1. **Summary**

1. This report seeks to inform the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure of the development of a Theatre Strategy for Portsmouth.

2. **Purpose of report**

2.1 To update the Cabinet Member on the recent work to develop a Theatre Strategy for Portsmouth

2.2 To recommend the adoption of the attached Theatre Strategy.

3. **Background**

3.1 In March 2008 a Performance Venue Review report was taken to the Executive Member for Culture & Leisure outlining the recommendations from a review of cultural performance spaces which we had undertaken with the major venues in Portsmouth.

3.2 Within the recommendations of this review was one to devise and deliver a strategic framework for a Theatre Strategy for Portsmouth City Council to facilitate the authority's strategic support for theatre performance spaces in the city for the medium term.

3.3 Approval was given by the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure in November 2009 to circulate a draft Theatre Strategy and invite feedback from a range of stakeholders. Subsequently the report was widely circulated and an open invitation given to theatre organisations in the city to attend a consultation evening which was held on 25th January 2010.

3.4 All the feedback was collated and has informed this final version of the Theatre Strategy and Action Plan which is attached in Appendix 1.
3.5 The strategy takes into consideration national, regional and other strategic frameworks, including the PUSH agenda and the aspirations that Portsmouth has to be City of Culture jointly with Southampton in 2013.

3.6 Overall there has been a very positive response to the draft Theatre Strategy and we have welcomed the feedback which has been received.

3.7 The adoption of this strategy will hopefully provide the necessary framework for the continued growth of this sector but with a more collaborative offer increasing opportunity and frequency of engagement by both residents and visitors in theatre.

3.8 The adoption of this strategy will also facilitate the introduction of Service Level Agreements in association with funding given by Portsmouth City Council to any organisation involved in delivering culture as from April 2010. This is in line with the Portsmouth Compact and good practice for working with the voluntary sector.

4. Recommendations

4.1 To adopt the overarching principals as laid out in the Theatre Strategy for Portsmouth City Council.

4.2 For Portsmouth City Council to directly deliver the recommendations laid out in 16.1, 16.2 and 16.3 of the strategy in conjunction with the development of Service Level Agreements with both the New Theatre Royal and the Kings Theatre.

4.3 For Portsmouth City Council to explore the individual recommendations as outlined in the Theatre Strategy and to work to facilitate their delivery where practical within existing resource limitations and with other organisations such as the Cultural Consortium or the Portsmouth Cultural Partnership.

5. Reasons for recommendations

5.1 The Theatre Strategy here is the result of a considerable amount of consultation and effort. The Performance Venue Report in 2008 highlighted this as a key area for delivery in order to develop the theatre offer in Portsmouth. In the current economic and resource climate it is essential that there is a clarity as to the role, function and purpose of Portsmouth City Council’s investment into this sector.

6. Options considered and rejected

6.1 Consideration was given to not adopting this Theatre Strategy but rejected on the grounds of the need for a clarity of Portsmouth City Council’s position in order to support the development of Service Level Agreements in relation to funding for both theatre venues as necessitated in the Portsmouth Compact.
7. Duty to involve

7.1 Internal consultation: Portsmouth City Council’s employees have been consulted where their work links to theatre delivery. To see a non-exhaustive list of these persons, please see Appendix 2.

7.2 External consultation: A large number of conversations have taken place with external stakeholders. These have included all the key Portsmouth venues as well as regional partners such as the Arts Council England South East. To see a non-exhaustive list of these persons please see Appendix 2.

8. Implications

8.1 Human resources:

This project has been supported by the Arts & Cultural Development Service. It is anticipated that the support and delivery of the Action Plan will be facilitated by the service but could include a range of other partners such as the Cultural Consortium and Cultural Partnership Board.

8.2 Communication:

The whole project has had a significant impact on raising the profile of Portsmouth as a cultural city. Adopting the Theatre Strategy should further increase the effectiveness of this sector and raise the profile further of the range and breadth of activity which is happening in the city.

8.3 Risk Assessment:

There is a risk that some of the recommendations (aspirations) may not be financially affordable, hence fail to materialise.

9. Corporate priorities

This report and the project it refers to contribute to the following Priorities:

Corporate Priorities:
- Improve efficiency and encourage involvement
- Raise standards in English and maths
- Regenerate the city

Local Strategic Partnership: Vision for Portsmouth
- 8: Enhance Portsmouth’s reputation as a city of culture, energy and passion offering access for all to arts, sports and leisure

10. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

An Equality Impact Assessment is not felt to be necessary at this stage.
11. **Legal implications**

There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report. However further consideration will be required once a strategy has been agreed.

12. **Head of Finance’s comments**

Many of the recommendations (aspirations) will have capital and/or revenue financial implications. The City Council has just set it capital & revenue budgets for the financial year 2010/11 so only those recommendations that can be contained within the existing cash limit will be implemented.

Any recommendations that requires additional capital and/or revenue resources will need to have funding sources identified and been presented to members for future approval.

Signed: .................................................................

**Stephen Baily**  
Head of Cultural Services
Appendix 1

Portsmouth’s Theatre Strategy

In September 2009 Portsmouth City Council commissioned Stephen Browning Associates to devise a strategic framework for the support and delivery of theatre within the city which delivers both professional activity and community engagement.

1. Introduction

1.1 The changing demographics of the region

This strategic framework for theatre in Portsmouth must take into account the significant changes taking place both within the city itself but also within the cultural industries. The demographics of the city are changing fast, with projected increases both in the population and the number of households in Portsmouth. Hampshire is also forecasting a significant growth in population together with an increase in the number of retired people in the area. These demographic changes will have a dramatic impact on the audience for theatre in the city, and will influence the programming, the services and the facilities provided by the two professional theatres.

In our earlier report for the City Council we also highlighted the need for any future strategy to address the cultural and social barriers which are preventing many groups from engaging with cultural activity in the city, including council tenants, households with no car, people aged 25-34, and people with disabilities. These barriers include the cost of tickets and travel difficulties, as well as access issues for people with disabilities. There is also a huge lack of awareness of cultural activity amongst BME communities in the city. The theatre sector is starting to address these issues, but there is clearly a need for sustained support to ensure that real progress is made over the next few years.

1.2 The cultural landscape

A theatre strategy for the city should also take into account imminent changes to the cultural landscape including:

- The development of a cultural quarter centred on Guildhall Square.
- The partnership of the New Theatre Royal and the University, and the exciting plans for the ‘back lot’.
- The restoration of the Kings.
- The Building Schools for the Future programme and the transformation of two specialist schools – King Richard and Mayfield.
- The PUSH programme and the increase in engagement with young people outside school hours.
- The increased role of Creative Partnerships within the city.
- A developing partnership between cultural organisations in Portsmouth and the cultural sector in Southampton and Hampshire, as a result of the PUSH programme.
- The introduction of the Creative and Media Diploma in schools in Portsmouth.
- The bid for UK City of Culture in 2013, in partnership with Southampton.
- The important role of the city’s cultural heritage in the repositioning of Portsmouth, with the increasing emphasis on ‘the waterfront city’.

1 The Performance Venue Review 2008
The future strategy for theatre in Portsmouth has to recognise these changes but it should also acknowledge that there has been dramatic progress given the perilous state of both the New Theatre Royal and the Kings in the earlier part of this decade. The city is very fortunate to have two beautiful Matcham theatres, and they are both in the process of being transformed and made fit for purpose for the 21st century.

1.3 The outline strategy

The strategy needs to build on the substantial progress which has been made in the last few years and ensure that theatre in Portsmouth can continue to flourish and develop. If there is a single priority for the city we would suggest that it is about raising theatre’s profile with the residents of Portsmouth so that the work attracts and engages an even larger local audience. We must explore innovative ways to promote to the potentially enormous audience within our region.

The strategy for theatre in Portsmouth from 2010 - 2015 needs to address the following:

1. **Theatre buildings.** Current state and recommendations for improvement and development over the next five years.

2. **Theatre companies and their artistic programmes.** Current strengths and the potential for future development.

3. **Artistic partnerships.** Which companies are we currently working with, and what is the potential for developing these relationships further? Are there other companies that should be performing in the city and how do we encourage this development? Are there opportunities to develop international partnerships and encourage more companies from overseas to perform in Portsmouth?

4. **Education and community programmes.** Current state and opportunities for expansion. How is the Creative and Media diploma changing students’ requirements and how is theatre responding to this challenge? How has the Find Your Talent programme opened up new partnerships which can be built on over the next five years, and how is this development funded?

5. **Audience development.** What is the balance between residents and visitors to the city, and how do we encourage greater participation and engagement? What are the current barriers to attendance and how do we overcome them? How are we engaging with minority groups and what more can we do to develop their participation with theatre in the city.

6. **New performance spaces.** The new theatres in the King Richard School and Mayfield School, together with Groundlings Theatre Company’s new studio space at the Old Beneficial School, provide a potentially exciting inter-city touring network for small scale work. The new studio theatre at the New Theatre Royal could also be a potential partner in this network, as well as Highbury College and Portsmouth College. How can we progress this idea, and how will it be managed and funded?

