

cCLOA London meeting notes

Monday 15 June 2020, 15.00-16.30

Attendees

Ishbel Murray (Richmond and Wandsworth, chair), Andrea Keeble (Haringey), Andrew Clark (Sutton), Andy Dalby-Welsh (London Youth Games), Justin Baker, Sagar Barua, Cassie Bridger (Barnet), Ian Brooke (Oxford), Chris Bunting (waling), Chris Lee (Merton), Christine Parsloe (Merton), Mark Christodoulou (Islington), Darrell Braiden, David Walton (Lewisham), Dianna Neal (London Councils), Eugene Minogue (Westminster), Iain Varah (Vision/Redbridge), Ian Ross (Lambeth), Joe Ryan, Joyce Guthrie (Waltham Forest), Justin Baker (Lee Valley), Kelly Saini Badwal (Sutton), Lauren Lucas (LGA), Lisa Pottinger (Tower Hamlets), Lorna Leach (London Sport), Louise Fitton (Waltham Forest), Mark Cook (Sport England), Rachael Roe (GLA), Rebecca Towers (Southwark), Roger Winfield (RBKC), Sagar Barua (Westminster), Sara O'Donnell (Richmond and Wandsworth), Stefania Horne (Hounslow), Takki Sulaiman (Greenwich), Thorsten Dreyer (Tower Hamlets), Tim Gallagher (London Councils), Vincent Donaldson (Lee Valley).

1. Issues facing the leisure trust sector

Chris Lee, Director of Environment & Regeneration at the London Borough of Merton

- GLL is the operator in Merton, as well as for 13 other London boroughs, the Olympic park and the GLA.
- Chris has been bringing boroughs together to develop a shared position, recognising the need to support GLL but also the wider demands on council finances. This group has agreed a set of principles that are being worked out with GLL.
- It's vital that leisure centres don't lose their current membership, as they may not come back. In Merton, membership has stayed at around 85% of its pre-Covid level.
- There are lots of discussions going on in councils about how they can reinvent their leisure offer in the medium-long term. This includes taking services back in house.

Comments and questions

- [Local Partnerships](#) have been brokering conversations between councils who use one of four leisure providers (GLL, Fusion, Freedom and Places Leisure). See post-meeting note.
- Some operators are seeing this as an opportunity to reset their contract with councils in a way that feels opportunistic. Some of these operators were struggling before the crisis. It's important that contract terms aren't disregarded.
- The Government's PPN 02/20 guidance around providing support to contractors should not override the contract. [This document](#) from the LGA explains more about the guidance.
- GLL is looking at a recovery timeline of getting people back through the door in July and returning to normality by March next year.
- There are a small pool of leisure providers with limited competition. Is this the future of leisure services? We will know more about this in a year's time. Some councils have good

relationships with their providers and are happy with their arrangements, but this differs across the board.

Ian Brooke, Oxford City Council, CLOA Executive member

- Before the pandemic, the Institute of Health Equity published [Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On](#). This highlighted the extent to which health inequalities have become worse. There is a danger that the pandemic exacerbates this further.
- [A YouGov survey](#) found that just 30% of the public would feel comfortable returning to gyms. There is a dash to reopen in the private sector, looking at July 4 in many cases.
- Still grappling with how the sector will operate with social distancing in place, which could lead to a 40-80% income hit.
- We also need to contend with changes in habits during lockdown, with more people taking outdoor exercise.
- [The cCLOA Executive has published a blog](#) on rethinking how the sector operates. It seeks to stimulate debate and set a 'reset and build back better' tone to the national discussion.

Comments and questions

- Boroughs have been on the front line in responding to increased hardship in their communities. This will only increase once furlough comes to an end. It's important for councils to work collaboratively with operators to address this.
- Information is moving at a very fast pace, and we are expecting guidance from the government on reopening the sector soon.
- Sport England can provide advice and coordinate activity for London boroughs in relation to their contracts and arrangements with leisure providers (see post-meeting notes for more information).
- London Sport has been running weekly online sessions on topics such as the remobilisation of facilities. They can provide further support to local authorities (see post-meeting notes).
- The immediate challenge is to get the people who normally engage back through the door to ensure the offer is financially viable. Then we can start thinking about engaging those people who are harder to reach.
- Iain Varah is on the library working group as part of the DCMS taskforce. There are concerns amongst some library staff that reopening libraries is being rushed. Participants were invited to pass on any concerns or questions to Iain - Iain.Varah@visionrcl.org.uk

2. An overview of issues facing the culture sector

- Many commercial theatres have furloughed staff and have gone quiet. If they can't reopen for the pantomime season there will be serious concerns about their financial viability. It is likely that they will look to local authorities for support further down the line but right now this isn't happening.
- It is unlikely that theatres can be viable with social distancing in place. The LGA has been running a series of roundtables with theatre CEOs and UK Theatre. Their viability is a real concern.
- There is an opportunity for libraries to support the wider cultural offer.

- There is a lot of online cultural content out there. But research carried out by the [Creative Industries Association Policy and Evidence Centre](#) found that there has not been a substantial rise in people's consumption of culture online during lockdown.
- The William Morris Gallery in Waltham Forest has been putting out weekly curator talks on Zoom. This has led to interest from all over the world. Even when doors reopen, it is important that this virtual offer is maintained.
- There is a lot of discussion around outdoor arts activities and linking this to the reopening of the high street. Social distancing is easier to maintain outside. There is an opportunity for boroughs to use culture to improve the offer on high streets.
- There is a lot of momentum around realising the value of parks and open spaces during the lockdown. A parks management forum has been set up at national level. [Parks for London](#) and the [Local Government Association](#) have issued guidance on parks management during the pandemic. Parks operation could be a discussion topic for a future meeting.
- The London Youth Games have launched [LYG Virtual Games](#), which is made up of challenges for young people set by young people. Three weekly challenges will be released every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday at 9.00am on the London Youth Games website and social media channels.

Post-meeting note from Local Government Association

The LGA is in the process of bringing together councils who operate with the same leisure provider together to discuss how they respond to requests for financial support. [Local Partnerships](#) will be providing direct support to councils who have contracts with Greenwich Leisure (GLL), Places for People (Places Leisure), Freedom, and Fusion. Please contact CTS@local.gov.uk if you would like to take up this offer, stating which leisure provider(s) you currently working with.

Post-meeting note from Sport England

- **Help us shape our future strategy**, I would welcome thoughts on how we can help colleagues connect this conversation both internally and with community partners - <https://www.sportengland.org/news/help-us-shape-our-future-strategy>
- **Open call for innovative solution to tackle inequalities**, this is an opportunity to share ideas to help develop our response (closing date 24th June at noon) - <https://www.sportengland.org/news/open-call-innovative-solutions-tackle-inequalities>
- **Responding publicly to Black Lives Matter** - <https://www.sportengland.org/blogs/sport-england-and-responding-publicly-black-lives-matter>
- **Community Emergency Fund**, details at the bottom of the page including a link to details of funded partners by local authority - <https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/our-funds/community-emergency-fund>
- **Further information**, we have also made a range of supporting announcements in relation to our Join the Movement campaign #StayInWorkOut, latest insight, and guidance for particular audiences including older people and for pregnant women and new mums - <https://www.sportengland.org/news-and-blogs>

Please contact Mark Cook for more information - Mark.Cook@sportengland.org

Post-meeting note from London Sport

London sport have some support services in place to help local authorities talk to each other and share thinking. Specifically online sessions weekly - topics vary but are linked to management of outdoor spaces, remobilising portfolio of leisure centres, scenario planning management of indoor space.

We've also put in shared folders for accessing resources, recordings, sharing documents, and a WhatsApp group although that is a very slow burner.

We'll be expanding the offer, so the best thing is to contact Lorna Leach - lorna.leach@londonsport.org and ask to be added to the weekly email that will highlight all new offers and information we have. Our strength is in navigating the later stages around connecting services to residents and organisations that can support that re-engagement with the more reticent Londoners about coming back into those kinds of spaces.