

- It is a pleasure to welcome you all here today to discuss how our cultural, sporting and heritage activities can be such a powerful force for positive change in our communities.
- And what a wonderful city to be in. Bristol has a fantastic cultural and sporting offer. I'm delighted that we have been able to bring the conference here, with the help of Bristol City Council.
- For those of you who don't know me, **I am Cllr Ian Stephens and I chair the LGA's Culture, Tourism and Sport Board** and, along with my colleagues on the Board, am your champion at a national level – whether that's talking to central government about what you need, or tailoring the LGA's improvement offer to help you most effectively.
- There is more on that improvement offer in your delegate handbooks, and I hope you'll take us up on it. It receives excellent feedback each year.
- It's been an enormously busy year for us all since we met this time last year in Leicester. The **Culture White Paper** has kicked off a significant number of workstreams, across libraries, museums, and archives; the **Sport England strategy** has set a new direction for sport and physical activity; and the ongoing **pressures on budgets** mean we're all doing our utmost to find creative ways to not only keep our cultural and sporting facilities open, but also to improve them and enhance their offer.
- We've seen some significant successes for the sector.
- The **new Sport England strategy, 'Towards an active nation'**, has followed our recommendation that multiple funding streams should be consolidated, and more of them opened up for local authority bids. I hope you're all getting your applications in and showing what councils can do to promote physical activity.
- The **Leadership for Libraries Taskforce**, for which the LGA is jointly accountable with DCMS, has published its vision for the future of library services. I'm delighted that the Taskforce team exhibiting here and ready to talk to you about 'Ambition', as the vision is called, and to answer any queries you might have about innovative practice in libraries.
- You don't need me to tell you that our library services are much loved and valued by our communities, and that we need to get our offer right about them. It's important to remember that they are not 'just' about books, but were set up to empower citizens.
- Of course, books do remain an important part of that offer, but **library services have so much more to offer on all our key objectives** – economic growth, public health, community cohesion – and we need to shift our services into a higher gear in delivering them – if you haven't already done so.

- The LGA will be producing two tools to help with this –

**A needs-mapping tool** to help services to identify the greatest levels of local needs – whether that is qualifications and skills, health issues, or employment – and target their resources accordingly; as well as to help demonstrate the impact they are making to reduce that level of need.

**And a benchmarking framework** to help you think critically and constructively about your library offer and identify areas where you may wish to improve, based on sector best practice.

- There's been one other specific achievement this year of which I am proud – encouraging the DCMS to launch the bidding to be **European Capital of Culture** in 2023.
- We will be outside the European Union by then, and the LGA is doing extensive thinking about what that means for local government, but we will still have cultural links.
- Already, we are seeing **ambitious cultural plans and strategies** from those cities who are bidding for it, as well as those bidding for UK City of Culture in 2021.
- The creative tension and inspiration this is sparking is fantastic. We've heard a lot about the tensions in our communities, and the ongoing impacts of austerity.
- How wonderful then, to see our communities coming together to create a positive, vibrant and beautiful vision for the future of their places.
- That brings me to the forward look for culture, tourism and sport.
- It is clear that **culture, heritage and sport form the glue that bind our communities**, attract new businesses and overseas visitors, and tackle some of the most challenging issues around health and skills.
- I am therefore delighted **to launch our [latest publication](#)**, jointly with the Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association, which shows how ten councils have used arts and culture to create a sense of place and enhance their communities.
- I hope you will be inspired by these examples, which are in your delegate pack.
- If you have your own successful examples, then you'll also find a flyer in your packs about a **new online hub of best practice** that we will be launching in March, with funding from Arts Council England.

- Please do submit your own work to us, or suggest future themes where it would be helpful to have some good practice available.
- Placemaking is, of course one of the key themes for the conference today, and we have some excellent speakers from Rotherham, St Helens, and Cambridge talking about the different approaches that they're using.
- That's almost more than enough from me, so I'll just add that the LGA Board and the officers supporting it will continue to work hard on your behalf over the coming year.
- We have our eye on the **National Archives' new strategic vision** for archives which will launch at the end of March, aimed at shaping and securing the long term sustainability of this skilled, innovative, resilient and increasingly digitally-enabled sector.
- We are also preparing to look at **Sport England's forthcoming local delivery pilots**, the role of culture and the creative industries in delivering **the new Industrial Strategy**, and of course, **Brexit** will be getting a lot of discussion as well.
- If there is anything else you feel the LGA should be looking at, please speak to any member of the LGA team.