7. **Training.** How do we ensure that we have the producers, managers, performers and technical personnel for the future? Will the new drama school at the Old Beneficial School and the training initiatives introduced by both theatres provide sufficient staff with the right qualifications, or are further training courses required?

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2 The Arts Council’s Area Profile, using a 45 minute drive time from Portsmouth, suggests that the audience for theatre, including plays, dance, ballet, opera, classical music and jazz, is in the region of 495,000 people.
8. **National and regional context.** How will the cultural landscape change, for example, when the new cultural quarter in Southampton opens? How should Portsmouth respond to the new initiatives announced by the Arts Council as a result of the recent theatre assessment? If the new arena is built on the outskirts of Portsmouth what will be the impact upon comedy, for example? Will leading comedians shift from the Guildhall to the arena, and if that is the case, does this mean that the Kings will find it harder to programme comedy in future?

9. **The relationship between the City Council and the two theatres.** Is it the right moment for the City Council to formalise its relationship with the New Theatre Royal and the Kings?

10. **Amateur theatre.** Amateur theatre is flourishing in the city, but could more be done with their rehearsal and performance spaces? Could St Peter’s Theatre be used by the Kings for education and community activity? Could other companies or schools use the rehearsal spaces at Milton Barn?

11. **Provision in the northern part of the city.** We are very conscious that many of the city’s cultural buildings are based in the south of the city and this leaves the residents living in the north with little access. The new theatres at Highbury College and at King Richard School could help to address this lack of provision, but is there more that could be done? Do we need to look imaginatively at non-theatre spaces, such as warehouses or circus tents, and programme work specifically for this community? And if so, how do we manage and fund this process? The New Theatre Royal is keen to develop the use of non-theatre spaces, particularly during the dark period when the theatre is closed, and they are keen to use their professional skills and knowledge to take a lead with this initiative.

12. **New technology.** How are the theatres currently using new technology either on the stage or to engage audiences? What can we learn from initiatives taking place in theatres across the country, and how do we apply these lessons to Portsmouth?

13. **Funding.** How can theatre continue to flourish if the Cultural Service budget is cut severely? Are there other potential funding streams within the City Council, for example, within Education and Lifelong Learning, or Community Cohesion, which might be appropriate given the wide range of education and community work undertaken by the two theatres? Are there other sources of financial support, such as PUSH, and, if so, how could the City Council help the theatres access these funds?

**2. The national context**

**2.1 The Theatre Assessment**

The Arts Council’s Theatre Assessment³, published earlier this year, provides a useful overview of current trends observed by both regional theatres and by theatre practitioners across the country. Research undertaken by the Arts Council as part of this national review of funded organisations demonstrated that:

‘The theatre sector was changing. Recent graduates from the burgeoning number of performing arts courses were developing work across artforms in non-theatre spaces using modern technology, work for children and young people was becoming more mainstream, diverse work was slowly becoming a more regular feature of theatre programmes, and physical theatre was increasingly featured in the programmes of our major theatres’.

³ The 10,000 seat arena, designed by Herzog and de Meuron, is now unlikely to be built before 2018. Portsmouth Football Club will focus instead on ways of expanding their ground at Fratton Park.

⁴ Theatre Assessment 2009. Arts Council England
Key trends highlighted in the report suggest that theatres were responding to the changes in local demographics, but audiences were becoming more fragmented. Theatre practitioners agreed that:

- The number of companies, festivals and events has proliferated and there have been improvements in infrastructure and quality, largely as a result of increased funding following the earlier Theatre Review, which took place in 2001.

- The increasing engagement with young people has been driven largely by the increase in participatory work, the use of technology and the growth in outdoor and site-specific work.

- The development of the family audience was being driven by the increase in work for children and families.

- Audiences had increased expectations of experiencing an ‘event’, particularly outdoors and away from theatre buildings.

- The audience had raised expectations of quality and standards, both in terms of facilities and performances. There were consistent observations throughout the research that new or refurbished facilities had raised audiences’ expectations. Representatives of theatres that had not benefited from capital developments were increasingly concerned about being left behind, and some reported that they had struggled to maintain audiences.

- Few theatre organisations are yet making full and effective use of technological developments and are not always appreciating the impact that new technology is having on the behaviour of audiences.

- Street arts have gained a higher profile in recent years.

- There is a steady growth in interest in culturally diverse work, and a growing appetite for political and provocative theatre.

- Audiences wanted more information about productions and venues in advance.

- Several venues reported that dance companies had been more interested in making relationships with them than theatre companies. There was recognition of the role of the dance agencies in contributing to the development of the dance in the regions. Though dance is a relatively small sector, it appears to have better networks than theatre.

- Respondents remarked on the programmes of a number of middle-scale venues relying heavily on tribute bands, comedy or commercially available drama of variable quality.

- The proportion of theatre in many small venues had reduced in favour of music or dance.

- Collaborations and partnerships have increased significantly during the last few years and brought significant benefit. There have also been more collaborations with international companies and artists.

- There has been a growth in the number of programmes to increase engagement, particularly with young people, and the status of learning departments within theatre organisations has increased, with their work influencing the mainstream. These learning departments have been particularly successful in engaging young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, Black and minority ethnic communities and those that have never experienced theatre before.
The data shows that attendance at informal learning sessions (outside the education system) and professional training sessions provided by regularly funded organisations is substantially higher than in 2001/2.

The assessment found that an emphasis on participation and volunteering has resulted in a doubling of the number of volunteers in the theatres involved in the research.

2.2 Relationship with local authorities

The Theatre Assessment also examined the relationship between theatres and their local authorities. The research suggested that there were increased and sometimes unrealistic expectations by local authorities particularly in the area of education. There were increased expectations on theatres to deliver across a number of local authority stakeholders, in many cases without additional financial support. The Theatre Assessment also recognised that increasing pressure on local government budgets, particularly in unitary authorities, was leading to a real reduction in funding for arts organisations. Portsmouth has not escaped these financial pressures and the arts budget has been reduced by 33% in the last five years.

2.3 Arts Council’s future strategy

Following the Theatre Assessment the Arts Council has indicated that it will focus on the development of international work and partnerships, the use of digital technology, a new approach to touring to ensure that more people have access to high quality work, audience development, the training of artists, and a further emphasis on the diversity of work and audiences.

3. Regional context

3.1 Regional competitors

Local residents are fortunate to be within easy reach of a number of major regional theatres outside Portsmouth including the Mayflower⁵ and the Nuffield Theatre in Southampton, the Theatre Royal in Winchester and Chichester’s two theatres, the Festival Theatre and the Minerva⁶. The Point at Eastleigh and the Havant Arts Centre⁷ are also nearby. Southampton is planning major investment into its new cultural quarter, and the New Arts Complex in Guildhall Square will include Nuffield 2, a performance venue with new auditorium spaces shared with Art Asia, as well as additional studios, rehearsal and technical facilities.

3.2 Competition for audiences and touring shows

These local theatres are competing for touring companies and for audiences. As part of the research for the Performance Venue Review last year we asked Chichester Festival Theatre to analyse their box office patron database and approximately 1000 people from Portsmouth went to the Festival Theatre in 2007, which accounts for 3.7% of their total audience. Recent analysis by the Kings demonstrated that the Chichester audience is not necessarily coming to Portsmouth in similar numbers. Despite significant advertising and promotion in the Chichester area the theatre attracted around 2% of its audience for Chicago from people living in Chichester post codes. It is hard for the Kings, for example, to compete with the Mayflower given that

⁵ The Mayflower is the largest theatre in the south of England, and its broad programme of musicals, dance, ballet, opera, children’s shows and annual pantomime regularly attracts audiences of 400,000 a year.

⁶ Chichester Festival Theatre is the major publicly funded theatre organisation in the South East. Each summer it plays to around 145,000 people across its two auditoria, in addition to a winter programme of visiting companies. The theatre also has an active Learning and Participation Department, which manages a 300 strong youth theatre company. The theatre receives over £1.5m from the Arts Council in addition to grants of £210,000 from West Sussex County Council and £250,000 from Chichester District Council.

⁷ Havant Arts Centre and Museum has recently changed its name to The Spring.
the latter is only 20 miles away. However the Kings is confident that there is a local audience for medium scale musicals and there are productions on tour which would suit the stage at the Kings rather than the Mayflower. The Trust firmly believes that local people should have the opportunity of seeing top quality musicals in their city rather than having to travel to Southampton, and the Kings is planning to present *The Rocky Horror Show* in May 2010 even though the production will have played in Southampton earlier in the year.

However it is important to note that when the New Theatre Royal has brought productions from The Globe in London to Portsmouth Museum, the audience was split 50% from Portsmouth and 50% from outside the city, including from Chichester, Winchester and Southampton. This would suggest that product and profile are key to attracting that wider audience to visit Portsmouth.

4. Local context

4.1 Local Area Agreement

Portsmouth’s Local Area Agreement, ‘Portsmouth on the Up’, identifies culture as one of five cross-cutting themes, and states that ‘improving inclusivity and access to cultural opportunities’ is a high level outcome of the agreement.

