

Title of meeting:	Culture, Leisure and Sport Decision Meeting
Date of meeting:	9 October 2015
Subject:	Record Breakers: the Summer Reading Challenge 2015
Report by:	Director of Culture and City Development
Wards affected:	All
Key decision:	No
Full Council decision:	No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To inform the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport of the results of Record Breakers: the Summer Reading Challenge 2015; the levels of promotion necessary to maintain levels of participation; the role of volunteers in supporting the Challenge and to propose targeted engagement to drive up participation rates next year.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **That in order to increase the numbers of children completing the Summer Reading Challenge next year and in subsequent years, the Library and Archive Service consults with primary head teachers on delivering additional activity as a traded service in targeted schools, in the summer term.**
- 2.2 **That the Library and Archive Service engage with colleagues from Portsmouth Children and Families Social Care, to promote participation in the Summer Reading Challenge as a positive activity for young people.**

3. Background

- 3.1 The Summer Reading Challenge is organised by The Reading Agency and public libraries. It is the UK's biggest annual reading promotion for children aged four to eleven. It combines access to books with fun, creative activities in the library. Throughout the Challenge, library staff and teenage volunteers support the children, helping them to discover new authors and to explore a wide range of different types of books and ways of reading.
- 3.2 Last year, more than 800,000 children in the UK took part in the Challenge, which requires children to read and discuss at least six books with library staff

and volunteers over the summer holidays. Children enjoy the element of competition and the incentives such as posters and stickers that are given out as they progress through the Challenge. There are significant benefits in terms of literacy attainment as well. Parents and teachers find that children who take part in the Challenge return to school after the summer break more fluent and confident readers, willing to experiment with different styles and genres (Appendix One). This year, 1,387 children completed the Challenge in Portsmouth libraries and they were invited to receive a certificate and a medal at a special winners' event. This was held once again at Southsea Castle on Sunday 13th September and 3707 people attended (2575 adults and 1132 children).

- 3.3 Library staff promoted the Challenge by speaking at assemblies in all primary schools in the city towards the end of the summer term. This was a considerable undertaking, given reduced staffing capacity. All pupils received an invitation to take part and letters were written to head teachers and parents to explain the rationale behind the Challenge and to promote participation. Articles were also featured in Portsmouth City Council publications "Flagship" and "House Talk".
- 3.4 2,710 Portsmouth primary school pupils signed up to take part and 53% of them went on to complete the Challenge. This rate of completion varies very little from year to year. A significantly larger proportion of girls (61%) completed the Challenge than boys this year.
- 3.5 For the second year running, we received £900 of funding from the Cabinet Office to support fifty-seven young volunteers, aged 12-19. These volunteers have played a crucial role in supporting our library staff to deliver the Challenge, contributing 898 hours of their time over the summer holidays. For the young people, as well as being a fun and positive activity, it is a great opportunity to develop their transferable skills and begin to populate CVs.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 Over the last few years, the number of children completing the Challenge each year comprises around ten per cent of all primary school children in the city. The Library and Archive Service compiles statistical information on the participation rates of pupils from all the schools in Portsmouth and the completion rates are remarkably consistent each year (Appendix Two). It is clear that further interventions are needed in order to increase pupil and parental engagement. There is evidence to suggest that there is a clear correlation between pupil attainment in Portsmouth schools and pupil participation in the Challenge. Furthermore, children's engagement with the Challenge is predicated on parents or carers accompanying them to a library during the summer holidays.

4.2 By delivering the Challenge during the summer term in schools, larger numbers of pupils could be targeted and given support to complete the Challenge. This is not unrealistic, given that pupils are routinely encouraged to read and record their reading by schools in any given term. If take-up from schools was high, this model would need to be delivered as a traded service with those schools otherwise there would be undue pressures on library budgets as more resource materials would need to be purchased. This intervention would be an additional offer which would not alter or diminish the summer reading challenge delivered in all Portsmouth libraries, to families, during the summer holiday period.

4.3 The Challenge has a proven impact on literacy development and wider educational outcomes so as corporate parents, it should be an aspiration that all primary school aged looked after children are actively encouraged to take part. Older looked after children should also be encouraged to become volunteers.

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 This scheme is within the Council's powers of promoting well being within the council area and as such requires no specific legal authority.

