives of the DCMS.

Arts Council England works to get great art to everyone³ by championing, developing and investing in artistic experiences that enrich people's lives. ACE provides funding for a National portfolio of organisations, many of whom receive important co-investment from local authorities. Responsibility for advising the regional museums and libraries will transfer to Arts Council England in 2012, following the closure of the MLA.

Sport England seeks to grow and sustain the numbers of people taking part in sport and improve talent development to help more people excel. Sport England provides advice to local government on a range of sports subjects including planning, facilities and sports development, it also has a statutory role in protecting playing fields. Sport England is leading on a mass participation sporting legacy from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games⁴.

English Heritage exists to make sure that the best of the past is kept to enrich our lives today and in the future. Through the planning system English Heritage has a key role to play in Local Development Frameworks and also supports a network of Heritage Champions who are mainly elected members.

The national tourist board **VisitEngland** will provide support to partners in LEP areas where tourism has been identified as a priority. The Government Tourism Policy⁵ aims to support growth via a marketing campaign to attract visitors to the UK following 2012, through increasing the proportion of UK residents who holiday in the UK and by improving the sector's productivity.

Support for the UK's archive sector will transfer to **The National Archives** in 2012. The National Archives is a government department that will advise the public sector on the care of historical archives and give guidance on information management.

Your next steps

- Meet with the key cultural organisations in your area and make contact with your local voluntary sector forum(s).
- Explore how culture and sport can be further embedded in your council's corporate planning process.
- Review your authority's key strategies to ensure they recognise culture and sport as an important contributor to outcomes.
- Identify areas where the contribution of cultural services is currently being missed and address this with the Portfolio Holder, Executive Members and managers concerned.
- Join the Culture & Leisure Portfolio-Holder Network for the East, which provides a forum to discuss matters of common concern and share best practice.
- Visit the web-sites of each of these organisations and learn more about their work.

www.artscouncil.org.uk

www.sportengland.org

www.mla.gov.uk

www.english-heritage.org.uk

www.visitengland.org

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

- Find out how the cultural agencies are work to support your Local Authority in delivering high quality and effective cultural services.

³Achieving great art for everyone, 10-year strategic framework for the arts

⁴Places People Play

⁵Government Tourism Policy, March 11