‘Culture is a lifeblood of a city – it identifies and shapes a city both in its heritage and its future. Culture is a vital part of community life, and a fundamental way in which a local identity is fashioned, and as such is a key ingredient in the success of any city’

The Agreement recognises that cultural activities can help to build safer and stronger communities, and foster a greater sense of local pride and identity. Cultural activities can help to build self esteem, self-worth and personal skills, as well as playing a broader role in offering diversionary activities for young people by promoting greater engagement with their communities. Cultural activities can also provide a rich source of volunteering opportunities.

Culture and the creative industries are also viewed as a key part of the economic development and enterprise of the city. The City Growth Strategy, which studied the economic potential of Portsmouth, identified tourism, leisure and retail as key sectors for growth for the next five years. The Agreement stresses the need to ensure that young people are equipped with the skills required for today’s creative industries, and recognises the key role that the University has in driving forward this agenda.

‘But yet more important is the undoubted truth that the economic potential of culture and the creative industries can only be realised if the cultural life of a locality is itself thriving. There is a great deal of recent research that suggests that the cultural vitality of an area is key in the decision of people to move there, educate their children there, and to invest in that area. As such any investment in the cultural health of Portsmouth is an investment in the city in an almost limitless number of ways’.

4.2 Portsmouth’s Corporate Plan

The City’s Corporate Plan recognizes that the encouragement of a dynamic cultural sector is crucial to Portsmouth’s economic and social development. The Plan states that:

“developing a rich, vibrant and well-supported cultural, creative and community sector is central to the future economic and social health of any city with significant ambitions for its future…cities with a strong sense of identity have healthier, more cohesive communities, thriving local economies and attract visitors from all over the world”.

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*Portsmouth on the Up – All together: more ambitious for our future. Portsmouth Local Area Agreement 2007 and revised version Vision into Reality, 2008 - 2011*

*Portsmouth City Council’s Corporate Plan 2008 - 2011*
4.3 Cultural Services

This aim is echoed in the City Council’s Cultural Services’ vision document:

‘By 2012, Portsmouth aims to be seen as a world-class waterfront city, unique in the region for its cultural heritage, innovation and dynamism; changing the lives of its residents and visitors by enhancing appreciation of the city’s cultural heritage and legacy; and enabling people of all communities and all ages to reach their true creative potential.’

Portsmouth’s theatres are an integral part of the city’s vision for the future. The theatres are not only a clear example of the city’s rich cultural heritage but they are delivering a varied programme of activities and events for both residents and visitors both in their respective buildings and throughout the local community. It is important to emphasise that the city’s theatres have the potential to address many of Portsmouth City Council’s corporate aims, and this is identified in the Cultural Services’ document. In different ways the Kings and the New Theatre Royal contribute to the enhancement of life for residents and visitors, and address key priorities identified by the City Council including Health and Wellbeing, Education and Lifelong Learning, Environment and Identity, Economy and Regeneration, Community Safety and Social Inclusion.

Portsmouth without either theatre would be a sad and impoverished city, and it is a tribute to the City Council that it has recognised that both organisations have a crucial and important part to play in delivering a ‘world-class waterfront city’. The City Council’s investment, both in the buildings and in the running costs of the New Theatre Royal and the Kings, has been substantial, and it is important that this is properly acknowledged in any future strategy for the city. However, it is also crucial for Portsmouth and the City Council to recognise that if the New Theatre Royal’s grant continues to decline there is a real danger that the theatre will return to a depressing cycle of reduced output, declining audiences, and cuts to the range services that it provides to the local community.

4.4 Cultural Services’ aims

Cultural Services have set out a number of aims for the next few years, including increasing the level of participation in the arts, community engagement and the levels of volunteering within all services, and it is important that the theatres consider how they can best support these aims. Cultural Services have also identified the importance of continuing to review the rationalization of buildings and facilities, the need to strengthen existing partnerships and to develop new relationships with other organisations. There are also specific targets identified in the Corporate Plan and the Local Area Agreement, including:

- Increase the number of visitors to Portsmouth
- Increase the percentage of residents who identify ‘creating a city of culture’ as one of the 2-3 important priorities for the City Council and its partners to achieve
- Increased number of, and support to, cultural and creative enterprises
- Increase the number of schools engaged with cultural services
- Increase the number of adults who have engaged with the arts at least three times within 12 months (N1 11)

These objectives are challenging and we need to be clear on the benchmarks being applied in each case. However we believe that an important part of the city’s future theatre strategy should be an assessment of how the theatres can make a significant contribution to helping the City Council to meet these targets.

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10 In 2009/10 Portsmouth City Council gave The Kings a revenue grant of £118,524 which is index linked. The New Theatre Royal’s revenue grant is currently £107,800, but this grant has steadily declined each year since 2004/5.
5. Issues raised by the theatre sector in Portsmouth

5.1 Portsmouth Cultural Consortium

In April 2007 the Portsmouth Cultural Consortium arranged an open meeting to discuss issues facing the theatre sector in the city. There were 25 attendees at the meeting and they split up into groups to discuss the following questions:

- How to unlock the potential of all the city’s spaces for rehearsal, performance, storage and workshops?
- How to improve audience attendance?
- What role should drama play in festivals and outdoor events?
- How to improve the overall experience of audiences?
- How can we raise the aspirations for theatre in the city?

A large number of suggestions were raised at the meeting and we have grouped the most common themes in the section below.

5.2 Key issues

5.2.1 The overall experience

There is a real need for the city to consider ways of improving the overall experience for theatergoers and address problems concerning transport, parking, and supporting facilities, such as restaurants, in the immediate area of the theaters.

The issue of safety was raised in connection with Guildhall Walk at night, but the lack of proper parking provision is also constantly raised as an issue by audiences visiting the Kings. Negative publicity concerning both the safety and accessibility of both venues is potentially extremely damaging to developing audiences.

5.2.2 Marketing

There should be coordinated advertising and cross-selling of tickets, perhaps through a centralised box office. The sharing of research and audience data was also important.

5.2.3 Performance venues

There should be greater use made of more varied performance spaces, including schools, community centres and pubs. To facilitate this there is a pressing need for a database of venues, their facilities and costs, for both rehearsal and performance.

5.2.4 Collaboration

There was a strong call for more collaboration and the sharing of resources and ideas, and a general feeling that more effective use could be made of existing facilities. There should be a closer relationship between venues and arts organisations, and they should develop long term goals and targets. There was agreement that more should be done to engage with harder to reach audiences.

5.2.5 Perceptions of theatre in the city

Greater efforts were needed to alter people’s perceptions of what is on offer, as the offer is much more varied and of higher quality than many people assume. There was a discussion around the current perceptions that productions at Chichester are of a good quality, up market and professional, whereas perceptions about
theatre in Portsmouth are low. The RSC’s visit to the Mountbatten Centre raised awareness. Taster events might be helpful to encourage attendance.

Perceptions can be changed with the right investment in both product and infrastructure, including the redevelopment of both theatres. The product can be delivered by both the Kings and the New Theatre Royal working collaboratively and providing an exciting complementary offer, and by the new studio theatres around the city opening up access to a potentially new audience.

5.2.6 Festivals

Participants suggested that a fringe festival should take place in Portsmouth, perhaps in four venues within four specific communities, and that outdoor festivals should include drama. It could be helpful if there was access to a central pool of lighting, sound and other technology to facilitate site specific performances, and the two theatres could advise on the appropriate acquisition of these facilities.

5.3 The role of the City Council

The meeting also discussed the City Council’s role in helping to facilitate change, and the importance of continuing the discussion amongst the cultural sector to ensure real progress.

We believe that ongoing consultation across the sector is extremely important and that the Performance Venue Forum is probably the most appropriate group to facilitate this dialogue on a regular basis.

6. The New Theatre Royal

The New Theatre Royal is a traditional ‘plush and gilt’ Victorian theatre designed by Frank Matcham in 1900. The backstage area was destroyed by fire in 1972, and the theatre was derelict until it re-opened in 1984 using a temporary thrust stage over the orchestra pit. In 2004 the auditorium was refurbished with the financial support of the City Council, the Arts Council, as well as the Foundation for Sport and the Arts and the Onyx Environmental Trust.

6.1 Programming

The NTR is a receiving house for small and middle scale theatre, dance, music and comedy, though it is also available for hire by the local community and amateur groups. However the Theatre Director also has ambitions to develop the theatre’s own productions and this years’ Christmas show, *Alice in Wonderland*, was produced in-house. High quality shows produced in-house, and co-productions premiered at the New Theatre Royal, will help to raise the profile of theatre in Portsmouth and should in time attract regional and national media coverage. The NTR has always been seen as a theatre which will take risks and present work of emerging artists, including physical theatre and cutting edge dance, and in the 2009 autumn season they presented work by companies such as State of Emergency and Precarious. The theatre has also started to experiment with opera, presenting Co-Opera Co’s productions of *Albert Herring* and *La Bohème*.