7. Director of Finance comments

7.1 The cost of delivering the current Summer Reading Challenge is met from existing library budgets.

7.2 The recommendation in this report is to consult with primary head teachers on delivering the Summer Reading Challenge as a traded service in targeted schools, in the summer term. The costs and charging structure for the proposed traded service would form part of this consultation work. It should be noted, however, that any increase in participation and material costs would need to be funded by schools. There are no additional resources available in the Library Service.

7.3 A further report will be brought to the Cabinet member for Culture, Leisure and Sport detailing the fees and charges structure for decision.

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Signed by:
Stephen Baily
Director of Culture and City Development

Appendices:

Appendix One: Feedback received from the Summer Reading Challenge Winners' Event, outlining the benefits of participation.

Appendix Two: School Participation in 2015

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

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport on 9 October 2015.

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Signed by:
Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport

Appendix One: Feedback received from the Summer Reading Challenge Winners' Event, outlining the benefits of participation.

Parents/Carers:

- My daughter was quite behind at school so this programme encouraged her to read as she was excited to collect the stickers for her poster and receive the medal at the end! Loved it!
- Very good idea - made us read lots of lovely books over the holiday and bumped into lots of friends in the library.
- This is a fantastic and rewarding reading challenge. My daughter loves reading and her reading has improved. Will definitely be back next year. Fantastic.
- My daughter really enjoyed the reading challenge. I found it was a good way to pass time with her during the school holidays.
- Great idea - introducing my granddaughter to the joy of using a library.
- My daughter loves doing this every year. It encourages us to go to the library over the summer and try out different books.
- Was fab that both children could join in. Really good to keep their reading going over holidays and encouraged me to keep on top of it.
- Event was brilliant, really made it special. Thank you.

Five year-old boy:

- I thought it was epic and good because I enjoyed reading books and getting a medal at the end.

Appendix Two: School Participation in 2015

School	Number of children signed up for the Challenge	Number of children who completed the Challenge
St Swithun's RC Primary School	124	64
Langstone Infant School	84	59
College Park Infant School	98	58
Copnor Primary School	91	49
Court Lane Infant School	94	47
Lyndhurst Junior School	76	46
Court Lane Junior School	86	41
Milton Park Primary School	65	40
Westover Primary School	65	38
Wimborne Junior School	78	35
Arundel Court Primary School	49	32
Wimborne Infant School	64	32
Corpus Christi RC Primary School	54	31
Cottage Grove Primary School & Nursery	49	31
St Jude's CE Primary School	59	28
Solent Infant School	50	27
Cumberland Infant School	46	25
Fernhurst Junior School	49	24
Penhale Infant School	34	24
Southsea Infant School	41	24
Langstone Junior School	50	23
Goldsmith Infant School	31	21
Meon Infant School	33	21
Ark Ayrton Primary Academy	34	20
Beacon View Primary School	27	18
Medina Primary School	38	18
Devonshire Infant & Nurture Assessment Unit	32	17
Northern Parade Junior School	47	17
Solent Junior School	39	17
Ark Dickens Primary School	23	16
St John's Cathedral Catholic Primary School	21	16
Highbury Primary School	40	15
Newbridge Junior School	30	15
Northern Parade Infant School	30	15
Craneswater Junior School	36	14
St Pauls RC Primary	49	14
Stamshaw Infant School	37	14



Gatcombe Park Primary School	20	13
Meon Junior School	39	12
Meredith Infant School	27	12
Portsdown Primary School	22	11
Moorings Way Infant School	21	9
The Victory Primary School	16	9
Mayfield School	15	8
Isambard Brunel Junior School	16	7
Manor Infant School	12	7
St George's Beneficial CE Primary School	21	6
Cliffdale Primary Academy	5	5
Flying Bull Primary School	12	5
Stamshaw Junior School	24	5
Portsmouth Academy for Girls	5	3
Priory School	4	3
Admiral Lord Nelson School	6	2
Charter Academy	12	2
Springfield School	5	2
St Edmund's RC School	8	2
Trafalgar School	3	1
King Richard School	4	1
Miltoncross School	5	1
Redwood Park School	2	1
Mary Rose School	1	0
The Harbour Special School	2	0