

Title of meeting: Culture, Leisure and Sport Decision Meeting

Date of meeting: 12 December 2014

Subject: Mythical Maze: The 2014 Summer Reading Challenge

Report by: Head of City Development and Cultural Services

Wards affected: All

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1** To inform the Cabinet Member of the results of the 2014 Summer Reading Challenge; the importance of encouraging children to read for pleasure; our growing engagement with young volunteers to support this initiative and to consider ways that pupil participation might be increased in the coming years.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** **That the Library and Archive Service engage directly with schools, to explore how pupil participation in the Summer Reading Challenge can be increased. This will include embedding it in school improvement plans; targeting those schools with lower levels of participation and specific year groups or pupils.**

3. Background

- 3.1** Organised by The Reading Agency and delivered by 99% of all UK public libraries, the Summer Reading Challenge is the biggest annual reading promotion for primary school aged children. The Challenge aims to get more children into their local libraries, inspiring them to read for enjoyment. It combines free access to books with library-based activities and also an online element. Throughout the Challenge, library staff and teenage volunteers support the children, helping them to discover new authors and explore a wide range of different types of books.
- 3.2** This year, 1554 children completed the Summer Reading Challenge in Portsmouth, having read at least six books over the summer holidays. 54% were children aged 4-7 years old and 38% were 8-11 years old. Although the Challenge is aimed at primary school aged children, 6% were under 4 years old and 2% were over 12 years old. A higher number of girls completed the Challenge than boys: 57%/43%.
- 3.3** Parents and carers have the option to provide equalities monitoring information when their child signs up for the Challenge. 535 registration cards with this

information were completed. 119 children (22%) were from black or minority ethnic groups and eight children had disabilities.

- 3.4 In partnership with Museums and Records Service, Southsea Castle was made available for the winners' event, where children and their families are invited to collect certificates and medals. This is the second year we have held the event at this location and the partnership delivers an additional benefit of introducing Southsea castle to children and their families from across the city. 3,400 people attended on Saturday 20 September (1947 adults and 1453 children). In the period from the launch of the Challenge on Saturday 12th July to the winners' event, nearly 56,000 children's items were issued in Portsmouth libraries.
- 3.5 This year saw a substantial increase in the number of young people aged 11-19 who volunteered to support library staff in delivering the Challenge. Last year we set ourselves the target of 25% growth in the number of volunteers for 2014. In fact we had 57 young people volunteering, nearly a 50% increase on last year. To support these agendas, the Library and Archive Service received £900 of Cabinet Office funding.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 Library staff visited 49 of the 53 primary schools in the city towards the end of the summer term to promote the Challenge in school assemblies. Whilst this plays a crucial role in raising awareness and enthusiasm amongst the children and teaching staff, there is real concern that the challenge is taken up by only the more able readers. The children most in need of support, encouragement and inspiration to develop their read are not participating in significant numbers. Greater active participation by schools in promoting the benefits of the Challenge to parents and carers, would significantly improve outcomes for pupils. Targeted encouragement for children and families identified as in need of literacy support is required
- 4.2 Although 1554 children completed the Challenge (a 2% increase on last year), 3015 children signed up to take part in the Challenge, giving us a completion rate of 51.5%. This figure of roughly 50% is remarkably consistent each year. Therefore, in order to meet our aspiration of increasing the number of children completing the Challenge beyond 10% of primary school age pupils, there needs to be a sustained partnership working with schools in order to engage parents and carers and raising their awareness of both the educational and recreational benefits of taking part.
- 4.3 One way of achieving this may be for head teachers to embed participation in the Summer Reading Challenge in their school improvement plans. This could be to target specific year groups, for example, or to drive up participation amongst boys in particular. According to research by the Institute for Education, "reading for pleasure is more important for children's cognitive development than their parents' level of education". Furthermore, the 2014 Key Stage 1 and 2 National Curriculum for English points out that "through reading in particular, pupils have a chance to develop culturally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually. Literature, especially, plays a key role in such development. Reading also enables pupils both to acquire knowledge and to build on what they already know. All the skills of

language are essential to participating fully as a member of society; pupils who do not learn to speak, read and write fluently and confidently are effectively disenfranchised".

5. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

- 5.1 A preliminary EIA has been completed and there was found to be no negative impacts on service users.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1 All legal comments are incorporated in the body of the report

7. Head of Finance comments

- 7.1 The recommendation proposed to engage directly with schools as part of the Summer Reading Challenge will be funded through existing budget resources.
- 7.2 Sources of additional support, such as the £900 funding Cabinet Office received this year, are continually being sought in order to enhance the offer.

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Signed by:
Stephen Baily
Head of City Development and Cultural Services

Appendices:

- Appendix 1: Feedback received at the Summer Reading Challenge Winners' Event**
Appendix 2: School participation in 2014

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Institute of Education Research 2013	http://readingagency.org.uk/news/reading-facts003/
National Curriculum for English 2014 Key Stages 1 and 2	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport on 12 December 2014

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Signed by:
Cabinet Member for Culture Leisure and Sport

Appendix 1:

Feedback received at the Summer Reading Challenge Winners' Event

- Thank you, our children thoroughly enjoyed the reading challenge and the award day. The challenge certainly increased the number and range of books that they read over the summer.
- It helped my daughter improve her reading age over the summer.
- Think it's very good as it kept my daughter reading through the summer holidays whereas she might not have done as much. The certificate and medal are a great incentive, also.
- There has been a significant improvement in my son's reading ability and concentration. Thank you.
- We really enjoyed taking part. The challenge was a good incentive to get the children reading over the summer and the website extras were really well done.
- Very good, interesting. My daughter is reading fluently and it is a good challenge every summer.
- My children are enthusiastic readers anyway but nice to spend quality time in the holidays going to the library and sharing books.
- A wonderful idea. The challenge motivated my daughter to read during summer. It has increased her interest and love of reading and she is more fluent. A brilliant idea.
- Lola loved the summer reading challenge and even though she picked six really long books she was determined to see it through to the end!
- It really encourages comprehension and encouraged us to discuss the events in stories and also concepts as the children prepared to discuss their books. It's a great idea.
- We have done the summer reading challenge for four years. It has encouraged reading and to explore different authors. Brilliant.
- I think the reading challenge is an excellent idea. The thought of getting a medal definitely increased my children's enthusiasm for reading over the summer. We will definitely participate next year.
- Alfie, aged 8: I think the reading challenge was good. I'm looking forward to doing it next year because it will be my fifth time doing it.
- Ruby, aged 6: I liked getting the stickers after reading my new library books and then going to get another new book to read.

Appendix 2:
School participation in 2014

School	Number of children signed up for the Challenge	Number of children who completed the Challenge
Westover Primary	105	66
College Park Infant	88	63
Langstone Infant	90	60
St Swithun's Primary	109	56
Langstone Junior	98	49
St Jude's Primary	80	43
Court Lane Junior	54	42
Milton Park Federated School	58	42
Wimborne Infant	65	42
Corpus Christi Primary	84	39
Wimborne Junior	72	38
Court Lane Infant	65	36
Craneswater Junior	63	33
Fernhurst Junior	81	33
Cottage Grove Primary	54	32
Southsea Infant	48	31
Meon Infant	43	30
Penhale Infant	52	30
Cumberland Infant	41	26
Goldsmith Infant	47	26
Copnor Junior	60	25
Arundel Court Primary	50	24
Devonshire Infant	38	23
Gatcombe Park Primary	29	23
Copnor Infant	76	22
Meon Junior	50	22
Solent Infant	43	22

School	Number of children signed up for the Challenge	Number of children who completed the Challenge
Solent Junior	26	22
Isambard Brunel Junior	31	20
Meredith Infant	50	20
Newbridge Junior	40	20
Charles Dickens Primary	28	18
St John's RC Primary	34	18
Highbury Primary	21	16
St Pauls RC Primary	33	16
Stamshaw Infant	58	16
Ayrton Ark Academy	32	15
Northern Parade Infant	26	15
Northern Parade Junior	56	13
Portsmouth High School	24	13
Manor Infant	19	12
Portsdown Primary	25	12
Stamshaw Junior	20	12
Beacon View Primary Academy	43	11
Medina Primary	23	11
Moorings way Infant	19	11
St Johns College	20	11
Portsmouth Grammar School	23	10
Flying Bull Primary	17	6
St Georges Beneficial Primary	16	6
Lyndhurst Junior	17	5
Mayville High School	16	5
Cliffdale Primary	4	2
Victory Primary	5	2
Redwood Park Secondary	5	1
Mary Rose Special School	1	0