6.2 The audience

The theatre has a current audience of around 30,000 people a year, with 76% of this audience living in Portsmouth. The New Theatre Royal attracts over 4,000 young people from local schools, and a further 2,700 people attend events and workshops. The theatre has a strong mailing list of 15,000 people, with a further

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11 *Alice in Wonderland* attracted national coverage for the theatre.
2,200 people receiving a regular e-newsletter, and in the last year it has started to develop a significant fan base on Facebook.\(^\text{12}\).

### 6.3 The theatre’s aims

The theatre has a clear mission statement and set of aims, including:

- To be a centre of cultural excellence and innovation that presents, promotes and produces a programme of culturally diverse great art both inside and outside of the building for people of all ages, cultures and expectations.
- To offer a dynamic range of world class professional drama, dance, music and comedy to enrich people’s lives.
- To seek out innovative work and provide a platform for emerging companies.
- To extend and compliment the cultural offer of the city of Portsmouth so that the city can be celebrated nationally as a thriving centre for culture.
- To offer local community groups, schools and the university the opportunity to create and perform on the stage.
- To offer workshops and outreach opportunities to people of all ages, cultures and abilities in the theatre and throughout the city and its surrounding areas.

### 6.4 Partners and new initiatives

The theatre works closely with the Kings and the Cathedral over programming, with the City Council in connection with the Find Your Talent programme, and with organisations outside the city such the joint project with the Theatre Royal Winchester to develop the Under 26 audience, and the partnership with Havant Arts Centre to extend the dance programme. The theatre has also been involved in the city wide initiative to develop the Post Industrial Family audience for cultural events and activities.

The Director is currently working on a series of exciting new initiatives including a street festival, ‘Beyond Words’ in 2010/11; the development of a community promenade play to celebrate the Dickens’ bicentenary in the city in 2012; and the use of other performing spaces in the city, including Guildhall Square and the Museum gardens. The theatre is planning to extend its learning and education programme from four to six schools in the city, and will be working with the Education Business Partnership and local colleges to provide up to 15 work experience or training placements by 2010. The Director has also recently set up a youth theatre and youth dance company, which have grown to include a junior youth theatre and a poetry club group. The theatre provides a full programme of half term and holiday workshops in addition to a summer school, and is currently developing a partnership with The Children’s University.

The NTR is also prioritising music, and next year will present the Music in the Round concerts at the theatre. Music in the Round is a well established series of chamber concerts which have been presented at the Cathedral for the past few years.

### 6.5 The theatre’s partnership with the University

The NTR’s new partnership with the University of Portsmouth will enable the company to operate as a national producing and touring theatre, since the planned redevelopment of the ‘back lot’ will extend the stage area and the backstage facilities, including new dressing rooms and wing space.\(^\text{14}\) The redevelopment will also include a new studio theatre, seating around 150 people, as well as proper rehearsal space, alongside accommodation.

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\(^\text{12}\) The theatre’s Facebook fans are based all over the UK including Hull, Manchester, London and Milton Keynes, as well as a significant number of people living in Portsmouth.

\(^\text{13}\) The NTR is extending its learning and education programme to develop the theatre’s relationship with King Richard School, Mayfield, Admiral Lord Nelson, Charter Academy and Milton Cross.

\(^\text{14}\) The expected cost of the new building is £4m. The NTR will be closed for redevelopment from 2010 -2012.
for the Performing Arts and Music faculty\(^\text{15}\), which will be based on the theatre site. This partnership between the NTR and the University will extend the range of public performance at the theatre, but also provide the opportunity for the theatre to become a regional hub for training and skills development linked to the National Skills Academy at Thurrock. The University is planning for an increase in undergraduate and post graduate provision over the next four years and it is expecting that students studying performing arts and music will increase in numbers from 100 to over 200.

The redeveloped New Theatre Royal will allow the theatre to:

- Engage middle scale contemporary national companies, which cannot fit on the stage at present.
- Provide a space for youth groups and for local performing companies to develop and perform their work.
- Establish a ‘Made in Portsmouth’ brand as the NTR creates its own professional shows.
- Expand its outreach activities for the city’s schools and colleges.
- Contribute to the regeneration of the city centre.

This new initiative is a hugely exciting development for the city and for the cultural sector in the region. It will raise the profile of theatre in Portsmouth and create opportunities for new creative partnerships with a range of touring companies, expanding the NTR's repertoire and allowing the theatre to develop its artistic programme. The skills and training initiative with the National Skills Council, together with the theatre’s determination to produce more shows in-house, should provide a range of opportunities for creative practitioners and for young people in the city who are considering a career in the theatre.

The closure of the theatre for two years, between 2010-2012, will also create an opportunity for the NTR to use other performing spaces in the city. We suggest that this period of ‘outreach’ is used to explore how best to use other theatre spaces, such as St Peter’s Theatre and Groundlings Theatre Company’s new building, the Old Beneficial School, as well as to trial some site specific work in other parts of the city.

7. The Kings

7.1 Objectives of the Trust

The re-development of the Kings Theatre in Southsea and its establishment as a major touring venue for the city is a huge achievement, which should be fully recognized and applauded. The Kings Theatre Trust has looked after the Kings since it was purchased by the City Council, and has directly managed the operation of the theatre since September 2003. In the last six years the Trust has overseen a major £2m programme of restoration\(^\text{16}\) as well as the development of a broad artistic programme which has built the theatre’s audience.

The Trust has a number of specific objectives including:

- To preserve for the people of Portsmouth, Hampshire and nationally, the historic, architectural and constructional heritage of the Grade II* listed building.
- To restore the Matcham designed building, and to maintain the building in a condition for the use and enjoyment of future generations.
- To ensure the appropriate operation of the theatre and take all steps necessary to promote people’s interest in the theatre, including heritage and educational activities.

7.2 The Kings’ audience

\(^\text{15}\) Performing Arts and Music are part of the University’s School of Creative Arts and Film Media

\(^\text{16}\) The Kings won the Best Restoration Award in 2008 from the Portsmouth Society. It is also important to emphasise that many local firms have been involved in this restoration project, developing a skills base in the city for heritage work.
The theatre has a current audience of around 130,000 people a year\textsuperscript{17}, with approximately 45\% of this audience living in Portsmouth. The Kings Theatre attracts over 10,000 young people from local schools, and a further 2300 people attend tours and workshops. The theatre has a strong mailing list of 40,000 people, with a further 5000 people receiving a regular e-newsletter, and in the last two years it has started to develop a significant fan base on Facebook.

7.3 Future programming

The Kings has ambitious plans to present a wide and varied programme of up to 300 performances a year by 2015, though the Trust fully recognises that if the current economic downturn continues it may have to adjust these plans. The Kings is hoping to increase the provision of drama, opera and ballet, and children’s shows, as well as planning for a significant increase in the number of musical theatre performances and the pantomime. The theatre is ideal for the presentation of large scale shows, as has been demonstrated recently with productions of ‘Seven Brides for Seven Brothers’, ‘Chicago’ and ‘Beauty and the Beast’, and, by focusing on this market, it is clearly addressing an important gap in provision in Portsmouth. These huge shows are expensive to present, but if the theatre can provide a very distinctive alternative experience to the Mayflower in Southampton there is no reason why it cannot build the local musical theatre audience over a period of time.

The Trust continues to encourage the presentation of community productions at the theatre, and in 2009/10 amateur productions and hires will account for 65 performances, which is approximately 25\% of the total output. The Kings has a strong relationship with the Portsmouth Players and the South Downe Musical Society, and it remains an important home for large scale amateur work.

7.4 Economic impact

The audiences for the Kings remain buoyant, though the economic downturn is clearly having an impact this year. The current attendance figure, as outlined above, is 130,000, which includes a substantial number of people from outside the city. Recent postcode analysis of the main database reveals that 45\% of the audience is from Portsmouth (Postcodes PO1 to PO6), with 55\% from the surrounding region. Historically, it always used to be split 50/50, but as the profile of the theatre has been raised and audience numbers have increased, a greater number of people have been attracted from outside the city, and this has altered the previous balance. This is a very positive change, as the theatre is encouraging more and more people to visit Portsmouth from outside the city\textsuperscript{18}, while numbers have still risen from within the city itself. The theatre undoubtedly has had a huge impact upon the regeneration of Albert Road and upon local businesses, and if we use the economic impact model developed by the University of Sheffield\textsuperscript{19} we estimate that the Kings is generating over £1m in additional spend in the local community.

7.5 Future restoration plans

It is important to emphasise that there is still significant restoration work which needs to take place to improve the audience experience. The improvements to the front of house areas in other theatres and cultural buildings have meant that audiences’ expectations are very high, and they will no longer attend theatres which provide a less than perfect experience\textsuperscript{20}. The front of house at the Kings needs to be improved to ease the audience circulation space and the theatre must install a lift to ensure accessibility to the circle. At the moment the

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\textsuperscript{17} The theatre’s audience has grown significantly – for example in 2004/5 the Kings was attracting 80,000 people a year.

\textsuperscript{18} The Kings is attracting over 70,000 people into the city every year.

