

Delyth Jewell MS
Chair
Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and
International Relations Committee

17 July 2023

Dear Delyth

Local Government and Housing Committee inquiry into local authority leisure and library services

I enclose for your information an embargoed copy of our report on Local Authority Leisure and Library Services. The report is under embargo until 00.01 on Thursday 20 July, and I would be grateful if you could treat it in confidence until then.

The issues we have explored throughout the inquiry and the recommendations we have made in the report may be of interest to your Committee. In particular, I would like to draw your attention to recommendation 13:

Recommendation 13. We endorse the recommendation of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee that the Welsh Government should provide additional targeted funding to the sports and culture sectors to help venues and organisations that face closure but have a sustainable future beyond the immediate crisis.

During the course of inquiry, it was clear that leisure and library services are in need of immediate support to help them navigate the current crisis. We have therefore endorsed the recommendation in your [report on increasing costs and its impact on culture and sport](#) and also recommended that the Welsh Government updates us on what additional financial support it will provide leisure and library services to deal with the current energy and cost-of-living crises.

We note in our report that the Welsh Government rejected the recommendation in your report, [Levelling the playing field: A report on participation in sport and physical activity in disadvantaged areas](#), that:



"...the Welsh Government introduce a new national approach for participation in sport and physical activity in disadvantaged areas. This approach should bring together existing work and good practice that is already taking place as well as introduce new ideas to contribute to this approach. This should include measurable targets, set against a defined time period of five years, to ensure that there is equity in access to participating in sport and physical activity."

When we questioned the Deputy Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism on her rejection of your recommendation during an oral evidence session on 24 May she said that she:

"...didn't want to waste time and resource developing a new strategy when we were already working to a strategy that was engaging with the sector and with stakeholders across local authority, across the third sector, with the general public and across Government."

However, we see the benefits of having a policy framework for public leisure provision. Despite the Welsh Government having several strategies to encourage greater participation in sport and active recreation more generally, there is no apparent national vision for public leisure services, especially one that links health services and public leisure. We have therefore made the following recommendations in our report which relate to your conclusions on a new national approach for participation in sport and physical activity:

***Recommendation 5.** We recommend that the Welsh Government leads a rapid review of the current state of public leisure provision in Wales and works in partnership with key partners such as the WLGA, One Voice Wales, Sport Wales and the WCVA to consider improvements for the future of leisure services.*

***Recommendation 6.** The Welsh Government should take all reasonable steps to develop stronger links between public leisure and health services. This should include developing a new policy framework for public leisure, which closely links with health and wellbeing services. As part of the process, the role of Public Services Boards and Regional Partnership Boards in improving joint working between health and public leisure services should also be reviewed.*

We intend to seek Business Committee's agreement to schedule a debate on our report in the autumn. Ahead of that debate, I will ask the clerking team to share with you the Welsh Government's response to our report.

Yours sincerely

John

John Griffiths MS

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.