

# Member Briefing

Cultural Improvement Partnership East Midlands

## The Way Ahead for Culture The Local Government White Paper

### Overview

In October 2006, the Government published a White Paper entitled Strong and Prosperous Communities - The Local Government White Paper. The White Paper seeks to change the way local authorities work to give citizens and communities a bigger say; to enable local partners to respond more flexibly to local needs; to reduce the amount of top-down control from central government; and to enable citizens and communities to play their part.

### Why it Matters

The Local Government White Paper marked a sea-change in the relationship between central government and local authorities. The Department of Communities and Local Government says that the government's vision is of revitalised local authorities, working with their partners, to reshape public services around the citizens and communities that use them.

The White Paper sets out the aspirations for the future of local government. Cultural services will be able to make a valuable contribution to fulfilling the White Paper agenda because it offers a unique interface with people.

### Key Messages

- **Culture has a unique contribution to make to the 'place-shaping' agenda heralded by the White Paper.**
- **Many of the White Paper's aspirations for better community engagement can be delivered through cultural services.**

### Background

The White Paper sets out a radical agenda for change and represents a positive response to a number of things councils have been asking for – particularly greater freedom to determine improvement in consultation with their communities. While cultural services are not directly addressed by the White Paper, they will be instrumental in its implementation. The main provisions are set out below.

#### **A fundamental rebalance in the relationship between central and local government including:**

- A more streamlined set of 200 national outcome indicators.
- A small number of targets agreed with each area (35, plus statutory targets for education and training).
- A reformed, more risk-based and better targeted inspection regime.

#### **More accountable and responsive services at local level:**

- An enhanced right to be heard: citizens can raise a Community Call for Action through their local Councillor, and petitions are encouraged.
- Promoting community ownership and management of assets, many of which will be cultural venues.
- Involving and consulting service users and providing better information.

#### **Stronger role for local authorities as place-shapers and local leaders:**

- Local authorities to develop Local Area Agreements (LAA) in partnership with other agencies
- New role for Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and thematic partnerships.
- Place duty on named partners to co-operate in agreeing LAA targets and to have regard to meeting them.
- Presumption that all area based funding will go through LAAs.



## Case Study: Shaping Places Through Culture

Lincolnshire County Council is putting its assets to work in 'place-shaping' as the White Paper advocates. A new public library is an integral part of the recently built Belton Lane Children's and Community centre. The library has a strong community ethos providing accessible, relevant services to as broad a range of the community as possible.

Belton Lane library opened in June 2006, and is the innovative product of strong partnership working with Belton Lane Primary School and SureStart. As there was no existing provision in this area, the proposition has included developing a strong relationship with the pupils/teachers in the primary school including curriculum projects, out of school activities, learning space and IT. The team has also been able to build strong and sustainable links with families using the SureStart facilities through story sessions, mother and toddler groups, various under-five groups, the dads' group, adult literacy classes and access to IT and Information and Guidance. In addition, it has ensured use of the centre, including the community cafe, for special schools to visit as part of their Life Skills module. There are three reading groups (including a visually impaired reading group and a children's reading group) and the project has supported national initiatives and community engagement from within the service.



*Photo: Lincolnshire County Council*

### Your next steps

- Find out what your authority is doing to respond to the challenge of the White Paper.
- Discuss with fellow Members and Officers how culture can inform your authority's response.



**Cultural Improvement Partnership  
East Midlands**

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