\textsuperscript{19} In 2004 the University of Sheffield published the ‘Economic Impact Study of UK Theatres, which was based on research at over 100 theatres across the UK. The average additional spend was £7.77 per theatregoer. This spend is additional to the tickets and programmes bought in the theatre.

\textsuperscript{20} The recent closure of the Hackney Empire is a chilling example of what can happen if the audience experience is less than perfect. As the Daily Telegraph wrote: ‘the Empire does not offer a good visitor experience…it feels more like a piece of heritage than a living theatre…the foyer is unwelcome and the auditorium dark and uncomfortable’. The newspaper then goes on to highlight the poor public transport, the unhelpful street parking restrictions, and the fact that there is nowhere to eat nearby.
Theatre cannot make the most of merchandising opportunities front of house, which is resulting in lost revenue, particularly on touring musicals such as *Beauty and the Beast*. The theatre is also planning to provide a café or restaurant on site which will help to maximize daytime use of the building. There is also a need for proper education spaces to facilitate the development of the Kings’ education and learning programme, and the Trust has recently secured a generous grant of £20,000 from the Foundation for Sports and the Arts to redevelop the Irving Room for this purpose. The Trust is also hoping to reconfigure and re-seat the auditorium to improve sightlines and comfort for its audience, in addition to undertaking a significant amount of work backstage to ensure that facilities for visiting companies remain competitive. This work is vital if the Kings is to continue to attract professional touring companies and to retain and develop its audience.

7.6 Parking

There is a shortage of adequate parking in the vicinity of the Kings, and this is an ongoing issue for audiences, particularly for those attending matinees. Discussions are currently taking place about the car park in Exmouth Road as an additional space to Waitrose, and it is clearly important that these developments are supported to ensure that the Kings audience can park their cars as close to the theatre as possible.

7.7 School parties

The Kings is finding it increasingly hard to attract school parties, even for relevant shows presented by companies such as Shakespeare for Kids, and the Trust has noticed that it is often difficult for local schools to encourage parents to support these trips. The Kings is a commercial theatre, and if this trend continues it is likely that it will reduce its programming for schools. We would suggest that this is an area which the City Council should explore with the Kings and the NTR to see if there could be ways of developing the relationship with local schools and making it easier for theatre trips to take place.

7.8 Partnerships

In the last few years the Kings has developed a number of key partnerships, including with Highbury College and with Portsmouth Football Club. The Kings has also successfully collaborated with South Downs College earlier this year, when the play *Two* was performed at the college studio theatre, with the students involved in the process of staging this professional touring show. The Trust is currently working with Havant Rotary to present joint schools events such as ‘Music Madness’, and is running regular workshops in conjunction with the Children’s University, encouraging 8 – 11 year olds to try set design, acting and music. The Kings is also developing weekly sessions for a number of youth drama groups, who will rehearse at the theatre before presenting their work in front of an invited audience on the main stage.

The Kings is active in encouraging work experience and structured placements for young people living in Portsmouth, and the theatre has offered a broad range of subjects including fine art and restoration, customer services, and business studies.

7.9 Volunteers

The contribution from volunteers has been crucial to the restoration and running of the theatre, and over 100 people are assisting the Kings in different capacities, whether it is with ushering, marketing, maintenance or backstage. The development of volunteering is crucial to the city and the role of the theatre in providing an active centre for the local community should not be underestimated.

8. Community engagement

8.1 Find Your Talent
The Find Your Talent programme has demonstrated very clearly that the development of partnerships, supported by additional funding, can make a significant difference to artistic organisations in the city and to the way that they are able to engage with the local community. Though it is far too early to gauge the success of Find Your Talent, the programme is starting to demonstrate that:

- Partnerships between artistic organisations, within Portsmouth and with companies in Southampton and Hampshire, are beginning to add real value, both in terms of the level of community engagement and in the opportunities for developing a wider audience.

- The additional funding has helped to challenge artistic organisations to develop more creative community programmes.

- There is a real need to focus on ways of maintaining provision beyond 2011 when the nationally funded programme comes to an end. We recommend that this provision, even if it has to be restricted due to the availability of funding, should be a key part of a future strategy for theatre in the city.

8.2 Find Your Talent projects

Find Your Talent funding has supported important developmental projects, such as the partnership between the New Theatre Royal and Candoco Dance Company. These two organisations have undertaken recent work with Hilsea Youth Club, which involved young people with learning, physical and behavioural disabilities. Following this project, these young people, and their families, have recently started to see shows at the New Theatre Royal. The New Theatre Royal has also recently submitted a request to Find Your Talent for funding for a dance project in partnership with the city’s Preventing Youth Offending Team, the Brook Club in Somerstown, King Richard School and Motiv8. This project will help to fund dance workshops and tickets for dance events at the school and the theatre, involving potentially 300 young people, many of whom are from low-income households, are low achievers at school or are within the youth offending system.

There are many more examples which demonstrate the importance of the Find Your Talent programme, including:

- The New Theatre Royal’s presentation of the company Krazy Kat, whose new version of Shakespeare’s ‘The Tempest’ features an integrated deaf/hearing cast of four actors. The NTR is working with Audiences South and with the Sensory Impaired Unit within the Council, to provide workshops with the company and the opportunity to attend the performances, for deaf and hearing families living in the city. The theatre’s close relationship with Audiences South has led to the commissioning of a signed and audio described performance for these families and for blind and visually impaired children of ‘Alice in Wonderland’ last December.

- King Richard School has involved 950 young people in Arts Week, working closely with the Kings Theatre and the New Theatre Royal, as well as visiting companies such as Rannel Theatre Company and Solomon Theatre. The school’s catchment, which is principally Paulsgrove and Wymering, is an area of social and cultural deprivation, and students have little access to cultural activities.

- Solent Youth Action applied for funding for television screen acting workshops for young people over the holidays. These workshops will be run by television professionals and the intention is to raise participant’s career aspirations. There is also the opportunity for the students to appear as extras in the new online soap opera, ‘Chalkhill’.

There are also interesting partnerships developing with Arts Asia, which has been working with the Bangladeshi community in Portsmouth, and Hampshire Dance, which specialises in presenting high quality
dance created by, and for, young people. In addition there are also hopes of encouraging greater participation by Portsmouth schools in the Shakespeare Schools Festival which will take place at the NTR in October 2010.

9. Creative and Media Diploma

From September 2010 students will be studying the Creative and Media Diploma in Portsmouth schools, and the two theatres are well placed to support young people undertaking this course. The theatres can provide in-house training and can utilise the professional expertise of their staff and the skills of visiting creative practitioners. The New Theatre Royal is working with a company called Drama Direct to provide a full week of training which will cover such areas as performance, stage management, marketing and lighting design. This course will fulfil the ‘applied learning’ criteria for the diploma. The Kings is also keen to support this initiative, though the Trust is rightly concerned that the theatre’s current resources for developing learning programmes are severely stretched.

10. Building Schools for the Future

10.1 King Richard School

The huge investment in Portsmouth’s ten maintained secondary schools and two special schools will have a significant impact upon the provision of theatre spaces in the city. King Richard School is planning a 300 seat flexible theatre at the heart of the new building, which is scheduled to be completed in September 2012. King Richard School has specialised in art and drama for many years but the new theatre will allow the school to develop new opportunities, both for the students and for the local community. Dance will be a key focus for the future, and there is an expectation that it will become a ‘hub’ for dance, providing opportunities for students across the city.

10.2 Mayfield School

Mayfield School was designated as a Specialist Arts College in 2007, which reflected its focus on the performing and visual arts, and it is Portsmouth’s lead school for the Creative and Media Diploma, which will start in September 2010. The school has recently upgraded its drama studio and dance studio, and the main hall is used for large scale drama performances. New facilities will be completed by 2014 which will include developing the main hall to a professional standard, opening up opportunities for the school to present visiting theatre companies in the new space. The school’s strategy for change also emphasises their intention to act as ‘a satellite venue to the New Theatre Royal’, and their hope that the new plans will transform Mayfield into the main artistic and cultural centre for the local community.

A number of other local schools are planning to upgrade their drama facilities as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme; for example St Edmunds is planning to specialise in drama and dance in due course and the school is hoping to develop a number of performance spaces. St Luke’s, which has become a Charter Academy from September 2009, is also planning specialist music and drama rooms and rehearsal spaces.

10.3 BSF and the theatre strategy

The significance of the BSF programme for the theatre strategy for Portsmouth is as follows:

- The addition of two professional theatre spaces to be used by the students themselves or by the local community. These new theatres will be able to accommodate productions presented by small scale touring companies in addition to appropriate scale work produced from within Portsmouth. Appropriate productions could also transfer from the New Theatre Royal or the Kings Theatre.
• The development of drama and dance at secondary schools across the city, together with the introduction of the Creative and Media Diploma, should stimulate interest in professional theatre both within Portsmouth and also in Southampton at the Nuffield and the Mayflower, and in Chichester.

• The FE Colleges and the University of Portsmouth’s Performing Arts Faculty, which will be based at the New Theatre Royal, provide a logical progression path for students interested in pursuing a career in theatre or the performing arts. The development of the skills agenda and the provision of training, particularly for technical posts in theatre, is a key part of any future strategy.

• Both the New Theatre Royal and the Kings need to consider how the new theatre spaces could augment their existing work at King Richard School and at Mayfield. They should also consider whether there are opportunities to involve members of the local communities within easy reach of both schools, either as audiences, participants or as volunteers.

10.4 Co-ordinated theatre design

However it is essential that the City Council ensures that the new theatre spaces in King Richard and in Mayfield are designed so that drama and dance in particular can tour easily across the city. These spaces must be planned alongside other new developments, including the studio theatres at the New Theatre Royal and at The Old Beneficial School. We would recommend that early designs for all these studio spaces are reviewed by a theatre architect to ensure that touring work could move across the city and that there is proper co-ordination at this planning stage.

10.5 Creative producer and programming

We would also recommend that the city should consider how these new spaces will be programmed, particularly outside term time. We would suggest that this is a role for a creative producer who should be based in the new offices on the back lot at the New Theatre Royal. This producer should also have the responsibility of developing other non theatre spaces across the city. The producer, who could be part-time, would report to the Director of the New Theatre Royal.

11. Higher Education

Portsmouth provides a range of FE and University courses for students interested in drama, the performing arts and creative writing. The FE colleges, such as South Downs and Portsmouth College, have professional studio theatres for curriculum based work around AS and BTEC courses, as well as for use by the students themselves. Last year Highbury College opened a 130 seat theatre as part of a major redevelopment, and they are now in a position to develop a performing arts course for 18 students each year, together with a technical theatre course for a similar number of students from September 2010. Highbury has a close relationship with the New Theatre Royal, and their students act as volunteers at the theatre. The NTR is also providing work placements for Highbury students, and regularly provides discounted tickets for students at the college. The new theatre at Highbury is principally for curriculum based work, though a number of youth drama groups will be using the space during the holidays. The college is planning to let the theatre out to a few professional theatre companies, though it is unlikely that this will take place during term time.

The University of Portsmouth’s Faculty of Creative and Cultural Industries brought together a number of separate departments including Art and Design, Architecture, Creative Technologies, and the Creative Arts, Film and Media. We have outlined details of the University’s partnership with the New Theatre Royal above21, but it is important to emphasise that the University’s focus on the development of skills across the sector, through support for the Creative Industries Business Advisory Service (CIBAS) and through their work with

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21 Section 6.5
Creative and Cultural Skills (Sector Skills Council), is a major contribution to the development of expertise in the local community. The University also provides a home for Creative Partnerships, which is having a significant impact in primary and secondary schools across the region. It is important that the University continues to be involved in discussions around the future provision of skills in the city, particularly given the Arts Council’s focus on the skills agenda at the New Theatre Royal.

12. Groundlings Theatre Company

The Groundlings Theatre Company has been based in the city for the last nine years. The company regularly performs at the New Theatre Royal and the Kings in addition to mounting an ambitious UK tour each year. The theatre company also runs classes for 150 students, covering everything from acting, training for television and film, and musical theatre dance classes. In addition to performance and training courses, Groundlings also provide an agency service for professional actors and helps to stage the Historic Dockyard’s Victorian Christmas event which can involve between 350 – 400 actors.

12.1 The Old Beneficial School

The imminent move by the theatre company from the Fratton Community Centre to the Old Beneficial School building has the potential to act as a catalyst for the development of theatre in the city. The new building, which is close to Gunwharf Quays and the Historic Dockyard, will allow the company to expand the drama school and to create a full-time accredited drama course. At the moment drama students living in the city are likely to commute to the Guildford School of Acting, which is now part of the University of Surrey, or to drama school in London. If Portsmouth can create its own accredited drama school it will create opportunities to develop local talent as well as having the potential to attract students and visitors from outside the city. A new drama school will also provide a perfect ‘stepping stone’ into theatre or film for students on the University’s Creative and Performing Arts, and Drama and Performance courses, and for young people undertaking the Creative and Media Diploma.

12.2 New studio theatre

The Old Beneficial School will be converted into a small theatre, seating between 130 and 150 people, together with three teaching studios. The new space will also allow the company to offer easy access to their enormous stock of 10,000 costumes, which will benefit amateur and professional theatre companies, and schools, throughout the region.

The expansion of the Groundlings Theatre Company and the development of the new theatre space in the south of the city is an exciting initiative which could expand cultural provision in Portsmouth. We believe that the new base and the drama school could open up the possibility of touring small scale work to the new school theatres at King Richard and Mayfield, and, if this is feasible, then it is clearly essential that the City Council ensures that all three spaces can be adapted to take the same production, reducing the need to restage or re-rehearse. We need to determine the additional costs of either a professional theatre tour or the cost of transferring work produced by the drama students, but this may go some way in responding to the urgent need to produce more quality drama in the centre and the north of the city. The NTR is currently working closely with Highbury College and Portsmouth College, and there is clearly an opportunity for an exciting network to develop. Small scale theatre companies from outside Portsmouth could also undertake the tours of these venues.

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22 See Section 16
23 The next production at the Kings will be West Side Story in April 2010
24 There is an interesting link with Portsmouth’s literary past, since Elizabeth Dickens was attending a performance of a play at the Beneficial School when she went into labour with Charles.
However, we do need to be careful that the Old Beneficial School does not compete head to head with the New Theatre Royal’s plans for its new space. We would suggest that there should be early discussions between the theatre company and the NTR to ensure that a very clear policy on programming and hires is established.

13. St Peter’s Theatre

St Peter’s Theatre is clearly a well-used and well-loved building serving the local community in a deprived part of the city. Unfortunately the theatre is on the first floor of the building, and access is difficult for elderly and disabled members of the audience. Access is also hard for visiting theatre companies. The theatre relies on long-serving volunteers who provide the necessary stage management and technical help to a series of amateur companies, including Victory Land and Phoenix Players. Victory Land uses St Peter’s as the centre for its theatre school, which provides courses in dancing and drama for students from 4 to 18 years old.

St Peter’s is one of only six amateur theatres in the country with a flying system. The stage feels too high from the floor, but it does mean that a capacity audience of around 200 people can see all the action! The church is responsible for the fabric of the building but the amateur companies have provided the funding to replace theatre equipment as necessary.

St Peter’s has an important role as an amateur and community venue, and it also provides well needed rehearsal space. The building does require significant investment, and new facilities, such as a proper box office, would enhance its attraction to both performers and audiences. We are keen to explore whether it could be used further and, given its proximity to the Kings, it would be interesting to see if the Trust might consider using this space as a centre for a local education or community theatre programme. The Kings is keen to discuss closer links with St Peter’s, though it is very conscious of the long standing relationship which Victory Land and Phoenix Players have with the theatre.

14. Amateur Theatre

Portsmouth has a flourishing amateur theatre sector, with over 30 companies regularly putting on performances each year. The oldest company is Portsmouth Players, still going strong after nearly ninety years in existence, with a membership of around 180 people. The Players have recently reduced the number of productions at the Kings from three to two a year, and they have noticed that their audience will only support well known shows. The theatre group is extremely fortunate to have their own rehearsal space, green room and wardrobe and prop store at the Barn in Milton Park, which was funded from a lottery grant. It would appear that this space is in constant use in the evenings and at weekends, but we are keen to see whether the rehearsal rooms could be used during the day by local schools and community theatre groups.

Amateur theatre groups provide a significant number of productions each year in both the NTR and the Kings, and they are helping to develop a substantial audience for drama in the city. We need to ensure that hire charges do not lead to amateur companies being forced to withdraw from using both stages, and we need to find new ways of ensuring that these theatre groups receive as much support as possible from the professional theatre sector. We suggest the creation of a new Theatre Practitioners Group which would provide a regular forum for the exchange of ideas and information, for sharing production plans, and for joint marketing. It would also be an appropriate forum to explore ways of utilising facilities and sharing resources such as costumes and sets.

15. Other performance venues

It is important to recognise that Portsmouth has a range of venues, from schools to pubs, and from community centres to cathedrals, which could be used for theatrical performances. Many of these venues, such as St
Agatha’s church, are ideal for music, but they lack the necessary infrastructure for regular theatre performances. These venues often lack a proper stage and visiting companies would find it necessary to install temporary lighting and sound equipment for drama and dance performances. There are similar issues with leisure centres though, of course, with sufficient investment you can transform these spaces into temporary theatres, as the RSC showed with its small scale tour throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

16. Portsmouth City Council’s relationship with the New Theatre Royal and the Kings

There is a good working relationship between the City Council and the two theatres, with members of the Council present on both boards. Council officers receive copies of the annual report and the business plan, together with copies of board minutes. Officers have regular meetings with the managements of both theatres, and they also attend the Performance Venue Forum.

16.1 Towards a shared agenda

However, there is no sense of a shared agenda and it hard for officers to see how both theatres are helping the City Council to deliver on either the national targets, which have been set for cultural engagement, or the local targets outlined in the Corporate Plan and the Local Area Agreement. The City Council has made a significant investment both in the fabric and in the running costs of each theatre, and it is essential that this is acknowledged. It is also vital that the Cultural Services Department is in a position to defend further investment when facing budget reductions across the service. We believe that there could be advantages for all parties if there was a more formal agreement between each theatre and the City Council, which addresses a set of clear objectives for the year ahead, and we recommend the introduction of Service Level Agreements from 2010 onwards. We understand that both theatres would welcome this development in principle.

We would suggest that the City Council requires regular, up to date information, so that it can track progress in meeting its key objectives, in addition to a Service Level Agreement with each theatre, which clearly sets out an agreed list of priorities that will be addressed by both parties in the year ahead.

16.2 Audience and performance information

A certain amount of useful information already exists within the theatre’s annual report or in the long term business plans, but we suspect that the City Council will require more specific information if it is to track cultural engagement across the city. We need to ensure that the collection of data does not become an ongoing nightmare for the two theatres, though we would suggest that they should be collecting this information on a regular basis anyway for members of the Board of for marketing purposes.

We would suggest that the Cultural Services department would find it helpful if it knew more about audiences, education and community programmes, engagement with minority groups within the city, and economic impact. The Council also needs to understand how and why artistic plans may be changing – is it in response to demand, is it due to new partnerships, or is it for financial reasons? We have included a list of information which the theatres could provide, either from an analysis of their patron data or through ongoing research into attendees and non-attendees:

- Audience figures and analysis. Is the audience local – if so, where are they coming from? Has this changed – if so, why? Which parts of the city are underrepresented in the audience? What are the theatres doing to address this? And how might the City Council help with this process?

25 There are three Council appointed representatives on the Board of Trustees of the Kings, and two senior Council officers regularly attend Trust meetings
26 We expect that the current internal audit review of the grants made by Cultural Services will recommend a formal agreement
• Analysis of visitors from outside the city.
• Repeat business. What % is repeat business and how has this changed?
• What is the audience cross-over between the two theatres?
• What is the theatres’ approach to developing a culturally diverse programme, and how are they engaging with Portsmouth’s ethnic minority audience?
• Details of education and community work, and an assessment of the impact of these programmes (feedback from teachers, for example, or engagement with artistic programme in the theatre).
• Number of volunteers working with the theatre organisation.
• Engagement of older people in activity programmes.
• Economic impact (using an agreed formula for local and visitor spend).

16.3 Service Level Agreements

Formal Service Level Agreements are standard practice with local authority funded theatres, and we have attached a copy of the current SLA between the City of York and the Theatre Royal as an example. The SLA covers a four year period to 2011/12. Though the SLA document lacks specifics it is supported by more detailed estimates showing the expected growth in performances, audiences, engagement with young people and education sessions. We have also included the following excerpt from Nottingham County Council’s agreement with the Nottingham Playhouse which focuses on the work which the theatre will deliver in some of the most deprived wards in the county.

WORK IN COMMUNITY SETTINGS (outside schools)
- Investigate the potential of promoting Saturday or twilight performances for audiences from the most deprived wards in the county and their families.
- Form partnerships and links to deliver major education/outreach programmes in future years, in the most deprived wards of the County supporting productions at the Playhouse.
- Develop partnerships to devise and deliver ONE week-long workshop project to assist in the artistic and social development of communities (from the most deprived wards of the county)
- Deliver at least ONE adult education session in a community setting in the county connected to Playhouse productions.

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT
- In partnership with the Arts Service Strategic team identify barriers to attendance and develop a targeted audience development programme to increase attendance from the most deprived wards in the county.
- Gather baseline monitoring information detailing profile, attendance patterns and post codes for attendees from the county defined by ward.

PARTNERSHIPS
- Develop links with the Arts Service Strategic Officers to support the joint development of new strands of work and support across the county.

27 Appendix 1
28 The City of York’s grant to the Theatre Royal is around £300K a year (2009/2010)
29 Nottingham County Council’s grant to the Playhouse is £137,000 in 2009/2010.
- Work with the Arts Service to develop opportunities for work experience, work related learning and volunteering for people from the county.

**QUANTITATIVE & QUALITATIVE MONITORING**
- Nottingham Playhouse will provide attendance and participation figures on a quarterly basis and provide an annual report together with appropriate performance information including:
  - Results of evaluation surveys for exhibitions/projects/participatory/education projects
  - Customer satisfaction surveys
  - Evaluation of artistic content of programme
- Nottingham Playhouse will also provide information of delivery of the clauses in the SLA grant agreement.

The formal agreement between the theatres and the City Council would identify what is achievable within existing resources. It would relate directly to targets in the Corporate Plan or to NI 11 objectives, and this will require both theatres to monitor audience engagement and education and community activity very carefully. It should also address how both theatres were planning to support other city initiatives, such as the City of Literature in 2012, and the potential for partnerships, for example with the Aspex Gallery, the library or the city museums. The agreement should also demonstrate the City Council’s role in supporting both theatres, for example through enhanced marketing, the development of visitor services, or liaison with local schools who are teaching the Creative and Media Diploma.

The advantage of an SLA is that it should help the City Council to strengthen its relationship with the two theatres by ensuring that the managements actively engage with Council officers on an annual basis to agree in advance a list of shared priorities. It should also ensure that each theatre is clear about the Council’s expectations, and that the managements understand their role within a wider strategy for the city which focuses on raising the cultural aspirations of all residents.

We have raised the issue of SLAs with both managements, and it is our understanding that they would welcome this development. We would also recommend that we should adopt a ‘light touch’ approach, possibly closer to the Nottingham Playhouse example above, rather than the creation of a complex legal agreement.

### 17. The Arts Council

We have had detailed discussions with Arts Council officers to explore how the Council might be able to support future theatre initiatives in Portsmouth. The Arts Council has been looking at ways that it may be able to assist the New Theatre Royal during the closure period, and examining how any resulting programmes of work might help the theatre prepare for a new role once the re-development of the building is completed. The Arts Council is keen to explore whether the New Theatre Royal could take on a creative producer role, which would involve planning and co-ordinating up to five separate companies working in different parts of the city.

The Council is also keen for the New Theatre Royal to continue to pursue the skills agenda and to develop training programmes for young people living in Portsmouth. The theatre would become a regional hub for the Creative and Cultural Skills Academy based in Thurrock, and it is expected that it would prioritise the development of off-stage skills, including directing, designing, playwriting, producing and marketing.

Arts Council officers believe that the development of the ‘back lot’ will transform the New Theatre Royal’s artistic programme, by opening up opportunities for producing in-house shows as well as allowing the organisation to present more middle scale touring companies. The re-development should also allow the theatre to clearly differentiate its offer to audiences away from the potential competition in Chichester and Southampton, with an increasing emphasis on young people and as a showcase for emerging artists.
The Kings has not always featured in the city’s discussions with the Arts Council in recent years, but we suggest that it is now timely for ACE officers to engage with the Trust to explore whether the theatre could be used for specific touring product or for longer term relationships with touring companies.

18. The Future Strategy

The future strategy for theatre in the city has been informed by responses to the draft document in 2009 and by two meetings with representatives from the theatre sector in January 2010.30

We recommend that the following outline for the future strategy for theatre in Portsmouth from 2010 – 2015 should be discussed between the City Council, the Arts Council, and the managements of the theatres and arts organisations in the city:

18.1 Theatre buildings

The New Theatre Royal’s back lot development with the University, and the further improvements to the front of house and backstage at the Kings, will require significant financial support in the next few years. The City Council will require clarity concerning the capital costs of both projects, but it is essential that these plans go ahead if we are to maximise the theatres’ role in the economic and social regeneration of the city. These developments need to be seen alongside the potential changes to the Guildhall, the emergence of an exciting cultural quarter in the city centre, the new studio theatres in King Richard School and Mayfield, the purchase of the Old Beneficial School, and the impact of the Kings in the local community in Southsea.

There needs to be greater clarity as to whether these new buildings can be used for meetings and conferences, providing further important facilities for the city.

18.2 The theatres and their artistic programmes.

The artistic programmes of both theatres complement each other well, and between them they are providing a range of exciting and varied work, from cutting edge drama and dance, to large scale musical theatre. The NTR’s move towards producing more work in-house is to be applauded, and the development of the back lot will open up opportunities for Portsmouth audiences to enjoy a greater range of middle scale touring companies. The new partnerships which the theatres are developing, including closer relationships with major commercial producers and with subsidised touring companies, should lead to an even more dynamic repertoire for the city. We would also expect that work from the NTR will reach a wider audience, either through regional touring or in London. We need to ensure that the future management of the Guildhall liaises closely with both theatres, so that the venue provides a complementary programme which focuses on music of all kinds, including orchestral and choral work. There should also be a clear policy of encouraging young talent from the city which should be supported by each performance venue. There is likely to be potential competition between all three venues for the growing comedy market, but it should be possible for the managements to programme accordingly, given the three different auditoria.

If there is a gap in provision it is that Portsmouth has not been successful in attracting large scale touring drama companies on a regular basis, and the city is held back by the cost of underwriting visits by the national companies such as the RSC. The city should look for opportunities to build a closer relationship with the national companies, and clearly the bid for the City of Culture in 2013 provides the perfect opportunity. A residency for the RSC at the Kings, alongside a significant supporting education programme, would be a hugely exciting coup for the city.

Large scale drama is readily accessible at Chichester, of course, and we need to look at ways of strengthening that relationship to the advantage of the city. For example, English Touring Theatre opened their tour of ‘The

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Grapes of Wrath’ at Chichester last summer, and it would have been interesting to explore whether the
company could have provided a supporting workshop programme in schools and colleges in Portsmouth.
It has been suggested that the theatres and the city should consider whether a regular drama festival might be
of interest to performing arts companies and to audiences. It might also be the appropriate event to invite over
international companies, perhaps from linked cities such as Caen. A festival of this scale could fit perfectly with
a bid for City of Culture, and could utilise both theatre and non theatre spaces.

18.3 Education and community programmes.
The range of work being provided for schools and for the community by both theatres is impressive given the
available resources. The Find Your Talent programme is clearly successful and will lead to a number of new
and exciting partnerships, both within the city and with creative organisations in Southampton and Hampshire.
The new Creative and Media Diploma should lead to a significant increase in the number of young people
engaging with the work of both theatres. The challenge for the city is to consider whether theatre education
work should take place in those schools which do not have a performing arts specialism, but where the young
people would benefit from such an initiative. Could the theatres undertake more work in schools and colleges
in Portsmouth if further resources from other budgets, such as Education and Learning, were available? The
response from schools to the work of both theatres has always been extremely positive.

There are also opportunities for the professional and amateur companies to consider staging work relating to
the GCSE syllabus, though this will require a co-ordinated approach across the sector. We recommend that
the City Council should convene a further meeting of representatives from both the theatre and education
sectors to consider ways to progress the following agenda:

- Find Your Talent. How do we engage with the highly motivated group of young people who will
  emerge from the FYT programme when it finishes in March 2011?
- Creative and Media Diploma
- Engagement with a wider groups of schools in the city
- Programming for the GCSE syllabus
- Building Schools for the Future and the new theatres in King Richard and Mayfield
- A co-ordinated strategy for future engagement with young people. How do we grow this audience
  for the future? How do we continue with FYT post 2011?
- Are there specific programmes, such as Rock Challenge, which could have a wider application
  across the sector?

18.4 Audience development and marketing
The new SLAs should set clear targets for both theatres to engage with disadvantaged groups and
communities living in the city31. The City Council should also consider whether it can provide enhanced
marketing support to the two theatres, particularly by raising the profile of the range of work taking place on
Portsmouth’s stages. The City Council needs to work closely with both theatres to raise awareness of the
strength of drama in Portsmouth, both within the city and in the surrounding region. We would suggest that the
City Council continues to monitor the effectiveness of ‘Aspire’ and other material promoting culture in the city,
and that Flagship could be used to help raise the profile of the sector and address the current imbalance in
coverage.

31 The SLA between the City Council and the Kings should take into account that the theatre is a commercial organisation
and many touring promoters will be less sympathetic to excessive discounting for disadvantaged groups and communities
within the city.
The Council should also consider whether there could be benefits in creating a single online portal for cultural activities in Portsmouth, to make it easier for both residents and visitors to find out what is on. This single portal could also support a greater use of the Leisure Card to provide specific offers to residents.

It has been suggested that it would be helpful for box office staff to be made more aware of what is taking place across the city, so that they are better placed to ‘sell on’ if a particular show is sold out. The sector has also suggested that culture should play a more prominent part in the way that the city is branded.

18.5 New performance spaces

The new theatres in the King Richard School and Mayfield School, together with the new studios at the NTR and at the Old Beneficial School, open up exciting opportunities for audience development and for inter-city touring. However, as we have mentioned earlier in this report, it is essential that this process is properly co-ordinated and we recommend that the City Council should consider appointing a theatre architect to ensure that work can transfer easily from one space to another. We also recommend that consideration is given to appointing a creative producer to work with the schools to develop activity in these spaces during school holidays. This creative producer would be based at the NTR.

The increase in the number of venues and the growth in seating capacity across the city will require careful management to ensure that competition is avoided and that audience development goes hand in hand. We recommend that the Performance Venue Forum should continue to monitor this process. The City Council should ensure that there is close liaison over this development with other key groups in Portsmouth including the Cultural Partnership board.

18.6 A new theatre practitioners’ group

We support the suggestion that there could be benefits in creating a Theatre Practitioners’ Group to ensure that progress is made in facilitating a closer partnership between both professional and amateur theatre organisations. Key issues for this group to discuss include:

- The sharing of resources, such as sets and costumes
- Greater use of existing facilities, such as The Barn in Milton Park, the home of Portsmouth Players
- Programming, to avoid competition
- Joint selling and shared marketing campaigns
- Joint lobbying. It has been pointed out that the sector is not making itself heard either within the City Council or at a regional level
- Sharing intelligence and research. The sector needs to focus on pulling together key statistics to back up its argument for sustained investment and support. Economic impact statistics are clearly essential, and perhaps the University might be able to help this group assemble the necessary data.

18.7 The relationship between the City Council and the two theatres.

We recommend that the City Council should develop Service Level Agreements with both theatres and that this should be introduced from April 2010. These agreements should be reviewed and developed annually to the benefit of both parties, to ensure that there is real progress in delivering the cultural regeneration of Portsmouth.

The theatre sector is also keen for the City Council to explore whether the Big Screen in Guildhall Square could do more to publicise events, perhaps by highlighting the availability of tickets for shows. It has also been suggested that the City Council could help with the distribution of promotional material to Portsmouth schools, perhaps by providing a ‘culture bag’ each term.
18.8 Provision in the northern part of the city.

We are very conscious that many of the city’s cultural buildings are based in the south of the city and this leaves the residents living in the north with little access. Fortunately both King Richard School and Highbury College, with its performing arts course and new theatre which opened in 2009, are well placed to address this gap. We need to look at ways that the theatre companies can utilise these new venues and work imaginatively in non-theatre spaces, such as warehouses or circus tents, and programme work specifically for this community. The closure of the NTR, which will enable the company to develop its outreach work and to engage with a wider audience, and the possibility of Arts Council support for a series of companies based across the city, provides an opportunity to test ways of addressing this issue.

18.9 Training

The increasing emphasis by both theatres on the provision of training for young people is an important development which should raise the profile of theatre in Portsmouth both locally and throughout the region. We should aim to position Portsmouth as the training centre for theatre and creative skills in the south of England, and work closely with the Arts Council, the University of Portsmouth and the various training agencies to achieve this objective.

18.10 Funding.

How can theatre in the city continue to flourish if the Cultural Service budget is cut in the future?

We recommend that the City Council should recognise the wider role of the two theatres as social enterprises, working in schools and colleges, community centres, and with elderly people across the city. Are there opportunities for the theatres to apply to other potential funding streams within the City Council, for example, within Education and Lifelong Learning, or Community Cohesion, which might be appropriate given the broader community work undertaken by both organisations? Could there be partnerships with other local agencies, such as the Primary Care Trust or Business Link, which might unlock new opportunities for the theatre sector in Portsmouth? We also feel that it is important for both theatres to be aware of the potential for funding from regional agencies, such as PUSH, and clearly the City Council has an important role in assisting with this process. We recommend that the Council should consider how it could help to signpost appropriate partnerships and funding streams, so that the sector can apply for financial support from other local and regional organisations.

19. Conclusion

At the Theatre Strategy consultation meetings representatives from the theatre sector were asked for their aspirations for the next five years. Their aspirations for theatre in Portsmouth included:

- To challenge the perception that Portsmouth has a limited cultural offer
- To value culture as a tool for delivering other agendas, and to celebrate and value the contribution that culture makes to both residents and visitors in the city

We hope that this strategy will provide a framework for the sector to meet and overcome these challenges, and to build upon the striking success of the last ten years.

Stephen Browning
Stephen Browning Associates
Appendix 2

Internal PCC involvement:

Head of Culture
Tourism, Visitor Services & Events Manager
Arts & Cultural Development Service Manager
Visitor Information Centre Manager
Senior Arts Officer
Arts Development Officer

External involvement:

Arts Council England South East
Bench Theatre
CCADS
Creative Partnerships
Cultural Partnership Board
Find Your Talent
Groundlings Theatre Company
Highbury College
Kings Theatre
King Richard School
Mayfield School
New Theatre Royal
One Off Productions
Phoenix Players
Portsmouth Cultural Consortium
Portsmouth Festivities
Portsmouth Players
PUSH
St. Agatha’s Church
St. Peter’s Church
Southdowne Musical Society
Southsea Shakespeare Actors
Southsea Town Council
Tongues & Grooves
Victoryland Theatre School
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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of document</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Performance Venue Review – Report taken to Culture &amp; Leisure Executive meeting in March 2008</td>
<td>Council Executive Papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Draft Theatre Strategy – Report taken to Culture &amp; Leisure Executive meeting in November 2009</td>
<td>Council Executive Papers</td>
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The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure on 18th March 2010.

Signed by: Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure