



SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CULTURE AND LEISURE SCRUTINY PANEL

MONDAY, 18 MARCH 2024 AT 12.00 PM

**THE EXECUTIVE MEETING ROOM - THIRD FLOOR, THE GUILDHALL,
PORTSMOUTH**

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Membership

Councillor Russell Simpson (Chair)
Councillor John Smith (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Yinka Adeniran
Councillor Peter Candlish

Councillor Leo Madden
Councillor George Madgwick

(NB This supplementary agenda should be retained for future reference with the main agenda and minutes of this meeting).

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

- 3 Review of the Economic Development & Regeneration Strategy focusing on High Street Direction (Pages 3 - 110)**

RECOMMENDED that the panel sign off its report and submit it to Cabinet for consideration.

The enclosed report originally marked on the agenda "to follow" was published on 15 March 2024.

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Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CULTURE &
LEISURE SCRUTINY PANEL**

**Scrutiny Review of the Economic Development
& Regeneration Strategy focusing on High
Street Direction**

Date published: 15/03/2024

Under the terms of the Council's Constitution, reports prepared by a Scrutiny Panel should be considered formally by the Cabinet or the relevant Cabinet Member within a period of eight weeks, as required by Rule 11(a) of the Policy & Review Procedure Rules.

PREFACE

Short introductory statement to the report from the Chair. To set out context and purpose of the review, quotes from any relevant legislation or other publications, a thank you to witnesses, the panel and finally commending the report to Cabinet/Cabinet Member.

Preface to follow

Councillor Russell Simpson
Chair, EDCL Scrutiny Panel

Date:

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Appendix I - Minutes 29 November 2023

Appendix J - Update Phil Salmon and Les Pink - December 2023

Appendix K - Minutes 14 December 2023

Appendix L - Incorporation of youth engagement programmes in Pop-Ups

Appendix M - Minutes 8 January 2024

Purpose of the Report

Since the Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy was written pre Covid-19 the Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy concerning High Streets needed to be reviewed. The Economic Development, Culture & Leisure Scrutiny Panel reviewed the strategy focusing on the High Street direction and this report is to present Cabinet with the recommendations therein.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Cabinet/Cabinet Member:

- (i) Consider creating a 5-year plan for the high streets.**
- (ii) Consider providing support for an independent Business Improvement District (BID) through a consultant employed to lead communication between Portsmouth City Council and the BID, to help drive a business plan based on the needs of the retailers to achieve deliverable results for businesses and Portsmouth residents.**
- (iii) Consider providing support for the BIDs in high streets across the city, with funding from the Local Authority in the region of up to £100k.**
- (iv) Consider re-instating a High Street Co-ordinator and team for all of Portsmouth's high streets to work with and for local businesses, as a central point of contact, to ensure the high streets are kept at a high standard of amenity including, but not limited to, street furniture, CCTV, cleansing and maintenance.**
- (v) Consider creating further street entertainment sites across the city to encourage increased footfall and recommend increased communication and awareness of those sites to the general public.**
- (vi) Consider creating a central shared store of resources to be used by all services when creating cultural displays and events across the high streets, with a list of available items communicated effectively across the council.**
- (vii) Consider delivering improved communication and awareness of cultural events in high streets to encourage increased footfall and spending in local businesses.**
- (viii) Consider improving access to Port Solent facilities including public transport and a taxi rank.**
- (ix) Consider the creation of a trial of semi-permanent structures for hire for market stalls to improve the amenity and layout of markets, particularly in Commercial Road and Palmerston Road.**

Background

The Panel initially consisted of the following Councillors:

- Councillor Russell Simpson (Chair)
- Councillor John Smith (Vice-Chair)
- Councillor Leo Madden
- Councillor Peter Candlish
- Councillor Yinka Adeniran
- Councillor Emily Strudwick.

Standing Deputies were:

- Councillor Matthew Atkins
- Councillor Stuart Brown
- Councillor George Madgwick
- Councillor George Fielding
- Councillor Mark Jeffery
- Councillor Benedict Swann

At the Full Council meeting of 17 October 2023, it was agreed for Councillor Emily Strudwick to become a standing deputy with Councillor George Madgwick becoming a full member of the committee.

The Panel meet 7 times on:

- 20 July 2023
- 29 September 2023
- 26 October 2023
- 29 November 2023
- 14 December 2023
- 8 January 2024
- 2 February 2024

The Economic Development, Culture and Leisure (EDCL) panel met on 20 July 2023 to consider potential topics for review by the panel, (see Appendix A). Topics considered were:

- Town Centres and High Streets - Economic Development.
- Culture in the north of the city - a balance

The topic chosen was:

'Scrutiny of our town centres and high streets to establish what may be done to improve them, including dealing with empty properties and consideration of any cultural aspects'.

The Scrutiny Management Panel agreed this topic for review at its meeting held on 26 July 2023.

At its subsequent meeting on 29 September 2023 (see Appendix B), there was further discussion around the agreed topic with panel members questioning whether the scope was too broad. The panel considered the following report at this meeting:

- Economic Development, Culture & Leisure Scrutiny Panel - Scoping paper (Appendix C)

The Panel met again on 26 October 2023 and further considered the scrutiny topic (see Appendix D) and agreed to refine the topic in order to make it more focused, to a review/refresh of the Economic Development & Regeneration Strategy (see Appendix E) focusing on the High Street element and key objective 5.3. At this meeting the scrutiny topic was finalised as:

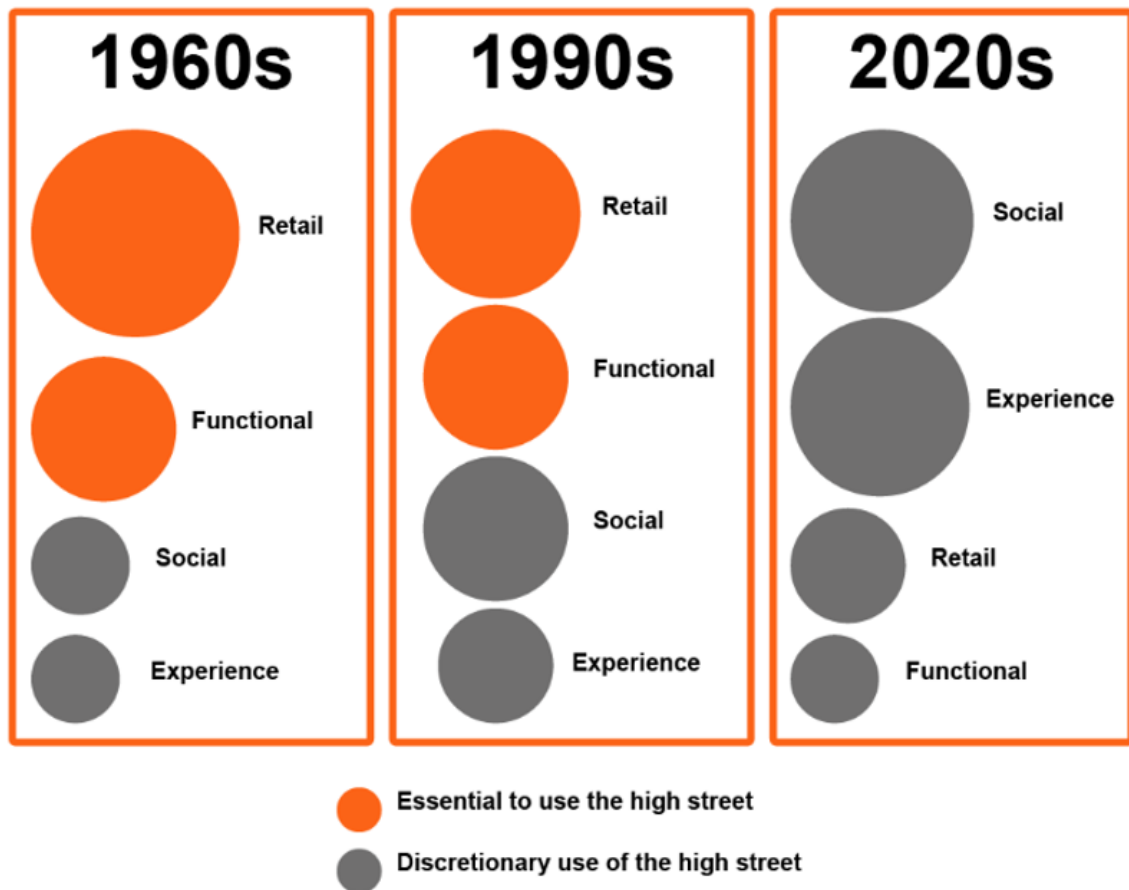
'Review of the Economic Development & Regeneration Strategy focusing on High Street Direction'.

The national context

Nationally, high streets across the country have been in decline for a number of years due to the current economic climate, the changing shopping patterns of consumers with the increasing use of online shopping, crime, shoplifting and anti-social behaviour. This has led to extensive store closures and the subsequent decline in footfall to town centres across the country. Shops have moved to out of town shopping centres with their ample free parking and this too had led to a decline in the traditional high streets in city centres.

The Covid pandemic accelerated the change that had already begun prior to 2020 and caused considerable economic damage to the high street nationally.

This change in needs and demands of local consumers and employers is clearly illustrated in this infographic by the Local Government Association in their publication '[Creating resilient and revitalised high streets in the 'new normal' | Local Government Association](#)'.



This demonstrates the trend is moving away from just the traditional retail function of high streets to something more akin to a 'conglomerate' of experiences with social and experiential a higher priority than retail and functional (banking, postal and medical services). These social and experiential functions are the 'pull' for consumers who then are likely to visit the retail elements of the high street (if they are present).

The local picture

Portsmouth is no different to the rest of the country having seen a huge decline in the attractiveness and economic decline of the high streets across the city with numerous shops now empty or repurposed as charity shops or increasingly hospitality venues such as restaurants, fast food outlets or coffee shops.

Whilst it is better to have some form of business present rather than an empty, boarded up shop, there is still a long way to go to restore or revamp local high streets so they can compete with those out-of-town centres.

The Panel review is focused on the high streets within the Portsmouth City boundary although it is noted that working with Gunwharf Quays as a commercial outlet centre, is central to promote circulation of visitors and should continue.

The review is centred on the Portsmouth City Council Economic Development & Regeneration Strategy and the key objective 5.3.

5. Create a thriving and competitive business environment

Key objective 5.1 Invest in and strengthen the visitor and creative industries sector.

Key objective 5.2 Diversify the economy into more knowledge based sectors.

Key objective 5.3 Revitalise the city centre, and high streets across the city.

Key objective 5.4 Make Portsmouth the most business-friendly city with the best support for businesses.

Key Objective 5.3 is described as follows:

The strategy will drive the transformation of the city centre and all high streets such as those in Southsea, Fratton, North End and Cosham. It will make the digital high street a reality. It will embrace bold architecture. Our city centre and high streets will be re-purposed with more high-quality city living, leisure, restaurants, hotels and co-working spaces.

Evidence

The panel heard evidence, both verbal and written, from witnesses across three meetings on 29 November 2023, 14 December 2023 and 8 January 2024.

EDCL meeting - 29 November 2023

Evidence was received from:

- Nickii Humphreys, PCC Licensing Manager
- Andrew Phillips, Manager, Cascades Shopping Centre, Commercial Road.
- Julie Carolan, Manager, H&M, Commercial Road.

Nickii Humphreys had provided a brief report, (see appendix F) with maps, on the various busking sites across Portsmouth. The Panel heard that the busking scheme was run by the Licensing department and that it was free of charge for people to register and book sites when required but there was no marketing of the sites. No income was generated for the Council from the permits. The spaces in Palmerston Road and Commercial Road were well used but there was a lesser demand in other areas. Licensing work closely with Rebecca Alexander, the PCC Places and Markets Manager, particularly during seasonal times, to promote as much entertainment as possible in the retail areas.

The Panel considered that additional sites could be added across the city such as in Copnor Road and Allaway Avenue.

Evidence was heard from Andrew Phillips and Julie Carolan regarding Commercial Road, the main points being:

- The now disbanded PCC City Centre Management Team had been the 'glue' between other areas of the council, such as the cleaning contractors and landscaping and they had worked to ensure that what was best for the city centre was put first. This team had a marketing and maintenance budget and were in place for the well-being of the city centre.
- Since the team was disbanded in 2016, there had been no-one pushing the needs of the city centre, to its detriment. Retailers such as Marks & Spencer had sited the removal of the City Centre Team as a key reason for leaving the city centre, as they saw no investment or ambition from PCC.
- The city centre had become an afterthought for PCC as most of the marketing was centred on Gunwharf and bringing in tourists.
- In relation to crime, investment in infrastructure for the city centre had been minimal with the CCTV cameras being too old for the Crown Prosecution Service needs, as the images were not good enough for prosecutions.
- The trees in the city centre blocked out two of the CCTV cameras for 8 months of the year as they grow to a point where they are touching the buildings on both sides and do not give a clear view so are not used by the Police.
- Overall, the investment in the city centre had not always been the wisest and not what retailers would think was the most necessary.
- The poor turnover of trade and visitors to the city had led to a reluctance by H&M to invest in a store refit.
- The city centre was not somewhere you would be proud to bring your family or friends to shop, with broken seating and an uninspiring environment.
- The Visit Portsmouth website advertising Commercial Road was embarrassing and does not showcase the retail options very well.
- The placement of the market stalls in the centre was haphazard and did not permit easy navigation from one side of the street to the other.
- If nothing was done about the downward shift in culture, further retailers would leave Portsmouth.
- Commercial Road should not try and compete with Gunwharf as they are two completely different shopping areas with Commercial Road selling the affordable everyday items. Regular shoppers should be encouraged more.
- The reinstatement of the City Centre Manager to be the point of contact for any matters that arise on the high street would be beneficial.
- Pre-covid, footfall had been on a 3% per year decline. Since the pandemic that had slowed and, whilst still low, was recovering. Online shopping was

starting to plateau and charges for returns were driving consumers back to the shops.

- Changes in planning use classes with its aim for more diversification in the high street was encouraging people to stay longer.

Andrew and Julie told the panel that retailers were now considering setting up a Business Improvement District (BID) focused on the city centre with retail central to the BID. The BID would provide a budget, marketing, focus and co-ordination for the city centre and would bring in retailers to ascertain problems and consider if there was a commonality that could be worked on. BIDs had been successful in other cities. A BID would need someone from the city council to head up the BID.

In relation to mixed use on the high street, Andrew highlighted a new initiative in Redhill, called [The Light](#) , which was a cinema and leisure park with bowling, shuffleboard, axe throwing, and various other leisure activities. This type of venue would have the potential to add about 40% footfall to the city centre and would encourage footfall into the evening trade.

The Panel considered a potential recommendation would be to advise the Cabinet Member to support an independent Business Improvement District bid, through enhanced communication and initial seed funding of up to £100k. The panel also considered, with a potential BID, this may be a good time to try and re-engage Marks & Spencer to encourage them back to the city centre, even if just the food hall.

The Panel also considered two further reports:

- CLED Scrutiny Panel - Looking at the Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy, what recommendations can be made to further support the high street in its refresh in 2024. (Appendix G)
- Briefing Paper from Culture & Leisure Services (Appendix H)

Minutes of the meeting, outlining the evidence can be found at Appendix I.

EDCL Meeting - 14 December 2023

Evidence was received from:

- Tim Keeping, Manager, Port Solent
- Phil Salmon & Les Pink, Project Team for the former Debenhams site, Commercial Road
- Louise Whitmore, Love Southsea Market

A written statement had been received from Alice Masterman, Surveyor and Commercial Property Agent from Flude. Her key concerns for the high street were:

- The state some buildings are left in over time which leads to the area becoming run down.
- Not knowing the bigger picture e.g. a tenant still in occupation but left early, caught in planning, under offer with solicitors etc.

- Parking - Portsmouth is okay but in Southampton that is something that can deter people as it is expensive with one-way systems and closed all the time.

She considered the following was working well:

- Events and markets
- Condensing the space, e.g. everyone moving into the main areas of Commercial Road
- Destination spaces rather than traditional retail

Her comment on what Portsmouth City Council could do to support further was 'quicker planning'.

Phil Salmon and Les Pink updated the panel on the current plans for the extensive former Debenhams site in Commercial Road which included the former Station Street car park. The plans were for a major tall building incorporating high quality private rented residential housing for local people which included retail space (see appendix J). The main points arising from the presentation were:

- The development would include 3000 square metres of retail space on the ground floor with as much frontage onto Commercial Road and Arundel Street as possible.
- The main drivers for the scheme were the private rented sector and would be a building with a hotel style reception, work areas, café, bar, coffee shop and retail. The design was focused on creating a sense of place in the heart of the square actively fronted by cafes and a grand reception to the residential and the rest of the retail buildings.
- The design had considered the 'desire lines' in the surrounding area. Connectivity into the site from Commercial Road had also been considered.
- The aim was to gain full occupancy and to generate income and spending offsite in the city centre.
- There would be limited car parking, encouraging residents to use the good public transport access links in the city centre.

Tim Keeping updated the panel on how Port Solent had successfully weathered the pandemic and current cost of living crisis, due to the unique way in which the tenure of Port Solent was held and made some observations on the challenges that may occur in the future. He provided some ideas on how Portsmouth City Council could help with maintaining footfall at Port Solent including help with the overflow car parking and public transport to the site.

Tim then provided the panel with his insight into the successful elements for a Business Improvement District (BID) as Chair of the Southampton BID. These were:

- To write a manifesto based on what people say they want and then setting out to deliver those elements. A successful BID was about delivering realisable results in a timeframe that most levy payers would understand.
- Key to the BID is the people on the board. There should be a corresponding officer within the City Council which gives the ability to be agile and to deliver once a decision has been made.
- A successful BID must remain relevant and continually review the needs of the levy payers with a good strategic representation on the Board. Diversity is key and should include representatives based on sectoral size, geography and size and type of business, including food and beverage and independent retailers.
- It was important the start comes from the Local Authority but should be quickly passed over to the private sector to move forward. Initial funding of up to £100k - should come from the local authority to pay external consultants to keep the BID on track. It should not just become another branch of the city council.

The panel then heard from Louise Whitmore of Love Southsea Market. She observed that Palmerston Road had been a thriving high street with John Lewis and Debenhams when the markets had started. The market had bought in a lot of independent retailers. She noted that Palmerston Road had now changed into more of a coffee culture area.

Louise suggested that, to allow for the continuation of the successful Love Southsea Market, PCC could provide a more permanent covered structure making it easier for market retailers to set up and that would still allow for movement between the market stalls and the local shops and cafes. She noted that Southsea shoppers were more inclined to buy from independent traders rather than corporate traders. In Commercial Road she envisaged a market selling items that are typically sold in Tik Tok shops or in the old Charlotte Street market.

Minutes of the meeting outlining the evidence can be found at Appendix K.

EDCL Meeting - 8 January 2024

The meeting on 8 January was centred around the cultural engagement with the context of the high street.

Evidence was received from:

- Christine Taylor - Curator of Natural History, Cumberland Museum
- Grace Scott - Museums Engagement Officer
- Ross Fairbrother - General Manager, D-Day Story
- Cathy Hakes - Head of Museums Service
- Dave Percival - Libraries and Archive Services Manager
- Catherine Ramsay - Business Development and Projects Manager

A written statement from Katherine Webber was considered (Incorporation of Youth Engagement Programmes into a 'Pop-Up' Collaborative (Museums, Libraries, Archives and The Hive) Project Model) (see appendix L)

The witnesses updated the panel on the following:

- The plans for the D-Day Story 80th anniversary programme for 2024 and the plans for bringing this out into the city, the high streets, and libraries.
- The highly successful pop-up museum that had been set up in Cascades shopping centre during the Covid lockdown. 60,000 people viewed the exhibition with over 700 activity sheets distributed.
- The in-person events by the Museums, such as street performing artists, which can bring a vibrancy to an area and encourage footfall.
- Pop-up museums present a real opportunity to engage with people who would not normally come to museums or who do not think it is for them.
- Pop-ups provide a good opportunity to cross promote other cultural services across the city.
- The work the library service was doing and the positive impact it had across the city especially those libraries based in or close to the high streets.
- The work of the HIVE based in the city library.
- They felt it would be useful for key items needed for pop-up displays or exhibitions to be stored in a communal resource for reuse and repurpose by all as and when needed.
- Good communication about cultural events or empty retail units would be highly beneficial and having the resources to move quickly to fill that space after engagement with the public once it had been ascertained what they would be interested in.
- The fantastic support the council provides for cultural events and activities across the city was noted.

Minutes of the meeting outlining the evidence can be found at Appendix M.

Conclusions

The panel recognised that Portsmouth City Council officers work tirelessly to maintain and manage Portsmouth's high streets and are doing their best with limited resources. Where Portsmouth has so many high streets, it was clear, from the evidence provided by witnesses, that they need more support to do so.

Having heard all the evidence it was clear that a major factor in the deterioration of Commercial Road in particular, apart from the national factors, had been the dissipation of the City Centre Team, leaving a void in communication in relation to the central management of the area. Witnesses had detailed how retailers felt there was no one person they could contact when problems arose, and how this had directly impacted on the loss of one of the major retailers. Also of note was that the City Centre Team, had, however, not been actively involved in the management of any other high streets across the city which was why the panel considered recommending a team that glues them all together.

The Panel agreed that supporting a Business Improvement District would be highly beneficial for Portsmouth, if done in the right way and targeted wisely. Having heard from Tim Keeping his recommendations for a successful BID, the panel considered this to be prime recommendation for Cabinet.

The Cabinet Member could consider supporting an independent BID through a consultant employed to lead communication between Portsmouth City Council and the BID and help drive a business plan around the actual needs of retailers in the area, to deliver realisable results in a time frame the levy payers of the BID would understand; to form a committee that included senior leaders of institutions across the city, treasury representatives from across various businesses and representatives from retailers including small and independent businesses.

The Cabinet Member would also be advised to support the BID with initial funding from the local authority in the region of up to £100k with the running of the BID swiftly moving to the private sector to ensure no delays in implementing solutions to matters and communicate group strategy.

Other conclusions from the evidence heard were:

- The need for a High Street Co-ordinator and team for all Portsmouth high streets, including Commercial Road, Palmerston Road, Cosham, North End, Fratton, Copnor, Milton and Albert Road to work with and for the local businesses. They would be a central point of contact for matters arising to ensure a conducive environment including dealing with issues pertaining to CCTV, landscaping maintenance, street cleaning and street furniture.
- The need for a central store of resources that could be used by all teams, when creating cultural displays and events across the high streets. Central to this would be the creation of a central list of items that was communicated out effectively to all.
- The use of Street Entertainment sites to encourage increased footfall in an area needed to be better promoted and to include extra sites across the city with the heightened use of pop-up shops.

- There was a need for better communication in an open forum and awareness including of cultural events across the city to encourage footfall in the high streets and encourage more spending in local businesses.
- There was a need for better layout of market stalls, particularly in Commercial Road and consideration should be given to semi-permanent structures in both Commercial Road and Palmerston Road for market stall holders. As noted in the meetings, this may have implications for planning, business rates and anti-social behaviour which would need to be considered if funding was identified.

Update 26 February 2024

The panel had become aware that meetings had previously been attended by Portsmouth City Council officers, including with the Leader of the Council, to commence discussions on a BID process. BIDs had been consistently discussed over a number of years with partners and recently had been led by the Place and Markets Manager.

The Panel were pleased that this positive step had commenced and were pleased that the information heard from witnesses on 29 November 2023 and 14 December 2023, had provided supporting evidence about the need for support from Portsmouth City Council to begin the process.

The scrutiny panel had organically concluded that, within a 5-year plan, a BID would enhance the future prosperity of the high street for both residents and retailers, and it was clear that in order to support successful BIDs in the city, a recommendation would be made for PCC to support the independent BIDs with funding of up to £100k.

The topic of review had originally seemed wide ranging and difficult to bring to a focus point. However, the panel were pleased that a clear main recommendation had emerged and that this had already commenced, and the panel were keen to do all they could to recommend positive support from PCC to see the BID to fruition.

Integrated Impact Assessment

An integrated impact assessment would be carried out when the Cabinet makes its decisions based on the recommendations set out in this report.

Budget and policy implications of the recommendations

The following table highlights the budgetary and policy implications of the recommendations being presented by the panel:

	Recommendation	Action By	Budget & Policy Framework	Resource Implications
1				
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3				
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Public Document Pack

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CULTURE AND LEISURE SCRUTINY PANEL

MINUTES of the meeting of the Economic Development, Culture and Leisure Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday, 20 July 2023 at 12.00 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Russell Simpson (in the Chair)

Councillors John Smith
Yinka Adeniran
Peter Candlish
Leo Madden
Emily Strudwick

5. Apologies for absence (AI 1)

There were no apologies for absence.

6. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

7. Minutes of Previous Meeting (AI 3)

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 1 June 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

8. Consideration of Scrutiny Topics (AI 4)

The EDCL Scrutiny Panel members discussed and considered topics for the forthcoming municipal year.

Town Centres and High Streets - Economic Development.

Panel members considered the scrutiny of Portsmouth's town centres and high streets and the gaining of evidence from officers and local high street businesses, both large and small, in order to compile a report on how they could be better supported in the long term. It had been noted that there were a number of commercial units owned by Portsmouth City Council (PCC), that, in some cases, haven't been let out for years. This would have resulted in a loss of revenue for the council and the loss of opportunity to support the local economy.

This applied all over the city, not just in Commercial Road and Palmerston Road.

It was noted that a number of retail premises are private sector owned and it may be that very little could be done to influence this part of the high street. PCC, however, could focus on their own properties with consideration of what

is owned by PCC, what is being done with these properties and what can be done with the properties.

The review could take evidence from private landlords, if possible, but with the main focus on putting PCC's 'own house' in order to make sure the commercial properties are being utilised efficiently and are leading the way - ensuring revenue is not lost.

The officers in attendance, were not from the property service, but confidently stated that the property officers would be able to compile a report on properties on the high street where PCC have a limited ownership. Officers noted the future regeneration of Commercial Road North. They also made note of the few projects being done in the Cascades area, with the occupancy in the Cascades Centre relatively strong compared to national averages. They also noted that officers have attempted to engage with the landlords of empty properties with limited responses as many are investment properties, often held by pension funds and they seem content to leave them empty.

Panel members considered the report being separated into two sections, one dealing with properties the council owns and then a separate general high street section. The report would need to consider the massive change in shopping habits and what that means for the bricks and mortar shops. Consideration should be given to what can be done to influence in a positive way, to look at the direction of travel and what PCC can do as a city to influence in order to best equip our high streets for the future.

Culture in the North of the City - a balance

A second topic that was considered was the possible lack of culture in the north of the city. A report could be compiled, spanning the last ten years, on what cultural events had taken place in the north of the city, what had worked, what hadn't and why it hadn't. The topic could consider the balance of cultural events within the city as a whole. Cinema provision could be examined due to the lack of cinemas in the north of the city which previously were part of the high streets. It was noted that some creatives were starting to look at Hilsea with public art projects. This was a positive trend moving upwards and consideration could be given as to how better to support this trend.

The main thrust of the topic would be in relation to Economic Development, rather than just culture and this would feed into the high street issue as spaces within the high streets are now used for cultural elements as well as retail. Consideration of using the spaces differently over the next five years, due to the ongoing trend to shop online, leading to more empty buildings. It would be an element PCC could influence and steer.

Panel members considered they did not want to make the scrutiny a north - south divide but a consideration of the city as a whole. They noted the character of the south of the city is different to the north of the city due to the geographical elements such as the seafront. Equally, the north of the city has its own unique geographical features. Trying to make them the same would not be workable as they are geographically different.

A decision was made to scrutinise the town centres and high streets to establish what may be done to improve them, including dealing with empty properties and consideration of any cultural aspects. The integration of cultural activities, both through the council or sponsored through the council could be included. It would encompass the city as a whole and would include all properties including commercial enterprises. The topic could then be narrowed down through the drawing up of the scoping document.

Action - Officers to request the commercial property team provide a report of how many properties the council hold on the high streets and how many of these properties are vacant, how long they have been vacant for, the rental income values of each of those properties and how much has been lost over the months or years and the reasons why.

Action - the scrutiny topic to be agreed at the forthcoming Scrutiny Management Panel.

9. Date of next meeting (AI 5)

A meeting would be convened in September (date to be confirmed) allowing enough time for officers to bring reports forward for the panel to consider and for a draft scoping document to be compiled.

It was agreed for regular monthly meetings to be convened through to the end of the municipal year.

Councillor Russell Simpson
Chair

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Economic Development, Culture & Leisure Panel - informal meeting
Friday 29 September 2023 at 11 am, Executive Meeting Room

Present

Councillors Russell Simpson (Chair), John Smith (Vice-Chair), Yinka Adeniran, Peter Candlish, Leo Madden, Emily Strudwick

Councillor George Madgwick - observer

Becky Alexander - Places & Markets Manager
James Daly - Culture Development & Projects Officer
Jane Lamer - Head of Economic Growth & Skills
Claire Looney - Commissioning & Partnerships Manager
Claire Watkins - Business Development & Projects Manager
Isla - intern with Claire Watkins

Cllr Madgwick was attending as an observer as at the next Full Council there would be a request for him to replace Cllr Strudwick on the panel.

Cllr Candlish referred to the email he sent the panel on 18 September and the officers' report. He asked where the panel wanted to go and what exactly they wanted to narrow down. If PCC did not own many of the properties that would not be a very productive line of enquiry. The report showed the nature of the high street was changing towards health, wellbeing, and socialising but residents (in his experience) wanted to fight against the tide, for example, the closure of large department stores. He was interested if the report reflected long or short-term trends. Claire Watkins said the data came from the Arts Council England so was based on national not Portsmouth trends. Jane Lamer said Covid had escalated what was already happening and compared with other cities Portsmouth's footfall was quite good.

Cllr Candlish made three points:

- PCC had to understand residents' views and needs while seeing what was commercially viable.
- The panel could step back to see how different high streets in Portsmouth fight back, for example, Palmerston Road seemed to be in a transition stage compared with Fratton Road, or the panel could compare Portsmouth with another city.
- Perhaps the high street needs defining - what is it? Where is it in Portsmouth? It was not just Commercial Road but other areas like Highland Road. Perhaps areas threatened by change could be mapped.

Cllr Simpson said it could be a good opportunity to look at high streets holistically and speak to residents. Will the topic be impactful? Will it be useful? High streets in Portsmouth were all different, for example, Cosham felt more like a market.

Cllr Candlish asked if there was an economic development map. Jane Lamer said there was significant work taking place with high streets with support from a national consultant. Other areas as well as Commercial Road were recognised as important, including in the Local Plan; there would be a map. Then there were very specific projects like the Bridge Centre. Extensive reports and considerable documentation

were available because of the Local Plan but it might be possible to provide summaries or share a draft. The Hednor (?) report looked at employment space. She acknowledged the panel did not want to step on officers' toes but they welcomed a challenge. Becky Alexander's role was to look at how PCC worked with businesses. A new market strategy was coming soon.

Cllr Simpson had met Stephen Baily about high streets and mentioned the busking spots in Chichester. There was only one in the north of Portsmouth but there could be more, for example, by McDonalds. The panel could look at cultural opportunities in the high street. Claire Looney noted there had been much focus on libraries though that was not a direct comparison with shops. PCC not owning properties was an issue as it limited the council's influence. She mentioned an art shop in Cosham that ran workshops but had closed as it was not viable. There was a balance between business rates and running a successful shop. Cllr Simpson mentioned buildings being empty due to high rates, including the KwikSave on Stubbington Avenue whose landlord lived on Guernsey. Perhaps landlords could be brought together in a forum.

Cllr Smith thought the report showed good work but it was not all joined up; sometimes work was done in isolation. It needed pulling together to show people where they could go. There was no golden bullet to resolving the high street's problems. Some shops or events were niche and not available to all. The look and feel of the high street needed to change. He was interested in the principles behind the purchase of Fratton Bridge. Artists etc could help regenerate run-down areas.

Jane Lamer agreed with the viewpoint so they were revisiting the economic development strategy this year, for example, Small Business Saturday. Claire Looney mentioned Let's Create in the former Dorothy Perkins shop for Christmas and other possible pop-up shops in the Cascades. It was difficult to find space in Cosham. Oliver Willcocks (Senior Project Manager, Property Development) could talk to the panel. It was about providing spaces for businesses to move and grow. Economic Development worked with the Federation of Small Businesses and the Chamber of Commerce; it always welcomed new ideas. The Island event in June and the Food Festival in July were good but what else could they do? Island was soft launched with the Festival. More sector integration was needed, especially with SMEs and start-ups; the latter started OK but had problems around year three.

Cllr Simpson asked if there was room for a roadmap or business forum. The panel could consider the issue from a different angle but without stepping on officers' toes. Jane Lamer mentioned how to keep businesses going in areas like Drayton or prevent disruption in areas like Cosham where a lot of regeneration was happening. It would take the team about two weeks to compile a summary of reports (which were quite big); the team was very small with limited resources.

Cllr Madgwick suggested the panel could make a recommendation for a compulsory purchase order on KwikSave. Private and PCC properties could be kept separate. He mentioned a PCC-owned property that had been empty for three years but PCC had refused an offer of £30,000 per annum rent which was better than nothing. A property on Allaway Avenue had been empty for four years and when someone was interested asbestos was discovered; why was it not found earlier?

Cllr Simpson thanked him for the suggestion but said it was better to focus on one topic at a time. [He distributed an audit report - single page - that the panel had seen at a previous item]. He was happy with Cllr Smith's suggestion. The chosen subject should add value and not duplicate other work; the panel needed to agree the principles and framework of their approach. He was not sure if the 26 October meeting would be formal to sign off the scoping document; he said more data was needed before agreeing the scoping document.

The meeting ended at 11.45 am.

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Economic Development, Culture & Leisure Scrutiny Panel - Scoping paper

Proposed scrutiny topic 2023/24:

To look at our town centres and high streets to establish what may be done to improve them, including dealing with empty properties and cultural aspects.

The consideration may include Palmerston Road, Commercial Road, High Street Cosham, Fratton Road and North End.

The scope does not include the cleanliness of the streetscape as this is outside the scope of this Scrutiny Panel. Street cleansing is undertaken by Colas for the Council under the PFI contract and would comprise a separate scrutiny topic.

This paper is a joint enterprise between Culture and Leisure and Regeneration directorates.

Current position on UK town centres and high streets

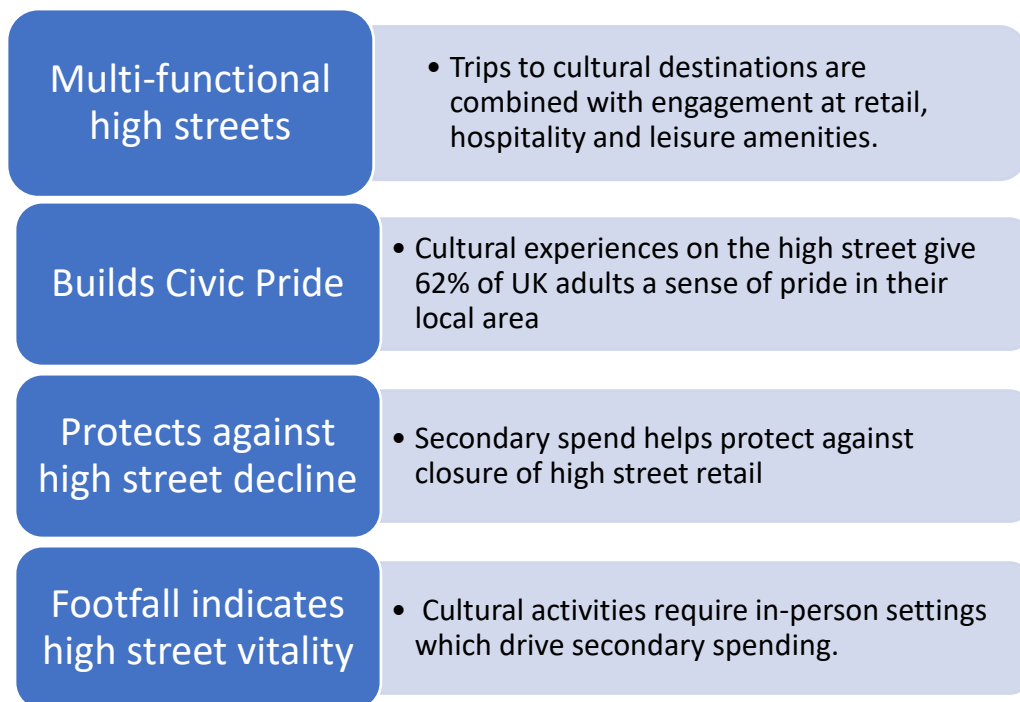
Traditionally the 'High Street' is any British town or city that is normally the 'central retail thoroughfare' with a mix of shops going back 150 years.¹ The growth of out of town, outlet and suburban centres has shifted the demand of the traditional high street, together with the pull of online retail and the post pandemic effects. The future of high streets therefore has moved away from retail dominance to health, wellness and socialising with others. Government policy to improve the high street includes the Future High Street Fund, Levelling Up Fund and Heritage Action Zones.

High streets are multi-functional spaces and footfall and spending is not entirely dependent on retail. Theatres, events, art galleries and museums have the potential to attract both locals and visitors from further afield who commit to secondary spend.

75% of buildings used by organisations funded by Arts Council England are on or within a 5 minute walk of a high street.² The effect of a high street presence can be summarised as follows:

¹ [What Happens to the High Street? \(retailresearch.org\)](https://www.retailresearch.org/)

² [A High Street Renaissance | Arts Council England](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/news-events/a-high-street-renaissance)



A broader cultural offering can also widen the appeal of the high street to younger and diverse audiences. If high streets remain solely about financial transactions, the threat from online retail to close down the high street remains greater and the remaining offer has a more challenging struggle to survive. By diversifying the reasons to visit the high street, to health and wellbeing and socialising, for example, a more comprehensive offer will keep visitors longer in the space.

Cultural offering in city centres helps build civic pride which in turn develops a sense of place, belonging and ownership. This can take the form of activities with other residents, thereby developing a sense of community and reducing social isolation.

Responses to a Deltapoll undertaken by BOP Consulting on behalf of Arts Council England in 2021, shows that the appetite for the UK high street remains healthy with the majority of respondents wanting to spend the same amount of time at the high street / town centre as pre Covid. Moreover the desire for cultural engagement in the high street is high with 85% wanting the same or more culture and leisure opportunities.³ 70% of respondents agree or strongly agree that cultural opportunities on the high street make local areas better places to live. Preferences for such opportunities included pop-ups, cinema, museum, theatre and libraries.

Business rates

Business rates are an annual property tax charged on most non-domestic properties such as shops, offices and public houses. Business rates are set by central government which sets the annual business rates multiplier, which is applied to the rateable value. Portsmouth City Council does not have a role in setting the business rates multiplier or in the property valuation to determine the rateable value. The local authority issues the business rates bill and is responsible for the collection and recovery of the property tax, with half of the income from business rates being paid by the local authority to central government.

³ [A High Street Renaissance | Arts Council England](#)

Evidential examples from across the UK

Bristol	<i>See No Evil</i> - a street art project to transform an unloved street thoroughfare into a tourist attraction. ⁴
Blackpool	<i>Blackpool Treasure Trove</i> saw 7 pop up museums across the city, with 4 co-produced with young people. ⁵
Stoke on Trent	<i>Community Maker</i> created a space for people to get together, eat, talk and make ceramic items - and develop a community through these activities. Participants said the group helped grow positive impact of their perception of the town. ⁶
Ipswich	<i>Mapping Suffolk's Stories</i> project took place whilst The Hold, a new £20 million visitor attraction was constructed. The Hold is a new heritage centre on Ipswich waterfront which holds the county archive collection together with gallery, café and education room. <i>Mapping Suffolk's Stories</i> was a co-production project, with community groups and schools exploring local heritage and groups could share their work through mini exhibitions and pop-ups. ⁷
Gosport	In partnership with Hampshire Cultural Trust, Gosport Borough Council has secured funding of £1.78m for a High Street Heritage Action Zone ⁸ (HSHAZ) programme. This includes several projects to transform unused high street buildings to establish cultural and commercial opportunities. This is part of a broader Heritage Action Zone managed by the Planning Service. Examples of the HSHAZ include: <i>Gosport Pop</i> - a temporary pop up museum in a vacant property on the high street (whilst Gosport Museum is closed for development). <i>Imagination Refinery</i> - comprising maker spaces and business incubator spaces on the high street. This offers multiple spaces for small start ups to work together, enabled by community and supporting growth. The Imagination Refinery is an initiative by The Makers Guild, who were also part of the collaboration with Portsmouth Creates in developing the We Create Market in 2020. ⁹
Glasgow	<i>Paisley: The Secret Collection</i> is situated on a UK high street and is the first publicly accessible museum store.

⁴ [See No Evil 2! – Bristol Temple Quarter](#)

⁵ [Blackpool's Treasure Trove | Blackpool's Treasure Trove is a two year project exploring Blackpool's entertainment industry from 1950 to the present day. \(wordpress.com\)](#)

⁶ [People, culture and place: the role of culture in placemaking \(local.gov.uk\)](#)

⁷ [People, culture and place: the role of culture in placemaking \(local.gov.uk\)](#)

⁸ [HSHAZ - Gosport Heritage Action Zone \(gosporthaz.org.uk\)](#)

⁹ [Home | Imagination Refinery](#)

	This allows members of the public to view thousands of items from the museum collections that have not been on display at the museum or seen by the general public for many years. ¹⁰
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Culture & Leisure in Portsmouth

Culture brings colour and personality and an increased sense of uniqueness of place. It can help to reach more audiences and spread benefits equitably, using social capital to deliver social value. Effective cultural regeneration needs to start with the cultural social capital as the catalyst for deliver regeneration.

One of the big challenges with the city centre is to encourage residents to feel ownership. Culture helps communication and engages people through relevance. Working with residents in co-production models helps people generally feel more positive when things are being done with them.

The Renaissance of Portsmouth Harbour as part of the Millennium Project, which delivered Gunwharf Quays and the Spinnaker Tower, is an example of a long-term project to regenerate a significant area of the city. The scheme also demonstrated the need for a long-term vision, with the original concept formulated 10 years before the final element opened.

The ultimate aim has to be to help deliver the aspirations of the Imagine Portsmouth vision¹¹ - healthy and happy, culture and creativity, thriving economy, lifelong learning, green city and easy travel together with the Council's corporate plan to stand up for Portsmouth¹². Whilst improvements such as those below are possible, the Council owns relatively little of the property in the 'high streets' of Portsmouth which affects the level of influence it has for change.

By the term 'culture-led regeneration', the Council is looking at culture as a catalyst for improvement. This could be a large investment such as a new museum, which is the cornerstone or flagship of a much wider development, or a major anniversary might spark a landmark event, the need for a new development or inspire overarching branding. An example of this would be the city's Second World War role leading to the opening of the D-Day Museum in 1984 and its redevelopment as The D-Day Story in 2018, which in turn attracted the international-level D-Day 75 events and Landing Craft Tank 7074 to the city. The LCT has brought many opportunities for engaging with the city, including hosting choral events enabled by its unique acoustics.

The city centre has huge potential for regeneration, and not only is culture ideal capital for inspiring and driving change, but in many cases it is already doing so. The Guildhall is a high profile performance venue in a listed, civic building, currently engaging in a project 'The Basement' to bring opportunities for young people to engage with culture and the arts¹³. Guildhall Square itself plays host to many events throughout the year, from Remembrance Sunday to the Ice Rink every Christmas. In addition, the Guildhall Square includes the Big Screen, which provides large scale advertising for the many culture and leisure offers in the city at a competitive rate. The New Theatre Royal is a short distance away in Guildhall Walk. Culture & Leisure Services have been delivering the National Lottery Heritage Fund supported project to reimagine Victoria Park, which is a valuable green space in the heart of the city. The project is aimed at engaging with local communities,

¹⁰ [Paisley: The Secret Collection - museum store - Paisley.is](#)

¹¹ [The Vision - Imagine Portsmouth](#)

¹² [Corporate Plan - Our plan for recovery and renewal 2021/22 \(portsmouth.gov.uk\)](#)

¹³ [Guildhall Renaissance | Portsmouth Guildhall](#)

including providing a new community hub. The Park has also played host to We Shine events in 2021 and 2022, together with accessible opera and family fun days at the park. There is also opportunity for individuals and groups to get involved in wildlife spotting and community gardening. There has also been an increase in street art in the city centre in the past few years.

Suggested areas of interest

Portsmouth Creates

Portsmouth Creates was established in 2019 as an independent cultural organisation for the city. During the Covid-19 pandemic Portsmouth Creates delivered the hugely successful We Create markets, and for the past two years have organised the We Shine light festival, which in 2022 attracted over 90,000 people. Supported by PCC, the University of Portsmouth, Arts Council England and Victorious Festival, Portsmouth Creates is a good example of partnership working and the capacity of the arts to bring regeneration and resident engagement. Portsmouth Creates is also a vital organisation in providing a cultural and creative input to partner organisations such as Shaping Portsmouth and The Hive.

Please contact **Claire Looney** for more information and suggested witnesses from Portsmouth Creates.

Hotwalls Studios

The Hotwalls Studios are a landmark development situated in Old Portsmouth. Operational since 2016, the 13 studios provide an environment in which start up artists and makers can develop their businesses and engage with the public. The site also includes a café, The Canteen, and the Round Tower which is used as a flexible exhibition, workshop and event space. Artists and makers must be open to the public for a minimum of 30 hours per week and must be open on Open Studios days which are on the third Sunday of every month. The Hotwalls therefore meets the need for affordable studio space in a flexible and supported environment to enable creative ventures to grow. It provides a cultural hub for the creative community by showcasing high quality work and offering a creative events programme, enabling the residents of Portsmouth to experience the creative industries.

Please contact **Claire Looney** for more information and suggested witnesses from Hotwalls Studios.

Libraries Service

This service manages nine libraries across different communities.

Southsea Library is situated directly in Palmerston Road shopping area and functions as a pedestrian corridor between Palmerston and Marmion Roads. By opening 7 days a week, the library supports the retailers of Palmerston Road. Whilst there was some initial resistance to a library on Palmerston Road, within six months of the library opening the footfall to the area increased by 5%. The library has an active Friends Group and offers many activities varying from Scrabble Club to Slow Sew and Create and Chatter Craft.

Cosham Library is sited adjacent to Cosham High Street. The library is open 6 days a week and re-opened in July 2021 following major refurbishment, including a new IT suite.

North End Library is sited at Gladys Avenue, North End, at the main roundabout in the commercial thoroughfare. Open 6 days a week, this is the most significant library in the north of the city and the most successful in terms of numbers of children participating and completing the annual summer reading challenge. It is a key community resource in the area, celebrating its 60th year but would benefit from investment to improve the appearance of the library.

The service also has a **mobile library**, which has a weekly timetable of stops, mainly in the north of the city and including two supermarket car parks.

In March 2023, funding was confirmed from **Arts Council England Libraries Improvement Fund**. This funding will cover two capital projects:

- The purchase of electronic, environmentally sustainable tuk-tuks which will support community engagement activity across the city;
- Office pods will be installed in two city libraries to provide further facilities.

Please contact **David Percival** for more information and suggested witnesses from the Library Service.

Tourism and Visitor Services

The Tourism and Visitor Economy Strategy was adopted by the Council in December 2022.¹⁴ The strategy has 3 key objectives:

- To grow the profile of Portsmouth as a national brand;
- To increase the value of the visitor economy to Portsmouth;
- To work with partners to manage and develop the destination offer.

To grow the brand, the service designs and delivers year round marketing campaigns, for example, 'Portsmouth, Put The Wind In Your Sails'. The advantage of digital campaigns is that both scalable and affordable and can be easily 'tweaked' and updated. Profile raising takes place both locally, regionally and nationally with both digital marketing and marketing on display from Portsmouth to London. By leveraging the benefits to the city of major events - such as Victorious Festival- further promotion of the city takes place, with the economic impact of Victorious being valued at £15m.¹⁵

The service takes steps to increase the value of the visitor economy by managing the Visit Portsmouth webpages (which offer free online listing) together with cost effective printed publications. Dedicated tourist hubs are situated at The Hard and at the D Day Story on the seafront and the service also provides a tourist guiding offer.

Strong relationships exist between the service and partners such as Visit Britain, Tourism South East, Portsmouth International Port, Brittany Ferries and Southampton Airport. Together with the Port and Shaping Portsmouth, the service is working on the Cruise Passenger Programme to increase visits and spend at local tourism businesses.

Destination Network meetings regularly take place, to allow all tourism partners in the city to be kept updated and share developments. Partners are essential to create a stronger and broader

¹⁴ [24.444 Tourism Strategy appenidx 1.indd \(portsmouth.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁵ [Victorious Festival: Evidencing economic and wider impacts - Bluegrass \(bluegrassresearch.co.uk\)](#)

Portsmouth offer, engaging with University of Portsmouth, England's Coast, Visit Hampshire, Visit Isle of Wight, Discover Gosport and Solent LEP.

Please contact **Jane Singh** for further information and suggested witnesses from the partner listing.

Events

The Grimsey Review 2020 emphasises the importance of the contribution of the local authority events team in managing a comprehensive programme of events which drives footfall to local high streets.¹⁶

The Events Service support the delivery of over 350 events annually which can range from small-scale events through to those with 80,000 footfall. The offering benefits both residents and visitors to the city, raises the profile of the city and the opportunity for secondary spend. High profile events include those such as: Kite Festival, Southsea Food Festival, Great South Run, Christmas Light Switch On, Bandstand (including Bandstand on Tour) and new for this year, the Formula Kite European Championships (which makes its Olympic debut in 2024). The service is starting to plan in partnership with the Museums Service for the commemorative events for D Day 80 in 2024.

Many events also provide the opportunity to express the diversity of our city and celebrate all cultures and faiths, including through twinning and civic events.

The service also provide a comprehensive sponsorship package to promote opportunities on offer to local businesses, as to support the provision of events external sponsorship is key, which can include business to business links.

Southsea Food Festival

The 2023 festival saw an increased footfall to the Palmerston Road, Southsea area on its only day of delivery this year, exceeded the record footfall achieved in 2022 (8% increase on best day 2022). For the first time in its 15th year the Food Festival, a regular event focused on celebrating food and supporting local traders and businesses was impacted by poor weather (high winds) resulting in the cancellation of day one.

More positively, trader numbers saw over 50 traders showing further increase on previous years and the footprint extended along Avenue De Caen to bring in the close areas of the open green areas to provide a more spacious feel to the market. This also supported avoiding challenges around high winds from Osborne Road and allowed a more open feel to the market which welcomed over 40% of

Social media was effectively used to engage residents and visitors, using existing channels (PCC Channels, Invest Portsmouth, Rediscover Portsmouth, Visit Portsmouth) alongside a bespoke Facebook page and partner channels to reach a PO1-PO6 market and opening wider visitor groups.

A PR partnership with Wave 105, Hampshire Fare, Express FM and Hovertravel promoted the event and sponsorship from LEXUS secured the event.



¹⁶ [GrimseyReview2.pdf \(vanishinghighstreet.com\)](#)

PO1-PO6 traders, in addition to support from local traders and hospitality outlets who engaged from their existing footprints (including street licences) to benefit from the additional footfall.

Eat the Island

This networking event was created to meet a need from hospitality and tourism businesses and act as a soft launch for the Southsea Food Festival. This was delivered in partnership with Hampshire Fare, who are an engaged partner through Regeneration's Business South partnership. Initially intended to provide 10 stands and engage 30-50 individuals, 164 pre registrations were secured, with 92 attendees from 35 named businesses.

Positive media support was secured for the event and evaluations continued the theme [Eat the Island launched to celebrate Portsmouth's 'incredible foodie vibe'](#)

Evaluations confirmed 83% of attendees were satisfied or very satisfied with the event and significant partnership working is being confirmed by attendees, including Queens Hotel promotion and partnership with new partners.

Please contact **Lydia Mellor** for more information and suggested witnesses in connection with the Events Service, together with **Rebecca Alexander** and **Bill Sainsbury** from Economic Growth service.

Portsmouth Museums

The Museums Strategy, adopted by the Council in March 2022¹⁷ identifies a new story for Portsmouth Museums, one that identifies '*Portsmouthness*': the qualities, characteristics and distinctiveness of the city. This will engage residents in the history of Portsmouth as *their* history and provide an opportunity for co-production, working with communities, going forward. Subject to capital funding, external funding and other intersecting projects (e.g. Civic Offices Regeneration), there is an opportunity to relocate the Portsmouth Museum and Art Gallery to a high street location as part of wider regeneration aims. Consideration is also simultaneously being given to redeveloping the existing site and creating new storage and display space for the city's extensive collections. The Museum and Art Gallery also cares for over 10,000 pieces of art, many of national significance, and there is an aspiration to create spaces where these artworks can be more effectively displayed for members of the public to enjoy.

During the covid pandemic, Portsmouth Museums needed to find a way to support the community and develop a new audience through new avenues of engagement. An opportunity arose to use an empty shop window in Cascades which featured a mix of unusual objects, to capture the attention of passers-by, and those who would not normally visit museums.

A community artist was commissioned for a shop window display, 'A World of Wonder', which opened two weeks before the second lockdown (November 2020). CCTV captured 66,000 passing footfall by February 2021 and remained occupied until September 2021. A QR code as part of the display led to 202 page views, with visitors spending 65% more time on the page than other Portsmouth Museum pages. There was also an opportunity for members of the public to send in paper butterflies and moths which were added to the display and led to further invitations for the Natural History team to engage at other events. Between April and August 2021, 700 information sheets were taken away by visitors to the window.

¹⁷ [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 8th March, 2022, 1.00 pm Portsmouth City Council](#)



In addition to World of Wonder, Beaulieu Motor Museum have been making use of one of the empty units in Cascades for pop-up exhibitions over the past 2 years.

Further pop up 'mini' museums are planned; the ambition is for these to go into all our libraries (including our high street libraries) on a yearly exhibition cycle. The pop up exhibition theme for 2024 will be D Day 80, which to date is confirmed for Cosham Library to launch in January, 2024. Community engagement will take place to plan what the mini-installation includes. The service are currently looking to a local company to fund the pop-ups for the remaining libraries.

Culture and Leisure are also meeting with Historic England in autumn 2023 to discuss a report from the Historic Places Panel visit which includes consideration of high streets and Commercial Road.

Please contact **Cathy Hakes** for more information and suggested witnesses from Portsmouth Museums.

Economic Development (Regeneration)

Future High Streets

The Development Team in regeneration are leading on the delivery of the Future High Streets Programme. This includes a regeneration project currently focused around City Centre North and Central (fountain). Further information can be found here [Home - Portsmouth City Centre](#)

City Centre North will evolve into the most sustainable city district in the UK, renowned for being an inclusive, biodiverse and eco-friendly place for local communities and visitors.

A beautiful and purposefully designed open green space is at the heart of the plans for the north of the city centre. The proposed development will support the revitalisation of the whole city centre and the council's aspirations for sustainable communities, better connectivity, and greener travel.

It will knit into existing communities, provide substantial green open space for all and create new walking and cycling routes between neighbourhoods.

These improvements will complement plans already in place as part of the [South East Hampshire Rapid Transit scheme](#) ([South East Hampshire Rapid Transit \(sehrt.org.uk\)](http://sehrt.org.uk)) and the [Portsmouth transport strategy project](#) ([Portsmouth Transport Strategy 2021-2038](#)).

Our Places and Markets team are working with the Future High Streets Taskforce, on a series of recommendations and improvements to help reinvigorate the high street, particularly in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. Further information on the pop up shops and markets work can be obtained from **Rebecca Alexander**.

Work includes support to businesses through [Rediscover Portsmouth](#) and the free to access (residents and business) website where businesses (both independents and chains) can promote their work and specific offers. This website is targeted at residents but has general web access. An online option has been added to support home based businesses.

The council has also secured funding from the Future High Streets Fund, Safer Streets Fund and Safety of Women at Night Fund to make improvements to areas around Commercial Road.

These improvements aim to create new welcoming outside spaces where people can sit, relax and play, as well as take steps to tackle crime and combat violence against women and girls in public spaces.

For additional information about the Safer streets projects please contact **Caroline Hopper** from the Strategy team.

Further plans focus on the Guildhall area but following an unsuccessful Levelling Up (Round 2) Bid, these are moving forward with alternative strategies to support the development of the area.

Market Strategy

The Council's current Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy [Portsmouths economic development and regeneration strategy 2019-2026](#) will go through review in 23/24 to accommodate the impact of Covid and to recognise the development of key strategic documents including the City Vision [The Vision - Imagine Portsmouth](#) produced by residents and businesses to plan the future of the city and its aspirations.

As part of this work, a practical Markets Strategy is being produced to focus development around our market traders and street licences work and to increase accessibility for start up and small businesses to our high street areas and shopping districts as part of our wider refreshment and regeneration of these spaces.

Footfall reporting

Springboard footfall reports are in place for key shopping districts to allow a review of footfall comparison to pre covid. Reports show footfall reaching pre covid level, particularly around Commercial Road which allows a focus on dwelling and engagement.

Property Ownership

A focus for all high streets is often around ownership and occupancy with most UK high streets showing significant increases in empty shops.

For Commercial Road the city benefits from Cascades and under their new ownership in 2022, empty shop projects have grown to increase engagement around the centre (see above for creative examples) and the management have engaged with Portsmouth Creates around potential Christmas Market locations and pop up shop options to increase occupancy and ensure diverse engagement across the site. Occupancy is good in the centre, with clear strategies for addressing issues, but the

site is dominated by an empty Marks and Spencer unit, which whilst unused is still under contract with the company and therefore unavailable for rent. We would suggest that the **Cascades Centre Manager** is called as a witness.

On Commercial Road, there is no Council ownership. An attempt to purchase central sites was disturbed by a vibrant and competitive market leading the Council to withdraw to allow fresh retailers. This has resulted in the recent opening of 'Wendy's', as a premium fast food outlet opening by the Fountain which we anticipate will increase footfall to that area, together with supporting the Council's refreshment of the area as we move to anticipated demolition of key buildings (potential planning for Jubilee Place - old Debenhams building).

Ownership of other buildings in this area is not always clear. Extensive engagement during Covid to support the Covid Heroes project (vinyls celebrating essential workers) saw poor engagement from landlords when these were able to be identified. A small number of properties remain empty with no engagement but due to private ownership this remains beyond our control.

Fratton Bridge Centre has been subject to extensive work from the Development Team in regeneration, including successful traffic management road closures to trial work supported by Fratton Big Local and resident partners. Plans for redevelopment of this area can be discussed with **Oliver Willcocks**.

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Economic Development, Culture & Leisure Panel - informal meeting
Thursday 26 October 2023 at 1pm, Executive Meeting Room

Present

Councillors Russell Simpson (Chair), John Smith (Vice-Chair), Yinka Adeniran, Peter Candlish, Leo Madden, George Madgwick

James Daly - Culture, Development and Projects Officer

Claire Watkins - Business Development and Projects Manager

Jane Lamer - Head of Economic Growth and Skills

Rebecca Alexander - Places and Markets Manager

Allison Harper - Democratic Services

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

The Chair advised that, following panel discussions and discussions with Jane Lamer in Economic Development the suggestion was to refine the scrutiny topic to a review of the Economic Development & Regeneration Strategy focusing on the High Street element. The strategy contains a key objectives box which was quite vague and was compiled in 2019, pre Covid-19 since when a lot of things have fast forwarded, and a lot of retail habits have changed including on-line shopping. He suggested it would be useful to deep dive further and 'pick apart' this element.

There was a discussion about the contention that it was 'not fit for purpose' with Jane Lamer explaining why she had used this phrase. Working with the strategy unit and Councillor Pitt, the portfolio holder, it was decided to go for a refresh of the strategy in relation to the fundamental changes that have come across since the Pandemic and the now different economic climate. Some of the actions were very specific in the strategy and the plan is now to have more overarching priorities and then have a plan that is something more practical that can be adjusted without having to revisit the whole strategy. It is about making sure the strategy feels current and with longevity.

The Chair stressed that he considered the part concerning high streets was not fit for purpose not the whole strategy and that was the element that the panel could scrutinise. Shopping habits have changed so much since the implementation of the strategy.

Councillor Madden suggested using the terminology 'refresh' or 'renew'.

Councillor Candlish considered that the change in shopping habits is not so different from 2019 as the trends had been there for a long time and it was not really known by how much the Pandemic had really changed habits. High streets had been changing for a long time prior to the Pandemic and they were likely to continue changing.

The unanimous decision was taken to change the Scrutiny title to 'Since the Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy was written pre Covid-19 the Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy concerning High Streets needs

to be reviewed. The Panel suggests a review of the Economic Development & Regeneration Strategy focusing on High Street direction'.

Jane Lamer advised she would be able to bring a draft report to the November meeting providing a summary of the current position and where the service would suggest the focus is around High Streets in the updated strategy.

The Panel then discussed timescales to ensure the review was completed in time by the end of this municipal year. Timescales were tight. A decision was made to schedule an extra meeting in December to help with this.

The Panel then had a thorough discussion on suggested witnesses to be invited to include rental estate agents, market traders, retailers, cultural witnesses, licensing, retail centre managers and the High Street Taskforce. Witnesses could attend in person or provide a written submission. Direction would be given to witnesses on the evidence requested from them to ensure there was focused discussions and that witnesses were clear what the panel meant by 'the high street'.

The meeting ended at 14:15

Portsmouth economic development and regeneration strategy



Foreword from the Leader of Portsmouth City Council

I firmly believe that this new *Portsmouth Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy* for Portsmouth is an important part of our positive plan for change in the city. It will seek to maximise our competitive advantage and exploit to the full our unique strengths and assets to boost economic prosperity in the city. It will deliver inclusive growth and sustainable development. Economic growth is not an end in itself, it is rather a key factor in ensuring that all of our residents have the opportunity for a decent quality of life for themselves and for their children and their children's children. Equally regeneration is not just about the built environment but must include social change, inclusion and health improvement.

Economic Development will be delivered whilst safeguarding our excellent environment and responding to the climate change emergency.

The aim of this new *Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy 2019–36* is to

“Make Portsmouth Britain’s premier waterfront technology and innovation city – a great place to invest, learn, live, work and visit and the most attractive place for starting, growing or relocating a business.”

As we are also preparing a new *Local Plan* for Portsmouth up to 2036 it is important that we take a similarly long view of the economic development and regeneration of our city, and

put in place a long-term strategy. Many of our major projects, especially those involving new ground-breaking infrastructure, will take longer to deliver.

But I am aware that we need to make a difference from day one, so we will include immediate/short-term actions and then medium/long-term actions in the Action Plan which will follow this high-level strategy. It is also a focused strategy including only objectives and actions that will make a step change to our prosperity.

We are also clear that this is not a Portsmouth City Council strategy but a city owned and delivered one. This strategy is all about establishing a shared narrative for the city; we need to put in place the conditions for the private sector to create jobs now and in the future and for all partners and stakeholders to work in unison to make this vision and strategy a reality.

We are of course building on the success that has been delivered since 2011 by the city through the hugely influential regeneration strategy *Shaping the Future of Portsmouth* which established the Shaping Portsmouth public/private sector partnership and set in train many of the major regeneration projects which are included in the evidence base.

By listening to the concerns of our residents and businesses via extensive consultation we have made sure that this strategy is what the city collectively wants.

Executive summary

Portsmouth is one of the two cities of the vibrant Solent economy in the south east and has a population of 214,700. It has an impressive job density of 0.86, so a job for 86 of every 100 residents. Over the last year the city has seen impressive employment growth with a further 4,000 employees. The economic output is £5.7B GVA. The majority of GVA comes from aerospace and defence, marine and maritime, digital media, advanced engineering and the visitor economy. But from a much lower base creative industries have seen the fastest growth at 10% per annum since 2010.

This draft strategy is based on extensive consultation with residents and businesses including 898 public survey responses, four focus groups and extensive company one-to-one meetings. There was analysis of the economy using a city economic profile and advice from Oxford Economics who were critical friends through the production and also provided a baseline and the forecast targets and comparators to our nearest statistical neighbour cities.

Our economic analysis identified that Portsmouth has for some years been a slow growing city, compared to the UK and the south east, and to similar cities. In the baseline forecast produced by Oxford Economics for the council that pattern looks set to continue, with only 2.5% employment growth across the whole 2017–2036 period, compared with 6.1% over the period for both Brighton and Newcastle, for example.

The strategy therefore addresses the twin problems of low employment growth and slowing GVA per capita growth. Looking at competitive advantage in Portsmouth it proposes a radical approach to improve our city's performance.

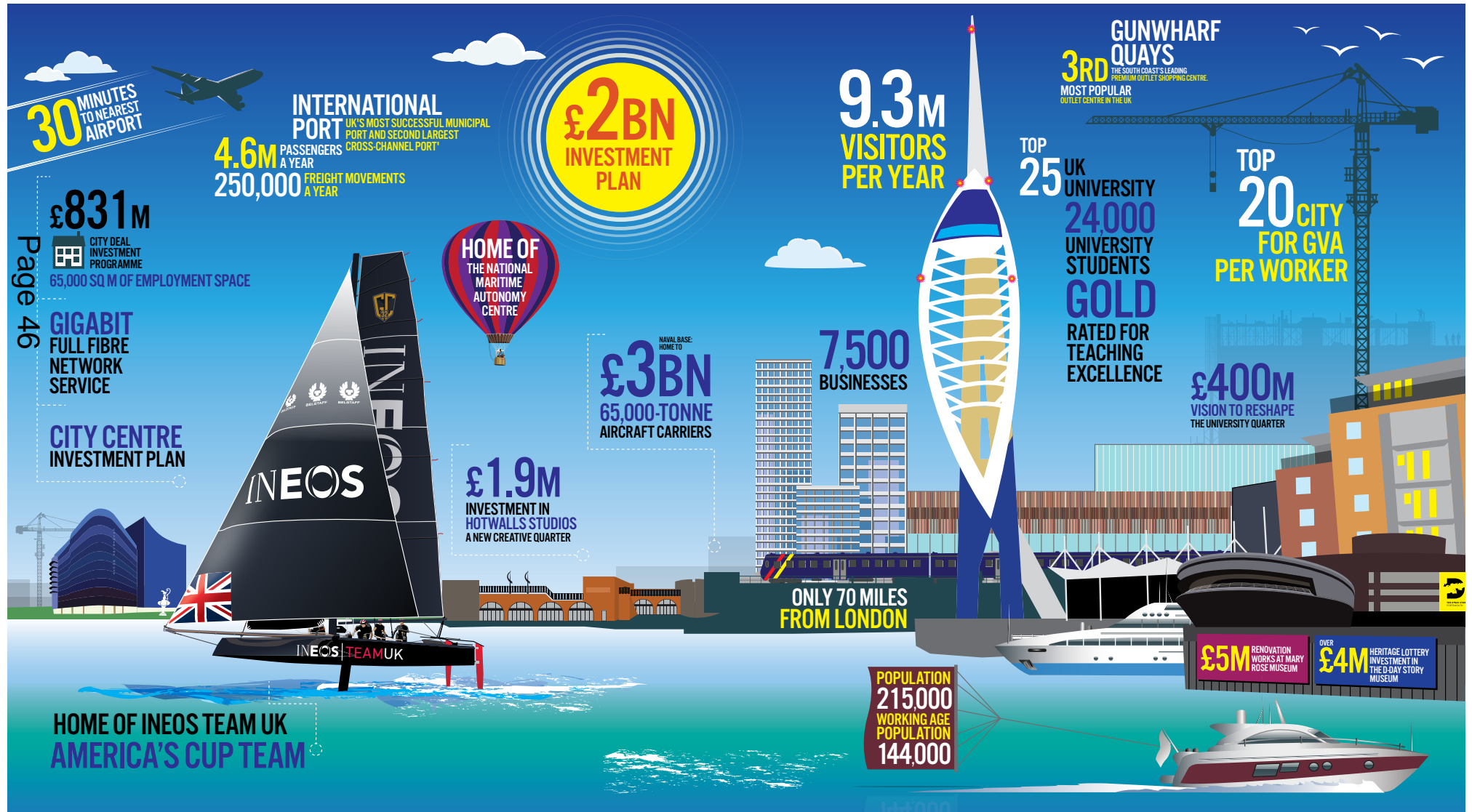
It is linked to the *UK National Industrial Strategy* and uses the same themed approach. It has been used to input to the Solent Local Industrial Strategy and will provide an evidence base for the new Portsmouth Local Plan. It links to all relevant council strategies. It runs to 2036 in line with the Local Plan timescale.

The strategy must also be seen against the background of tremendous economic transformation that has happened since the last strategy "Shaping the future of Portsmouth" in 2011. Key drivers have been considered when producing this strategy such as Brexit, globalisation, austerity, new digital technologies, environmental damage and climate change.

The overall aim is to:

"Make Portsmouth Britain's premier waterfront technology and innovation city – a great place to invest, learn, live, work and visit and the most attractive place for starting, growing or relocating a business."

Portsmouth in numbers



Draft Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy 2019-36

Through our consultation and evidence base we have identified these key challenges to address:

- Portsmouth as a city brand and image is weak, and is not seen in a positive light by many investors, businesses and visitors.
- The waterfront is a great asset but still has even greater potential.
- The huge development possibilities at Tipner and Horsea must be realised.
- The city lacks a science park or innovation quarter.
- The city must take advantage of its tremendous engineering and manufacturing strengths.
- Transport connectivity needs improvement.
- Education and skills weaknesses must be addressed.
- Poor health is contributing to high economic inactivity.

- The creative industries sector along with the visitor economy are under exploited.
- The city's housing offer is still not attractive enough.
- The decline of the city centre as a retail centre must be tackled.

SWOT analysis

The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis has been based on advice given to the council by Oxford Economics. In addition it is based on consultation responses from a survey questionnaire completed online by 895 respondents right at the start of producing the Strategy. Further input has come from 56 businesses across the city in one-to-one sessions. Focus groups were held to obtain nuanced input to the SWOT. This SWOT has been reflected in the strategy.



Strengths

- A waterfront city with a vibrant harbour, attractive seafront and major port, which lends itself to regeneration and place-making
- Advanced manufacturing and engineering, comparable in scale to anywhere in the UK
- World-class and popular heritage and cultural attractions
- Rare natural assets in the form of internationally-important bird-resting places, that can help to define Portsmouth's unique waterfront character
- Located in the Solent, and in the prosperous south east, with proximity to London
- Council and public sector land holdings, housing stock owned and managed by the council.

Weaknesses

- Perceptions – an old and congested industrial/naval town without room to grow
- The overnight/weekend visitor economy is under-developed
- An absence of other leading sectors with strong 21st century growth potential e.g. financial services
- Lack of business networks that might foster innovation and collaboration
- Weak transport links to rest of Solent and London, despite proximity
- Low qualifications of the workforce and high levels of economic inactivity due to poor health
- Perceived lack of attractive housing/ neighbourhoods and high quality environment

Opportunities

- Take advantage of the intrinsic nature of Portsmouth and really invest in the Great Waterfront City branding
- An innovation quarter or quarters, e.g. for clean growth and clean energy
- Make the city cleaner and greener
- Strengthen the overnight and weekend visitor economy
- Cultural-led regeneration
- Council active investors and use of land holding for regeneration, Tipner, Horsea, the Port and other public sector land holdings.
- Push for new transport links and improved public transport – Transforming Cities Fund
- Develop a skills strategy – specifically a qualifications-progression strategy
- Improve the city's housing offer, neighbourhoods and city centre
- Health economy in the research and education arenas.

Threats

- Portsmouth Naval Base does not get level of warship base porting and maintenance contracts and base is downgraded
- Educational attainment in both primary and secondary schools. A perception that there are very few good state schools. Absenteeism, difficulty in recruiting and retaining good teachers
- Businesses feel squeezed out by residential and university demands for space and do not feel planning policy is defending them
- Major new infrastructure is not delivered, e.g. coastal defences, city centre road, city centre north and Tipner/Horsea super peninsula

The strategy themes and objectives

1. Strengthen the Portsmouth brand

Key objective 1.1 Build the brand: the great waterfront city

2. Become a destination city for ideas and innovation

Key objective 2.1 Create a marine and maritime engineering and/or clean growth innovation quarter.

Key objective 2.2 Build on the strengths of the advanced manufacturing and engineering cluster.

Key objective 2.3 Boost innovation, research and creativity to attract entrepreneurs and support the economy.

3. Put people at the heart of regeneration

Key objective 3.1 Prioritise a qualifications-progression skills strategy for local talent.

Key objective 3.2 Address low educational and pupil attainment in Portsmouth.

Key objective 3.3 Empower residents in Portsmouth to raise the City's economic activity rate.

4. Infrastructure and place

Key objective 4.1 Push for new and improved public transport links regionally and locally.

Key objective 4.2 Delivery of major transport infrastructure in Portsmouth.

Key objective 4.3 Improve the city's housing offer.

Key objective 4.4 Upgrade local place infrastructure and enhance the city waterfront.

Key objective 4.5 Increase digital connectivity and utilities capacity.

Key objective 4.6 Embrace Portsmouth's environmental and wildlife assets and tackle climate change.

5. Create a thriving and competitive business environment

Key objective 5.1 Invest in and strengthen the visitor and creative industries sector.

Key objective 5.2 Diversify the economy into more knowledge based sectors.

Key objective 5.3 Revitalise the city centre, and high streets across the city.

Key objective 5.4 Make Portsmouth the most business-friendly city with the best support for businesses.

The strategy themes and objectives in detail

Theme 1: Strengthen the Portsmouth brand

Strategic aim

Our strategic aim is to improve the image and reputation Portsmouth has as a city, across the UK and the world.

Key objective 1.1: Build the brand: the great waterfront city

The waterfront literally shapes the city and makes Portsmouth different to nearly every other UK city. Branding is core to increasing investment from outside the city into the city but is not only about brand, but about the many

local businesses and local organisations that can promote the city's core brand message. It is recommended that a new approach to achieving buy-in from local businesses must be a key part of the new strategy under this theme.

It is fundamentally important to the delivery of much of the economic development and regeneration strategy, particularly in challenging existing perceptions of the city from investors, businesses, visitors, workers and even residents, so that Portsmouth is – rightly – proud of being Portsmouth.

Theme 2: Become a destination city for ideas and innovation

Strategic aim

Our strategic aim is to increase innovation in Portsmouth and thereby boost business growth, productivity, employment and inward investment.

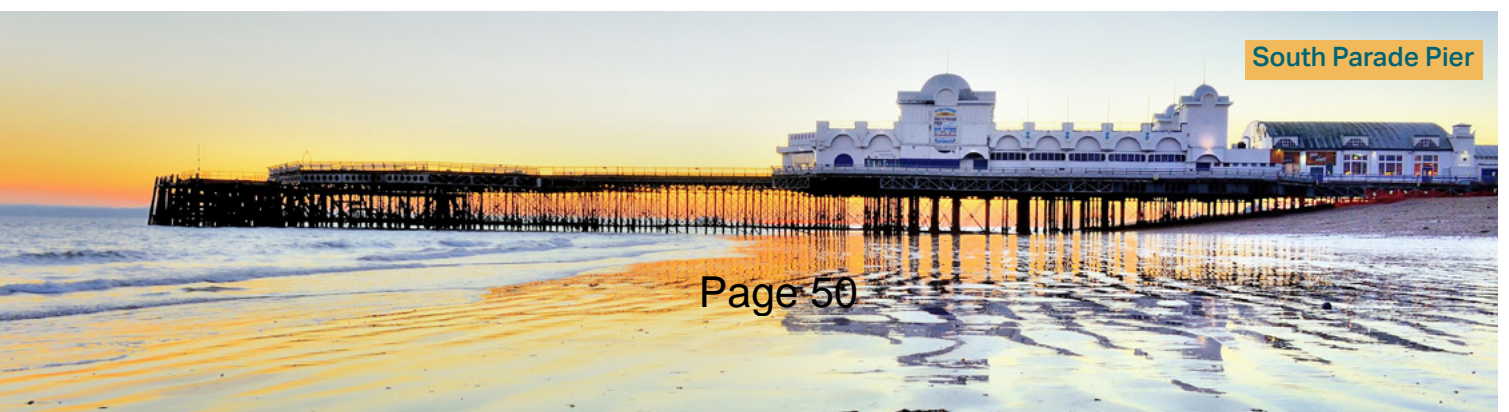
Key objective 2.1: Create a marine and maritime engineering and/or clean growth innovation quarter

As a land-constrained city there is insufficient space for a science park but plenty of opportunity for an innovation quarter or quarters, hence this is a key objective. Experience from the US points to how powerful innovation quarters can be to drive economic development. The first

suggested quarter is in marine and maritime engineering, which builds on the current buoyant cluster in the city and on local cutting edge technology e.g. autonomous systems, satellite applications, control systems integration and big-data analysis.

The second is in clean growth, which is one of the four grand challenges in the UK *Industrial Strategy*. The city is already aiming to have the first zero-emissions port in the UK.

This builds on the fact that Portsmouth is an advanced engineering city with the necessary skills for innovation to thrive. The naval base is one of the UK's premier advanced engineering establishments, comparable in employment terms with Rolls Royce in Derby or Airbus at Bristol.



Key objective 2.2: Build on the strengths of the advanced manufacturing and engineering cluster

All the statistical analysis conducted for the strategy shows how significant the advanced manufacturing and engineering cluster is in Portsmouth. If we combine concentrations in aerospace and defence, marine and maritime and manufacturing and engineering, Portsmouth is a nationally significant centre of excellence. This has already been picked up through the LEP's analysis for the new local industrial strategy.

The strategy will enable the cluster to share capacity and capabilities and retain expertise and supply chain contracts locally. The cluster will join together to boost STEM skills, enable

the financing of innovative solutions and new technologies, and attract new investment and funding to the city.

Key objective 2.3: Boost innovation, research and creativity to attract entrepreneurs and support the local economy

The strategy aims to ensure that Portsmouth gains as much government funding for research and development as possible.

This will increase patent registration and new product and process development.

There is a significant opportunity for the city around health research and innovation.

Theme 3: Put people at the heart of regeneration

Strategic aim

People are at the heart of every economic and regeneration strategy and they are Portsmouth's greatest asset. They are hard working and creative. Our aim is to address skills and education deficiencies and support those excluded from the labour market.

Key objective 3.1: Prioritise a qualification for local talent-progression skills strategy

Following a very successful employer's skills survey, the objective is to produce a comprehensive skills and employment strategy. It will include graduate retention, skills progression and soft skills and will challenge the psychology of stopping at the lowest level of achievement that an individual can get away with. It will cover skills for those furthest from

the labour market and adult and community learning alongside re-training and up-skilling for businesses.

The city has established a robust apprenticeship approach and the council has surpassed government targets for delivering internal apprenticeships since the Apprenticeship Levy was introduced in 2017. The city's strong commitment to apprenticeships is further developed through our strategic relationships with high quality delivery partners, including University of Portsmouth and specialist training providers across the city to ensure an outstanding provision to meet business needs.

Key objective 3.2: Address low educational attainment and pupil attainment in Portsmouth

Although the consultation exercise highlighted educational attainment in the city as a major

weakness for the economy, the city has over the last five years increased the proportion of schools rated “good” or “outstanding” by Ofsted from 69.2% to 90.5% (May 2019). Portsmouth schools and colleges are rising to the challenge of providing the education our children and young people will need in order to take advantage of, and contribute to, the regeneration of the city. Since 2016 the Portsmouth Education Partnership has brought together schools, multi-academy trusts, early years providers, colleges, the university, teaching schools, employers and the city council to drive an ambitious education strategy designed to match and support our aspirations for the city’s development.

Many of the STEM weaknesses highlighted at Level 3 and 4 can be traced back to weaknesses at school. Portsmouth has targets around halving the gap as regards educational attainment against the UK average. It is therefore critical that it is a key objective as in the consultation many businesses mentioned the fact that it is difficult to recruit middle managers and team leaders due to the perceived poor quality of schools.

Key objective 3.3: Empower residents in Portsmouth to raise the City’s economic activity rate

Economic inactivity is the number and percentage of 16–64 year olds who were not in

employment or unemployed according to the ILO definition. Reasons for inactivity could include looking after a family, or being a carer, retired, in ill health or a full-time student. For whatever reason, these individuals are excluded from the labour market. It is sometimes referred to as ‘hidden’ unemployment, especially for those who are economically inactive and want a job.

The number of Portsmouth residents who are classed as economically inactive was 33,800 (almost one in four residents) in the 12 months to December 2017. The strategy must address this high number of available workforce urgently, given that our working age population forecast is subdued.

Key to addressing economic inactivity is the provision of learning opportunities to re-engage individuals in learning and overcome social inclusion barriers. The city must ensure that learning opportunities reflect the developing economy, with an inter-generational provision which includes family learning opportunities for the most disadvantaged families.

The strategy will include intensive intervention work funded by DWP and other funding sources will ensure that our most vulnerable residents have the opportunity to return to work. It will also include utilising research and innovation to address poor health outcomes which cause a lot of this inactivity.

Theme 4: Infrastructure and place

Strategic aim

Infrastructure is the essential underpinning of our lives and work. The evidence provided for this strategy shows that our infrastructure is not fit for purpose. So our strategic aim is to “ensure our infrastructure supports our long-term productivity”

High quality, high performing highways and infrastructure drive economic growth, enhance productivity and facilitates inward investment.

Tangible benefits include improved journey times and a positive effect on business numbers, skills and employment. Substantial recent and continuing investment in shoreline flood defences will keep the city safe from coastal flooding for the next century. Similar investment the city’s drainage infrastructure has led to the reduction of flood risk zones from 14 in 2012 to five in 2018. Such resilience provides confidence for investors considering

long-term commitments in building and employment.

Key objective 4.1: Push for new and improved public transport links regionally and locally

Air pollution has substantial health, economic and environmental impacts in the UK and locally. Alongside many other busy cities around the UK, Portsmouth has been identified as a city that needs to reduce air pollution levels as quickly as possible.

Portsmouth is working closely with the government's Joint Air Quality Unit (JAQU) to develop a plan to ensure that levels of nitrogen dioxide in the city are reduced below legal limits in the shortest possible time. A range of measures have already been implemented to reduce emissions and make travel greener, for example the introduction of electric vehicle charging points on-street and in our car parks, and retrofitting over 100 buses to remove dangerous chemicals from exhaust fumes.

Portsmouth is also expanding sustainable alternatives to the car by introducing a new park and ride route, improving traffic flow across the city and improving walking and cycling routes.

Improving train times between the Solent cities and between Portsmouth and London is crucial if Portsmouth is to attract new companies from London and improve efficient business operation. The strategy puts sustainable transport at its heart in particular a rapid transit system as part of smart city developments.

Key objective 4.2: Delivery of major transport infrastructure in Portsmouth

Portsmouth has delivered many ground breaking pieces of transport infrastructure over the years such as the M275 and the very successful park and ride. There is now an opportunity in this strategy to address the next

series of major transport infrastructure schemes such as the new city centre road, Eastern Road capacity improvements, various junction improvements and bus priority lanes.

Portsmouth International Port is the UK's most successful council-owned port. Recognised by the Department for Transport as a major UK port, it's a critical route for European and international trade because of its connectivity to the main shipping channels and the national motorway network. The port is one of the foremost contributors to Portsmouth's profile as the country's leading marine and maritime city. As a result of long-term agreements with major customers its continued commercial success is a direct benefit for the wider Solent region. With a bold approach to investment and an ambitious vision to grow the business across cruise, ferry and terminal operations, it's an exciting time for the future of the port.

Key objective 4.3: Improve the city's housing offer

Parts of Portsmouth are highly attractive and still very affordable but overall there is still a need to improve the city's housing offer to attract highly qualified people. By increasing the variety of homes and tenure available whilst improving neighbourhoods the city can retain more graduates and retain more spend from more highly paid senior managers in the city.

The city has a proud heritage in providing council housing dating from 1912. The council remains a significant landlord with a retained housing stock of approximately 15,000 properties and 2,000 leasehold properties providing a valuable source of social rented housing to support the city's economy. The key challenge locally and nationally is to create a greater supply of housing that people can afford to address the immediate housing need whilst remaining aspirational in the delivery of a range of housing products to support the regeneration of the city.



Key objective 4.4: Upgrade local place infrastructure and enhance the city waterfront

The city has fine examples of where the infrastructure and waterfront have been improved, such as recent projects to enhance theatres, the D-Day Story, the Hot Walls area and the port. In the consultation responses it was emphasised that the city needs more A grade offices in the city centre and that city centre north needs a mix of high quality new infrastructure. The strategy also needs to address seafront defences and to tackle the climate change emergency.

There are real opportunities to redevelop high quality public service infrastructure as part of a wider regeneration of the city. By disposing of old non-fit for purpose public buildings, new housing and new employment space will be created.

Key objective 4.5: Increase digital connectivity and utilities capacity

Portsmouth is a top 10 city for the high percentage of the population having access to super- fast broadband. So although digital connectivity and utilities capacity has come up

as a high priority the city is starting from a high base. The strategy covers the delivery of the Local Full Fibre Network and linked business benefit. Portsmouth, it is planned, will become a smart city with investment in sensors and blue tooth real time traffic and parking information. Through its link with the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, the strategy will ensure all utilities constraints are removed.

Key objective 4.6: Embrace Portsmouth's environmental and wildlife assets and tackle climate change

Portsmouth in common with the Solent as a whole has a very rich environmental asset base. In fact what makes Portsmouth and the rest of the Solent unique is the ability to balance intense urbanisation and intense business activity with environmental excellence. This objective is included in the strategy as it is felt there is even more opportunity to develop Portsmouth's environmental credentials whilst at the same time gaining investment for more green infrastructure. Examples of such assets include the two harbours and Farlington Marshes. The city has declared a climate change emergency and has an urgent need to address air quality. Under this objective, all of this can be turned into a positive. The health of the population is closely linked to where we live, the jobs and education we have and our local environment.

The city is passionate to create healthy environments which enable people to lead longer, healthier lives. Measures include smoke-free public spaces, promoting healthy takeaways and the Daily Mile in schools. Plans to improve air quality in the city will substantially benefit the health of all, and have additional benefits such as increasing active travel and physical activity, and improving mental health and community cohesion.

Theme 5: Business environment

Strategic aim

Our strategic aim is to make Portsmouth the best place to start, grow and move a business to in the UK

Key objective 5.1: Invest in and strengthen the visitor and creative industries sector

Culture and leisure help to make Portsmouth a great place to live, work and visit. The leisure and visitor economy is the largest employer in Portsmouth with in excess of 10,000 jobs. Since 2010 creative industries has seen the strongest growth in employment of all sectors with 10% per year. In June 2019 Portsmouth welcomed royalty and heads of state to the city for the national commemorative event for D-Day 75, which showcased the city as leading remembrance and reflection. The D-Day Story re-opened in March 2019 after a £5m redevelopment and was shortlisted for the European Museum of the Year Award. Portsmouth also has a proud track record of hosting major events such as the Victorious Festival and the Americas Cup World Series. For a densely populated city it has a significant amount of open spaces – including the unique setting of Southsea Common – which facilitate important leisure and event opportunities.

Key objective 5.2: Diversify the economy into more knowledge based sectors

At Lakeside there is not a single major accountancy firm. Even examining legal, financial and business services, the city's location quotient is very poor. The strategy will seek to attract more companies in these high GVA producing sectors. It is these knowledge based jobs that increase productivity in a wide range of other business sectors.

Also by expanding the provisions of medical education and research, more high value jobs

will be created. It may be possible to further develop medical education in Portsmouth.

Key objective 5.3: Revitalise the city centre, and high streets across the city

The strategy will drive the transformation of the city centre and all high streets such as those in Southsea, Fratton, North End and Cosham. It will make the digital high street a reality. It will embrace bold architecture. Our city centre and high streets will be re-purposed with more high quality city living, leisure, restaurants, hotels and co-working spaces.

Key objective 5.4: Make Portsmouth the most business friendly city with the best support for businesses

The city already has a great reputation as being a can-do city with a pro-economic growth and pro-business approach. The challenge is now for the city to be best in class. The strategy under this objective will seek to make the council even more business friendly, enhance business networking to increase open innovation and increase social value and the economic leverage from public sector procurement in the city.

The city has been particularly successful as regards the number of grassroots community social enterprises that have been started here as small businesses, and which have now become vital service providers; hence the development of the Hive. There is a strong national evidence base on the role and importance of social enterprise, especially in its direct response to the retreat of public services, particularly in health and social care. Social enterprise is worth £60bn a year to the national economy and represents a key opportunity for the city in the future.

Strategy targets

The strategy will help us deliver an economic step change.

Workplace employment

7,000 more jobs in 2036 than in 2017, instead of the 3,000 in the Oxford Economics baseline forecast which is likely to occur with unchanged policies.

Resident employment

An extra 7,000 Portsmouth residents in work. That would be a 7% increase over the 2017 level, which is the same rate of an increase as for Solent as a whole. And it compares with a rise of only 4% or 4,000 in the baseline forecast.

Productivity

£60,000 per person. The higher workplace employment should be associated with improved productivity. If productivity in Portsmouth rises by one third, then that will close half the gap between the Oxford Economics baseline forecast for the city in 2036 and their forecast for Solent in the same year. Portsmouth's productivity would then be £60,000 per person

(at today's prices) compared with £45,000 in 2017, £57,000 in the baseline forecast and the Solent average of £62,000.

Higher wages

If we assume that half the productivity gains feed through to wages, then in 2036 average earnings paid by Portsmouth employers will be £1,000 a week, compared with just over £900 in the baseline and just over £500 today – though inflation will account for at least some of that.

Skills targets

5% no qualifications and 40% educated to at least NVQ Level 4. This would mean reducing from 7.5% to 5% the proportion of the population of working age who have no qualifications, and raising from just under 35% to 40% the proportion who are educated to at least NVQ level 4.

All of this should be consistent with GDP rising by 45% in real terms over the period to 2036 instead of the 30% in our baseline forecast. That is a major step-up in performance.

Strategy targets

1. Workplace employment
7,000 more jobs in Portsmouth in 2036 than in 2017
2. Resident employment
An extra 7,000 Portsmouth residents in work by 2036
3. Productivity
£60,000 of GVA per person by 2036 compared to £45,000 in 2017

4. Higher Wages
£1,000 a week average earning by employees in Portsmouth by 2036 compared to £500 today
5. Skills target
5% with no qualifications in 2036, compared to 7.5% today
6. Skills target
40% educated to at least NVQ Level 4 by 2036 compared to 35% today



Governance, monitoring and reporting

The next stage will be to produce the action plan with measurable outcomes and targets, and ensure they are signed up to by individual partners who are taking the lead on individual actions.

As the strategy has six main targets these will be constantly monitored with annual review and consideration of how Portsmouth is progressing along the road to achieving these by 2036. The monitoring will be done independently against the targets and as regards the delivery of the action plan.

Then every three years there will be a major review of performance with a report taken to the Cabinet and to Shaping Leaders Board and discussions with a range of businesses on a one-to-one basis as when the strategy was drawn up in 2019. The first major review will be in 2022.



You can get this information in large print, Braille, audio or in another language by calling 023 9268 8857

Information on Busking

Nickii Humphreys, Licensing Manager

- **How much money is generated from busking licences per annum?**

There is no income associated with these permits as they are processed and issued free of charge with no expiry date.

- **How much money is generated per area - North End / Southsea / Commercial Rd (every main area we currently have a busking licence)?**

Not applicable as per comment above

- **Could we scrap busking fees for a year to encourage people to busk?**

See comments above.

- **How can we make it easier for people to busk?**

The process for applying for a permit is fairly simple (see link to the licensing webpage for street entertainment - [Street entertainment authorisations - Portsmouth City Council](#))

Applicants can apply electronically for the permit and following issue of the permit, they only need to telephone/email to make a booking for a pitch.

The conditions attached to such permits are available [here](#)

- **Do we have a map of busking sites?**

We do have maps which are available for buskers:

Appendix A - Arundel Street

Appendix B - Commercial Road

Appendix C - High Street, Cosham

Appendix D - London Road, North End

Appendix E - Palmerston Road

- **What was the income from busking when chargeable?**

From recollection and checking on our database, the fee was removed sometime around 2010/11 but unfortunately, I do not have those records anymore due to "cleaning up" our records when we moved over to SharePoint.

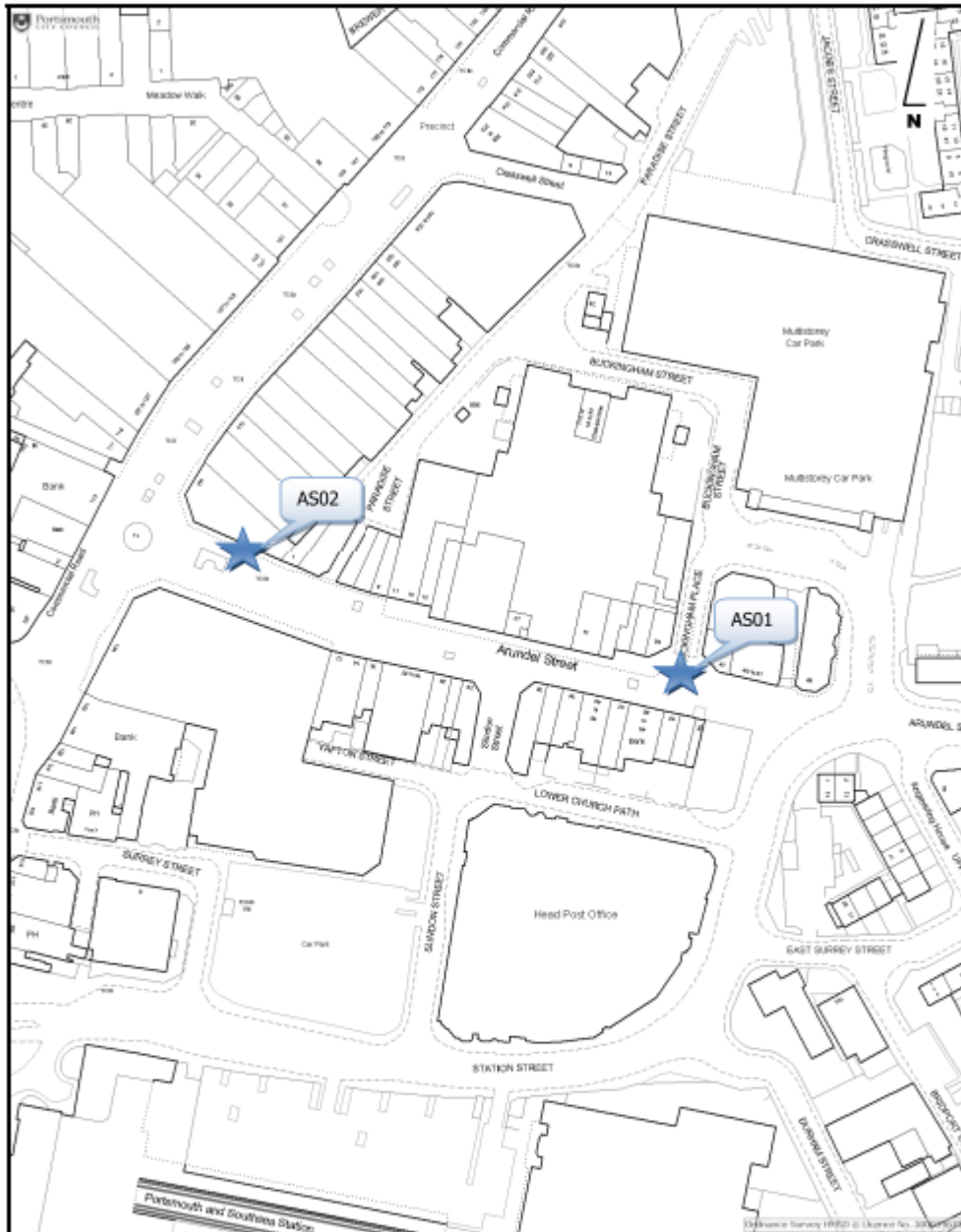
To look at each individual busking site for numbers to establish use would mean checking our booking diary for each individual entry but I can say that Commercial Road and Palmerston Road are the most requested locations. There is very little, if any, interest in the North End site but we have seen in the past use of the Cosham area.

The fee back then for an annual permit was £20 and in 2010 we had a total of 39 buskers registered in that year, so we are looking at income of under £1,000.

As there is no expiry date for these types of permits, our records show we have issued, to date, a total of 505 permits but this is obviously not a reflection of how many buskers are

currently using their permits in Portsmouth. I would look to the records in 2010 for a more accurate number of "active" buskers at any one time.

Appendix A - Arundel Street

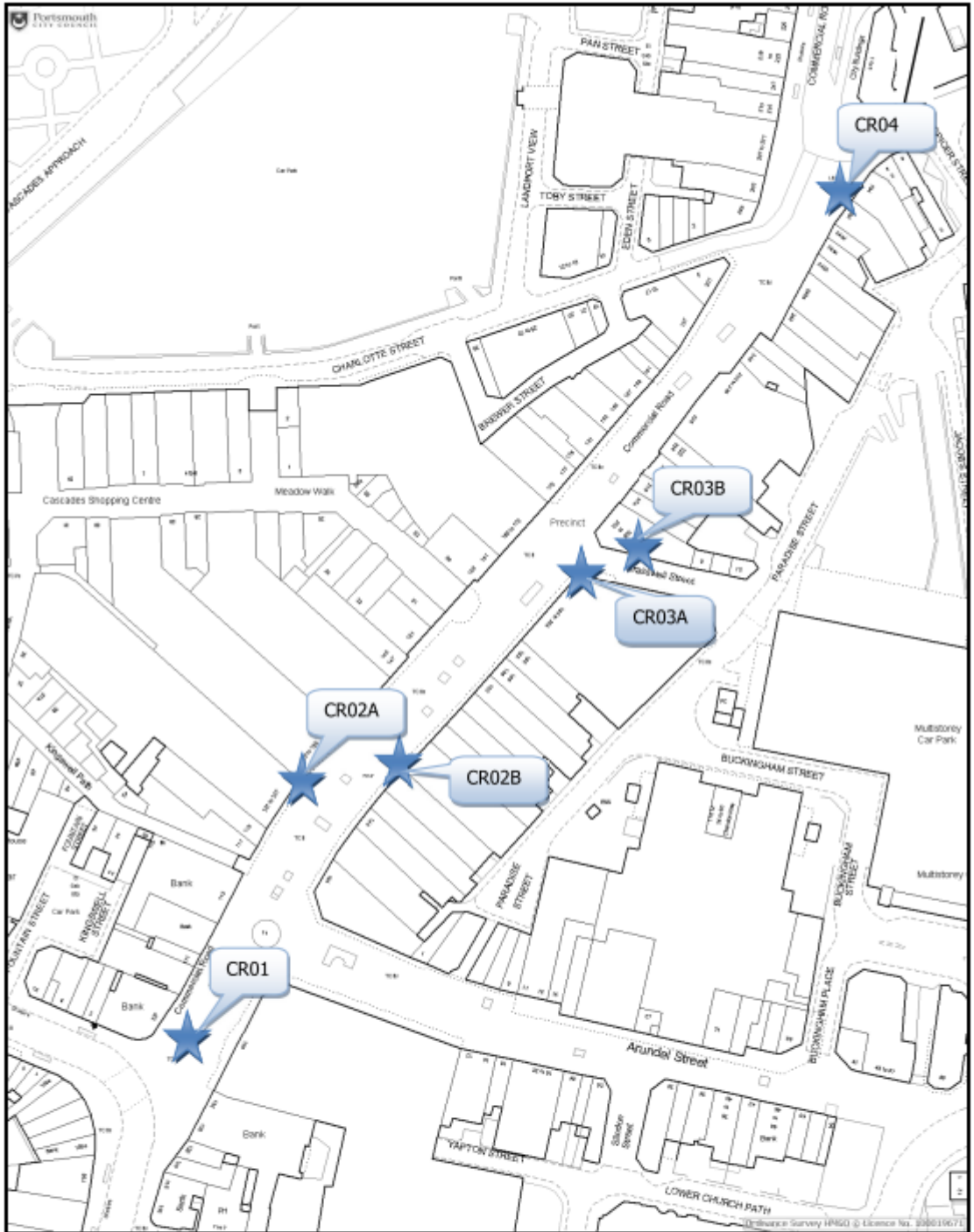


Title: **Street Entertainment Sites - Arundel Street**

Additionally if exhibition areas are free, these can be booked with Town Centre Management on 023 9284 1068

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Appendix B - Commercial Road



Title: **Street Entertainment Sites - Commercial Road**

Note: Where sites are marked as A or B - Only one of those sites will be able to be booked for use at any one time
CR04 site will only be available on non-market days.

Additionally if exhibition areas are free, these can be booked with Town Centre Management on 023 9284 1068

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Appendix C - High Street, Cosham



Title: **Street Entertainment Sites - Cosham High Street**



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Appendix D - London Road, North End

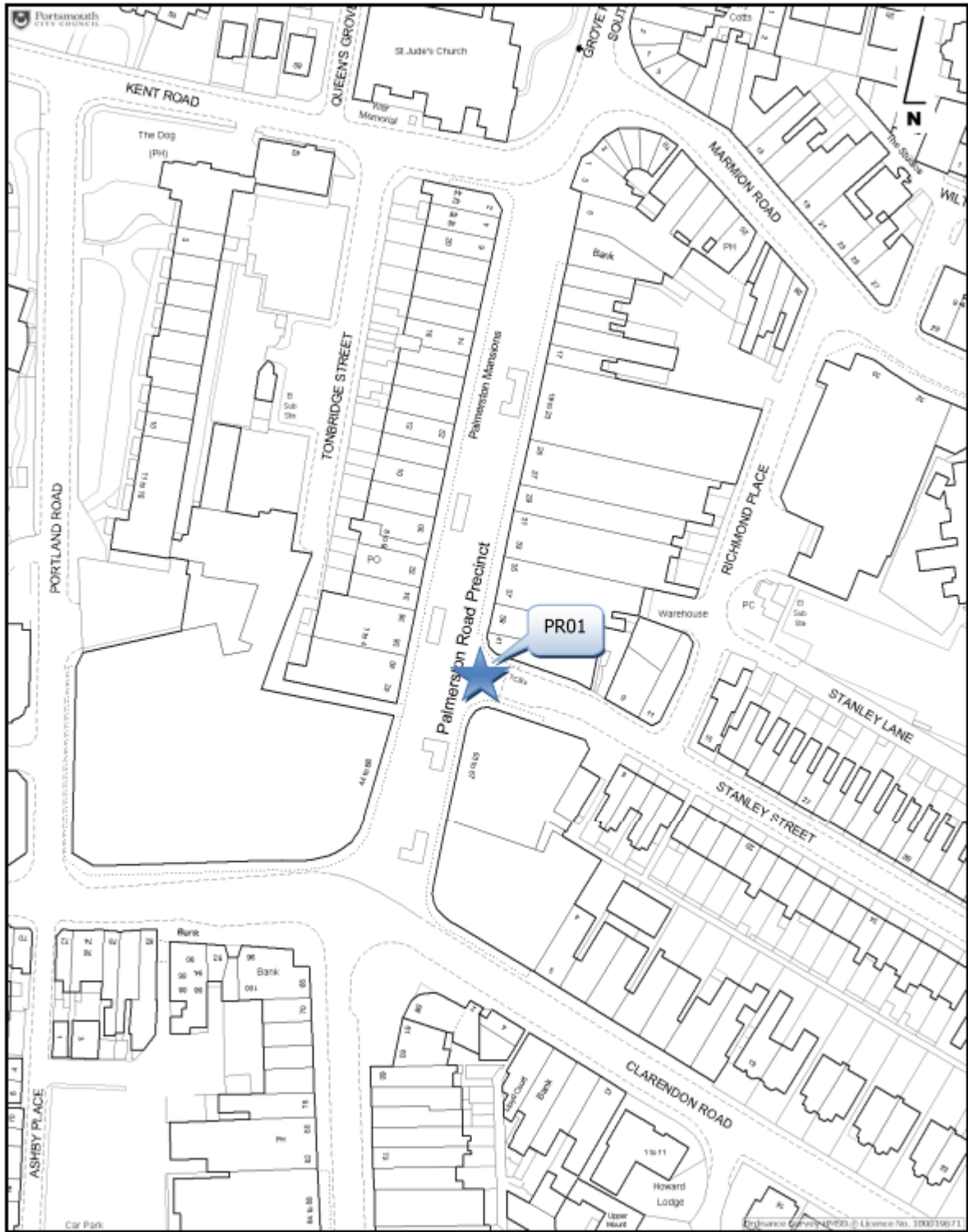


Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

Title: **Street Entertainment Sites - London Road, North End**

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Appendix E - Palmerston Road



Title: **Street Entertainment Sites - Palmerston Road**



Portsmouth City Council

Internal Report

Subject	Culture Leisure & Economic Development (CLED) Scrutiny Panel - Looking at the Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy, what recommendations can be made to further support the high street in its refresh in 2024.
Date	16 th Nov 23
Authors	Rebecca Alexander - Place & Markets Manager Jane Lamer - Head of Economic and Skills Claire Watkins - Business Manager (Culture)

Purpose

The CLED Scrutiny panel set the challenge of:

“Review the focus on High Streets within the current Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy and how can we recommend actions which better supports the reinvigoration of the High Street, recognising retailing and the need for a mixed-use approach to better support this vital industry”

The CLED Scrutiny panel seeks to review the current Strategy, and supporting work, and make recommendations for focus under the planned review.

Summary

Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy

The Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy was produced and consulted on in 2018/19 and implemented. In the light of significant economic constraints and positioning escalation due to Covid and the subsequent cost of living crisis which have added different challenges which drive Portsmouth’s economy.

The planned review of the strategy is designed to ensure that key themes and data remain in use, but that the strategy is refreshed to reflect the significant changes in economic challenges and links the work more strategically to other key work (for example the Social Value Policy, Imagine Portsmouth etc) to ensure it works with other policy drivers and is more simplified in its delivery plan to show clear measurable targets.

The Strategy Unit will lead this work to provide a cohesive thread.

[Portsmouths economic development and regeneration strategy 2019-2026](#)

Despite retailing representing the 2nd biggest employment sector in the city (source NOMIS 2022 data *), it has limited representation in the current strategy. In the refresh officers are seeking to rebalance and provide a more focused update on retailing.

Key objective 5.3 Revitalise the city centre, and high streets across the city

The strategy will drive the transformation of the city centre and all high streets such as those in Southsea, Fratton, North End and Cosham. It will make the digital high street a reality. It will embrace bold architecture. Our city centre and high streets will be re-purposed with more high-quality city living, leisure, restaurants, hotels, and co-working spaces.

The current action plan shows 3 key targets related to high streets

- Obtain maximum funding from the Future High Streets Fund (City Centre and Fratton bids)
- Deliver the new Portsmouth Markets strategy
- Specific action plans for each retail area of the city

Future High Streets

Secured in December 2020 and evidenced in the City Centre Regeneration work (including procurement of City Buildings on Commercial Road – moving to live meanwhile use for Enterprise Centres opening shortly) and Fratton Bridge Centre procurement

Portsmouth Markets Strategy

Approved at CLED 17th Nov 23 to provide a detailed action plan of activities and links to other economic development work including Pop Up Shops and business support measures

Specific Action Plans

Local Plan reflects the aspirations for different retailing space across the city (including shopping districts). Planning legislation to cat E precludes more direction within local plan work. No additional funding has been identified to support targeted interventions

Current information sources

The proposed refresh of the Regeneration and Economic Development Strategy in 2024 will relook and expand on this focus to provide clear tracking of progress against Shopping Centres and districts within the current budget.

In the original paper to Scrutiny Panel, extensive background research supporting the current work of the teams was provided (Economic Development and Culture) but the focus for 2023/24 Scrutiny highlights:

LGA (Local Government Association) report

Local Government Association general report reflecting on national trends.

[Creating resilient and revitalised high streets in the 'new normal' | Local Government Association](#)

Summary of FHS (Future High Streets) report

Specific to Portsmouth as part of the Future High Street Taskforce. This includes recognising key challenges around:

Collaborative working identified as the main barrier to transformation in Portsmouth

Better use of data to formulate strategies and action plans

Rebranding/reformulating communication internally/externally

Capacity build through effective relationships to deliver change

Facilitate a team approach to transformation with PCC (Portsmouth City Council), business and the community working together to create and achieve the vision

This work continues under both Property (development) and High Street Taskforce (Economic Development) with cross department working

Future High Streets (City Centre)

Future High Streets City Centre funding was secured in December 2020 and is subject to DLUHC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) monitoring. The purpose of the project has developed, following the council's inability to purchase the original commercial property on the high street following a vibrant private market and our commitment to not compete with business.

Future High Streets City Centre funded the purchase, and meanwhile refurbishment of the City Buildings project. Part of the wider regeneration in the north of Commercial Road, the building is moving into meanwhile use as an enterprise centre and has already secured 2 tenants ahead of its opening December 2023/January 2024. It is anticipated that the site will run for around 5 years ahead of the demolition and development work.

Most recent updates are focused on the delivery of public realm improvements to the north end of Commercial Road. Activities are funded by Future High Streets. Further information can be found in public realm development.

City Centre North regeneration has planning for phase 1 submitted and this will go to committee in October 23. Further information can be found at www.portsmouthcitycentre.co.uk

High Street Taskforce – Unlocking your Place Potential (UYPP)

PCC have a Mentor assigned (Neil Wild) and work done to SWOT assess the city centre and current approaches. Some traction lost due to a temporary withdrawal of our mention due to personal circumstances, work picking up again with a follow up session on 12th October 2023 and further sessions booked in. The funding for Future High Streets and the High Streets task force come from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities DLUHC

Further information can be found in High Street Taskforce report 'Unlocking Your Place Potential' UYPP

Safer streets

Economic Development focus in high streets connects with the Safer Streets Bid team, now on its 5th round of funding. Safer Streets projects focus on interventions to address violence against women and girls in public spaces and sit alongside interventions from the Police and Community safety in a 'task force' approach to high streets addressing anti-social behaviour and criminal activity. Safer Street funding unlocks projects with a focus on designing out crime, creation of 'safe spaces' and training for staff in licenced venues to recognise vulnerable individuals and offer support. Exploration of business needs uncovers that alongside business support, there is a need for support from community wardens and the police to manage high streets with a 'place' perspective, rather than a focus on one area of support.

BID (Business Improvement District)

Exploration underway. At the very least will unlock key stakeholders and facilitate better relationships to enable visioning and better partnership approaches.

Encourage buy in and a pro-active approach from businesses.

Decision on 'where' and potential (noting this must be business led)

Share learning across high streets/places in Portsmouth

Encourage traders/business associations formation to enable pro-active engagement with PCC and regular communication flow.

Rediscover website use to boost online support for high streets.

Evolutionary CRM (Customer Relationship Management) use to share information and enable better CRM.

Market strategy

The market strategy has CLED approval and support as of 17 November 2023.

The strategy sets out a 5-year action plan for markets, placing them at the heart of 'ground up' regeneration, supporting bricks and mortar businesses across the high streets. The Place & Markets team is undergoing a restructure to allow a more flexible and business friendly model working closely with SME (Small and Medium Enterprise) development advisor to support business growth across the city with a focus on high streets. The restructure has the same delivery costs but will position the service for growth and innovation after significant downturn seen over the last 5 years (exasperated by Covid) and is designed to support new business startup work. This work includes specific actions around Pop Up Retail outlets (under negotiation for Cascades) and Small Business Saturday event work in the market areas.

Market Strategy Recommendations

'Task force' and place-based, strategic approaches to the high street (not limited to the city centre) engaging with both internal and external partners e.g. Economic Development and Culture) to effectively formulate approaches and maximise potential schemes through shared resources and planning.

Map key stakeholders - internal/external.

Better use and sharing of data and evidence to inform action planning/strategies.

Set out vision, strategy, and action plan for high streets to encourage 'buy in' from internal and external partners.

develop internal/ external comms plans.

Internal/external partners fully engaged with high street vision, strategy, and action plan.

Exploration of BID/s subject to business interest

City Centre Projects and Programmes Review group

Led by Assistant Director for Regeneration (Property) and held monthly, this brings together the diverse project managers delivering across the City Centre to support better communication between projects. This is attended by the Place and Markets Manager. Governance and information sharing being worked up by Anna Limburn to

Attendance includes:

PMO

Strategic PM City Centre

PM for Future High Streets

Strategy Unit

Enterprise Centres

Transport

Traffic and network

Data sources

*[Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk)

Appendix 1

Invitation list for open committee meetings (ED (Economic Development)) has been issued with all participants are being asked to prepare a simple form ahead of attendance covering

- Name and business details
- Key concerns for the High Street
- What is working well in our high streets
- What can PCC do to support this further

29th November 2023 attendees

Andrew Philip – Cascades centre manager (potential BID)

Julie Carolan – H&M (potential BID)

Al Lye - Primark Manager

Nickii Humphries – Licencing Manager (PCC)

Tim Keeping – Port Solent Management

14th December attendees

Flude - Alice Masterman and Sebastian Martin

Phil Salmon and Les Pink - Planning Consultants - Jubilee Place (Debenhams site)

Lauren Taylor – Head of Community Safety (PCC)

Additional invites awaiting confirmation of attendance / written submissions for first two session include:

Peter Tisdale, THAT Group, Knight & Lee building developer

Gemma Nichols – CEO Portsmouth Creates

City centre/Cosham market traders

Tim Clark, Vail Williams property management

Sebastian Martin, Alice Masterman, Flude property management

Neil Wild, High Street Task Force mentor

Next Store Management

Proposed witnesses to call to CLED (Culture Leisure and Economic Development) Scrutiny Panel from Culture and Leisure (attendance in Jan/Feb meetings)

Cathy Hakes, Head of Museums (PCC)
Dave Percival, Head of Libraries & Archives (PCC)
Angela Gonzalez, Library Supervisor, Southsea Library (PCC)
Christine Taylor, Natural History Curator (PCC)
Grace Scott, Engagement Officer (PCC)
Katherine Webber, Museum, Heritage and Education Professional (external)
Ross Fairbrother, Manager, D Day Story (PCC)
Catherine Ramsay, Business Manager, HIVE (PCC)
Laura Weston, Education & Learning Officer, Conan Doyle (PCC)

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Economic Development Culture and Leisure Scrutiny Panel

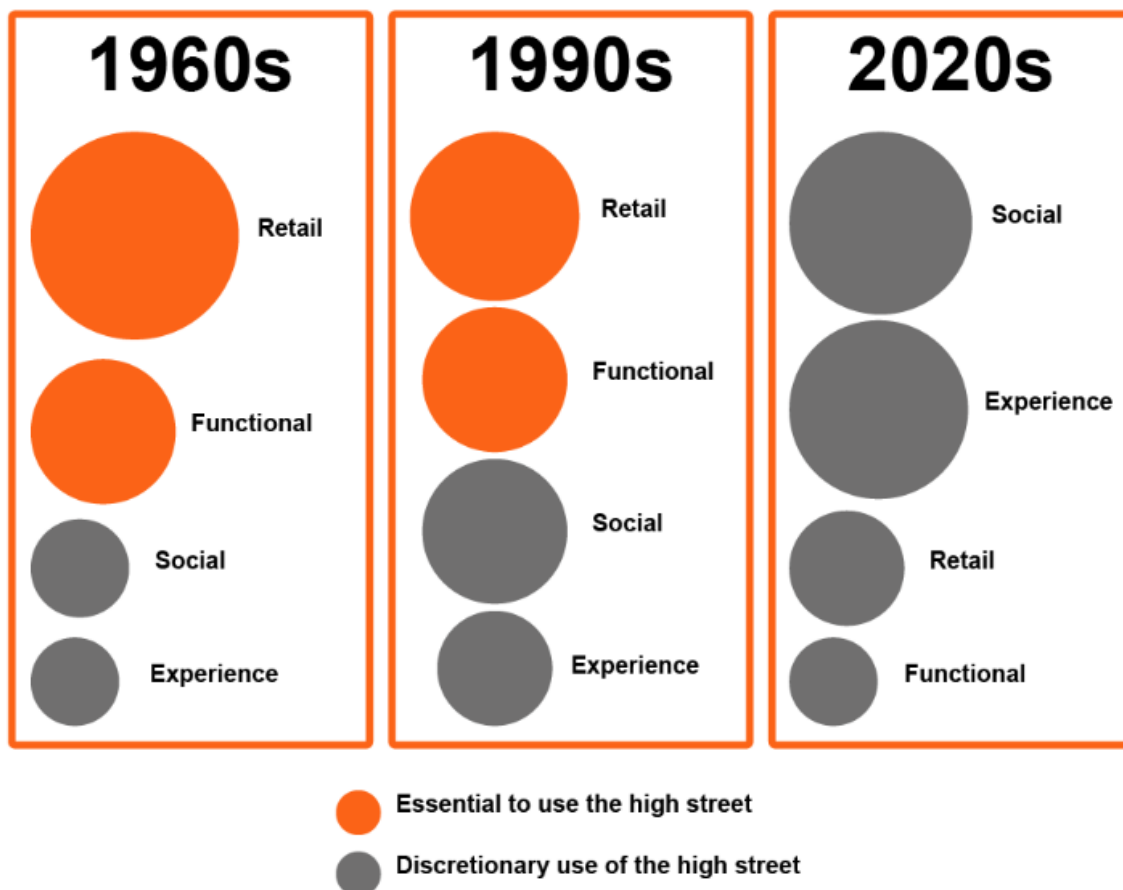
November 2023

Briefing paper from Culture & Leisure services

"Since the Economic Development & Regeneration strategy 2019-36 was written pre covid 19, the Economic Development & Regeneration strategy concerning high streets needs to be reviewed. The panel suggests a review of the Economic Development & Regeneration strategy focusing on high street direction."

The Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy was approved by Full Council on 15 October 2019.¹ It is well established that since that time, the Covid pandemic has caused considerable economic distress to the high street, with many store closures and significant changing patterns of behaviour in relation to high street demand. The development of the high street offer therefore needs to change to reflect these changing behaviours and priorities.²

Research by the Local Government Association 'Creating resilient and revitalised high streets in the 'new normal'', published in January 2022, identifies the main usages of the high streets in the 2020s:



¹ [Economic development and regeneration strategy - Portsmouth City Council](#)

² [Creating resilient and revitalised high streets in the 'new normal' | Local Government Association](#)

In this model, 'functional' uses of the high street refer to activities such as banking, postal and medical services (e.g. pharmacies). The model clearly demonstrates that the future of the high streets in the UK is focussed on social and experiential uses. Culture has a key role to play in this arena as will be demonstrated by this briefing paper.

As instructed by the Scrutiny Panel Members at the meeting on 26 October 2023, the type of high streets that this paper is concerned with are any high streets within the Portsmouth city boundary, excluding commercial outlet centres (e.g. Gunwharf) and also excluding local small parades. The model proposed in this paper could therefore be applied to:

- Commercial Road, Portsmouth city centre
- London Road, North End
- Fratton Road, Fratton
- Tangier Road, Baffins
- High Street, Cosham
- Albert Road, Palmerston Road, Elm Grove, Southsea.

Culture is a key driver to support the growing social and experiential uses of the high street. Moreover, culture, based on a sense of place and ownership, builds civic pride in a local area and cultural activities require in-person settings, which drive secondary spending³. As such, culture helps to build the social fabric of the community, thus having the potential to combat issues such as anti-social behaviour and vandalism.⁴

This briefing paper will consider the potential offer to the high streets from Libraries Service, Museums Service and HIVE Portsmouth. It will then consider a potential pop-up collaborative project model which could comprise all three services.

Libraries and Archives Service

The service has a total of nine library centres, with three of these in key high street locations:

Southsea Library sits in the pedestrian precinct corridor between Palmerston and Marmion Roads. It supports the retailers in the area by opening seven days a week - within six months of the library opening, footfall in the area increased by 5%. Activities at this library include Scrabble Club, Slow Sew and Create and Chatter Craft and the library has an active Friends Group.

Cosham Library is located adjacent to Cosham High Street. The library is open six days a week and in July 2021 re-opened following a major refurbishment, including new IT suite.

North End Library is sited at Gladys Avenue, at the main roundabout in the commercial thoroughfare. This is the most successful library in the north of the city, in terms of numbers of children participating in and completing the Summer Reading Challenge. It is open six days a week and is a key community resource in the area.

It is worth noting that the Mobile Library has a timetable of stops prioritising in the north of the city, including two supermarket car parks. Following Arts Council England funding, the Library Service also have two tuk-tuks to add to this provision to bring library provision and community engagement activity to the north and south of the city.

³ [A High Street Renaissance | Arts Council England](#)

⁴ [Arts activities may improve self-control and reduce antisocial behaviour among teenagers | UCL News - UCL – University College London](#)

Currently the Library Service offers mini book collections in the foyers of the library and these are often also promoted on its social media pages. For example, Cosham Library currently has a 'Cuffing Season' display to appeal to young adult audiences. Other mini library collections have included Black History month and Pride, together with local history collections.

Mini library pop ups can also centre around wellbeing, via the Reading Well Books on Prescription scheme, which is delivered by the Reading Agency in partnership with Libraries Connected and Arts Council England. This promotes health and wellbeing and can be used to develop social reading activity and communities based around shared reading.⁵



There is also opportunity to develop pop-ups in relation to the **Archive Service**. The service has recently recruited an Outreach Officer for the Portsmouth History Centre, this will enable archives to be taken out into the community. In addition, one of the Arts Council England funded Doyle Detectives undertook some research into the Conan Doyle collection regarding racing cars earlier this year and developed his own mini exhibition, which was on display at the Portsmouth History Centre until the end of October 2023.

Museums Service

Temporary museum exhibitions have a key role to play to generate audience and publicity for the museum service itself. The Museums Association paper, *Empowering Collections 2030*⁶, makes several recommendations that can be applied to temporary 'pop-up' exhibitions:

⁵ [Reading Well | Reading Agency](#)

⁶ [Empowering Collections - Museums Association](#)

- A proactive approach to democratisation of collections, i.e. 'getting them out there'
- Support partnerships and knowledge sharing
- Collecting in partnership with communities
- Use collections/ projects to create social impact
- Improve transparency and accessibility of collections - including online

Museum pop up exhibitions reflect the move away from traditional exhibitions towards creating social, recreational and participatory experiences; the direction in which the high street is moving.⁷

The Museums Strategy, adopted by the Council in March 2022⁸ identifies a new story for Portsmouth Museums, one that identifies '*Portsmouthness*': the qualities, characteristics and distinctiveness of the city. This will engage residents in the history of Portsmouth as *their* history and provide an opportunity for co-production, working with communities, going forward. The Portsmouth Museum and Art Gallery cares for over 10,000 pieces of art, many of national significance and there is an aspiration to create spaces where these artworks can be effectively displayed and engaged with.

Cascades: World of Wonder pop-up

During the covid pandemic, Portsmouth Museums needed to find a way to support the community and develop a new audience through new avenues of engagement. An opportunity arose to use an empty shop window in Cascades which featured a mix of unusual objects, to capture the attention of passers-by, and those who would not normally visit museums.

A community artist was commissioned for a shop window display, 'A World of Wonder', which opened two weeks before the second lockdown (November 2020). CCTV captured 66,000 passing footfall by February 2021 and remained occupied until September 2021. A QR code as part of the display led to 202 page views, with visitors spending 65% more time on the page than other Portsmouth Museum pages. There was also an opportunity for members of the public to send in paper butterflies and moths which were added to the display and led to further invitations for the Natural History team to engage at other events. Between April and August 2021, 700 information sheets were taken away by visitors to the window.



In addition to World of Wonder, Beaulieu Motor Museum have been making use of one of the empty units in Cascades for pop-up exhibitions over the past 2 years.

⁷ Museum Management and Curatorship, *New Ways of Experiencing Culture: The Role of Museums and Marketing Implications* (Neil Kotler, 2001).

⁸ [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 8th March, 2022, 1.00 pm Portsmouth City Council](#)

Further pop-up 'mini' museums are planned; the ambition is for these to go into all our libraries (including our high street libraries) on a yearly exhibition cycle. The pop-up exhibition theme for 2024 will be D Day 80, which to date is confirmed for Cosham Library to launch in January, 2024. Community engagement will take place to plan what the mini-installation includes. The service are currently looking for sponsorship to fund the pop-ups for the remaining libraries.

Pop-up spaces involving the Libraries and Museum Services could also include representation from our Parks Countryside Team. One of our Countryside Officers has been working collaboratively with both Libraries and Museums Service over the past year. The officer has, under a gazebo, held mini pop-up family friendly events at natural history events (jointly with Cumberland House) and also had a stall at the Summer Reading Challenge winners event at Southsea Castle, with child friendly activities to promote pollination, including making seed bombs.

The HIVE Portsmouth

The HIVE works in partnership across the city with voluntary, private and public sector groups to connect local people, groups and organisations to nurture individuals and communities to build a healthier and happier city.⁹ The HIVE is not a statutory service and its primary location is situated in Central Library, a warm and safe community space in the city centre.

Subject to resourcing, HIVE Portsmouth could have small pop-up venues in other libraries across the city, where these sit in high street locations. Such pop-up desks could be around themes such as health and wellbeing, volunteering opportunities or digital inclusion. There would also be the potential to recruit volunteers via the HIVE Volunteer Bureau, to manage such pop-up spaces.

Current high street or community locations where HIVE has supported include:

- Baffins Pantry, Tangier Road
- Portsea Pantry, John Pounds Centre
- Paulsgrove Food Pantry, Paulsgrove Community Centre

With the Council's purchase of the Fratton Bridge Centre, there is opportunity to have HIVE support on Fratton Road.

Examples of Cultural Services pop ups in the UK

The following include some examples of successful pop-up models from across the UK.

Exeter: Libraries Unlimited reutilised a former GAP retail unit into an art studio workshop hosted by a local professional artist/creative. Shoppers were invited in to partake in workshops, view exhibitions and had opportunity to browse a mini library and find out about library activities.¹⁰

Leicester: the Museums service have pop-up stalls at community events across the city. This enables promotion of the museums and forthcoming exhibitions. This can include objects to handle and family friendly activities. This has included a pop-up in the local shopping centre.¹¹

Aberdeenshire Council: mini pop-up museum displays are available in several libraries to share museum collections with the community.¹²

⁹ [Portsmouth City Councils strategic relationship with The HIVE Portsmouth.pdf](#)

¹⁰ [Pop up library on Exeter high street - Libraries Unlimited](#)

¹¹ [Pop-Up Museums – Leicester Museums](#)

¹² [Pop-up Museums - Live, Life Aberdeenshire \(lifelifeaberdeenshire.org.uk\)](#)

Museum of Homelessness 'Secret Museum' (London) was available for 11 days only. Stories and objects were hidden in central London locations, with clues for participants to find the museum. The museum included both outdoor and indoor locations.¹³

The Mary Rose Museum operated as a pop-up museum at festivals and events, taking artefacts, replicas, activities and a small shop around the UK, whilst the museum was undergoing renovation.¹⁴



Youth Engagement model, D Day Story - opportunity for High Street pop-up

In the past year the Museums Service have worked with local creatives / professional artists and the Council's Youth and Community Service to engage young people in a project opportunity.¹⁵ The Youth Clubs involved included Portsea, Buckland, Brook (Somerstown) and Hillside (Paulsgrove). Outcomes of the project included:

- Increased confidence
- Development of life skills / CV development
- Positive mental health and wellbeing
- Challenging perceptions of access and ownership to the city's heritage

'It [the project] is a great achievement and definitely something they [young people] can mention on a CV to show commitment and dedication' - Youth Centre Manager.

Consideration of this project indicates the potential to incorporate a youth engagement strand into a possible future High Street pop-up model. The model would be a joint venture between Culture Services and Youth Services, with a community pop-up venue as the outcome.



¹³ [Secret Museum — Museum of Homelessness](#)

¹⁴ [The Mary Rose Museum: Touring the UK with a pop-up museum \(museumsandheritage.com\)](#)

¹⁵ [Agenda for Cabinet Member - The Leader \(Culture, Leisure and Economic Development Portfolio\) on Friday, 17th November, 2023, 10.00 am Portsmouth City Council](#)

Opportunities for young people regarding the cultural pop-up could include the following:

- Co-production / co-curation - this could involve artefacts, replicas or art work based on a particular museum collection.
- Design and graphic art
- Mini- events / exhibitions held at the pop-up
- Social media promotion.

The pop-up space could include the following activity areas:



The pop-up programme, once established via an initial pilot, could engage youth centres across the city and 'pop-up' in different high street areas, depending where Council owned property was available (or a smaller version could 'pop-up' using a gazebo/market stall style). The Council's purchase of the Bridge Centre in Fratton offers opportunity in the upcoming future.

The pop-up would not only have the opportunity to engage young people but there would be potential for cross-generational work, if there was appetite in the community for adult volunteering and engagement at the pop-up. Creative workshops at the pop up would not just engage young people but the community as a whole.

The development of the Culture community pop-up would comprise 3 stages:

1. Outreach work at identified youth and community centres in the city
2. Engagement of young people to chosen Museum and Library venues
3. Development of pop-up e.g. professional oversight of art work display / curated library.

The activity area of the pop-up might include arts workshop or 'escape room' style challenges based on the Conan Doyle collection leveraging its unique connection to the city.

The alternative to an empty shop pop-up could include the utilising of front facing library window displays at key locations, or a display in Cascades.

Outcomes

The potential outcomes for a Culture community pop up in the high street include:

- Improvement of the high street environment - active, occupied, engaged units
- Breaking down of perceived barriers of access to culture

- Display of authentic project outcomes for the community - community owned curated displays of produced artwork
- Development of the social fabric of the community
- Improved inter-generational and cross-community relationships
- Development of life / work skills and confidence
- Positive mental health and wellbeing

Engaging High Street businesses with the city's culture

The Council may consider asking High Street businesses to display themed copies/ replicas of objects from the Council's collections. This could form a trail across the high streets of the city and could utilise QR codes to discover more information about the collection and the Council's cultural services. The objects would enable a talking point between the businesses and customers, could drive footfall to different areas of the city and raise awareness of the city's culture in the community.

Potential project funders

The following funding bodies may be appropriate regarding the development of a Culture pop-up project. Funding is criteria based, depending on the funding stream applied for.

National Lottery Heritage Fund look to fund projects in line with their new ten year strategy, Heritage 2033.¹⁶ Their funding priorities include:

- Promotion of inclusion and involvement of a wide range of people
- Boost to the local economy
- Encourage skills development and job creation
- Support wellbeing
- Create a better place to live, work and visit
- Improve the resilience of organisations working in heritage

Arts Council England's ten year strategy 2020-2030, 'Let's Create' is focussed around three outcomes and four investment principles:

<i>Let's Create: Outcomes</i>	<i>Let's Create: Investment Principles</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative People (everyone included) • Cultural Communities (collaborative approaches) • Creative Cultural Country (innovative & international) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambition & quality • Inclusivity & relevance (diversity) • Dynamism (responding to upcoming challenges) • Environmental responsibility

The Dulverton Trust is an independent grant awarding charity.¹⁷ It supports organisations addressing social issues, protecting heritage and the natural environment. It has previously provided small grants to The Portsmouth D Day Museum Trust.¹⁸

Proposed witnesses to call to EDCL Scrutiny Panel

Cathy Hakes, Head of Museums (PCC)
 Dave Percival, Head of Libraries & Archives (PCC)

¹⁶ [National Lottery Grants for Heritage – £3,000 to £10,000 | The National Lottery Heritage Fund](#)

¹⁷ [The Dulverton Trust](#)

¹⁸ [Portsmouth D-Day Museum Trust – The D-Day Story, Portsmouth \(thedaystory.com\)](#)

Angela Gonzalez, Library Supervisor, Southsea Library (PCC)

Christine Taylor, Natural History Curator (PCC)

Grace Scott, Engagement Officer (PCC)

Katherine Webber, Museum, Heritage and Education Professional (external)

Ross Fairbrother, Manager, D Day Story (PCC)

Catherine Ramsay, Business Manager, HIVE (PCC)

Laura Weston, Education & Learning Officer, Conan Doyle (PCC)

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Public Document Pack

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CULTURE AND LEISURE SCRUTINY PANEL

MINUTES of the meeting of the Economic Development, Culture and Leisure Scrutiny Panel held on Wednesday, 29 November 2023 at 1.00 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

PRESENT

Councillor Russell Simpson (in the Chair)

Councillors John Smith
Yinka Adeniran
Leo Madden
George Madgwick

ALSO PRESENT:

James Daly, Culture, Development and Projects Officer
Claire Watkins, Business Development and Projects Manager
Jane Lamer, Head of Economic Growth and Skills
Rebecca Alexander, Places and Markets Manager
Allison Harper, Democratic Services

Witnesses

Nickii Humphreys, PCC Licensing Manager
Andrew Phillips, Cascades
Julie Carolan, H&M

10. Apologies for absence (AI 1)

There were no apologies for absence.

11. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

12. Minutes of Previous Meetings (AI 3)

The minutes of 29 September 2023 and 26 October 2023 were approved as an accurate record.

13. Licensing Busking Report (AI 4)

Nickii Humphreys, Licensing Manager, PCC attended to answer questions from the Panel on Busking in Portsmouth's high streets.

The busking scheme run by the Licensing Service is for applicants to register with the council to busk at allocated spots around the city including the city centre and other high streets. There are no charges to register. People are able to book a spot at any of the city sites but there is not a great deal of marketing of the sites from a licensing perspective.

The spaces in Commercial Road and Palmerston Road are well used with a lesser demand for any of the other areas. Nickii noted that on occasion

certain performances can give rise to nuisance in stores in terms of the entertainment and this comes under the remit of Rebecca Alexander.

The length of time to obtain a license depends on the licensing services resources but can be done electronically via email with a photograph but at the most would take a few days.

Nickii advised that licensing work closely with Rebecca Alexander, particularly at seasonal times in markets where the busker comes as part of the market. They work together to promote as much entertainment as possible in that environment.

Rebecca advised that at the moment there are more bookings than would normally be dealt with by licensing due to the Christmas Markets and other events and it makes sense for her team to handle the bookings. She noted that people generally want to go to Commercial Road or Palmerston Road and will decline the offer of other sites should their preferred choice not be available. Feedback had been received last year from market traders and businesses in Commercial Road and Palmerston Road requesting a limit on the number of buskers due to the them sometimes being very noisy.

Nickii advised that the age limit for licenses is 17 and above.

In response to a question about promoting to sixth form colleges who have music courses and other art courses, Jane Lamer noted that there is no budget for promotion but it might be appropriate for the panel to make a recommendation to use Portsmouth Creates and ask them to engage with colleges to increase the opportunities. That would be at no cost.

Nickii advised that the only division within the city is that the seafront comes under the Seafront Management team and observed that there are no specific sites on the seafront that allow busking. That area was withdrawn from the remit of the street entertainment licensing probably due to management issues, particularly in the summer when there are events on the Esplanade.

Councillor Madgwick stated he was not sure that a space in Allaway Avenue would be successful but noted that in the Paulsgrove Community Centre there is a music scheme/music hub so it could be beneficial to link with them to attempt to liven up the Paulsgrove shops area.

The Chair suggested identifying a space in Copnor Road and Allaway Avenue and considered schools may benefit from a good rehearsal space, especially as Copnor has wide pavements. Councillor Magwick also identified College Park as a potential site.

Nickii advised that the buskers regulated by licensing are on the highway and if it was on any other land the engagement would have to be by colleagues in Property Services on how that land was utilised. The minimum age under the Children's Employment Act is 17 and any person under 17 would not be able to busk.

Nickii further highlighted that busking is for people who are collecting money for themselves. If there was to be a collection of funds going to a charity or any goods are sold as part of the busking, that technically becomes a commercial enterprise for the sale of goods which would mean street trading and any proceeds to charity would require a permit. All this information is provided to buskers when they make an application.

Nickii advised that even if young people had an adult with them, it would require a different licence and this could be checked with the Employment Officer in Children's Services.

Rebecca advised that when people book there is a conversation about the activity that is going to take place and then a connection can be made with other services in the council should it be needed e.g., Children's Services. They try and enable activities if possible.

The other witnesses were asked their views on busking in the city centre.

Julie Carolan (H&M) stated she was not aware that there were specific sites in the city centre but stated that from a business perspective, music playing outside the store can often conflict with the music being played in store. However, she considered it important to try and enliven the high street and have a variety of entertainment where possible. She thought the spots should be called 'Entertainment Spots' rather than 'busking'.

Andy Phillips (Cascades) stated they often have school choirs in the centre at this time of year which are always popular. They link entertainment in with their promotional items for certain spots on certain weekends. Being an indoor site, they have to be mindful of volume levels. He noted that busking in the high street could sometimes be very loud especially if there were one or two competing. He asked if there was any monitoring of amplification.

Rebecca advised that applicants are sent a formal email regarding various things including volume levels being acceptable. In terms of monitoring, it depends on resources whether levels are checked. She noted, however, that there are often a number of un-booked activities, and the council has very limited enforcement capabilities in that respect. They will be directed to the formal booking process.

The Panel suggested a recommendation that additional sites are considered across the city such as in Copnor Road and Allaway Avenue.

14. Briefing Paper - Economic Development. (AI 5)

The Panel noted the briefing paper.

15. Briefing Paper - Culture and Leisure Services (AI 6)

The Panel noted the briefing paper.

16. Scrutiny Review of the Economic Development & Regeneration Strategy focusing on High Street Direction (AI 7)

The Panel heard evidence from Julie Carolan, H&M and Andrew Phillips, Cascades.

Andrew Phillips - Cascades

Andrew told the Panel he had been working in Cascades since 2015. At that time Portsmouth City Council had a City Centre Management Team with 3 full time employees. He observed that they were the 'glue' between other areas of the council such as cleaning contracts and landscaping and they worked to ensure that what was best for the city centre was put first. This team also had a marketing and maintenance budget and were in place for the well-being of the city centre.

In 2016 the team was disbanded, and items devolved out to other services in the council and other contractors and since then there has not been anyone pushing the needs of the city centre. Retailers such as M&S had sited the removal of the City Centre Management Team as a key reason for leaving the city centre as they saw no investment or ambition from PCC. M&S leaving left a massive hole in the high street.

He considered that the city centre had become an afterthought for PCC as most marketing is targeted on Gunwharf and bringing in tourists. However, local people don't shop in Gunwharf every week, they shop in the main high streets. Gunwharf is for aspirational purchases for birthdays and Christmas.

In relation to crime, Andrew observed that investment in infrastructure for the city centre had been minimal with the CCTV cameras being too old for Crown Prosecution Service needs with the images not being good enough for prosecutions. In addition, the trees in the city centre block out two of the cameras for 8 months of the year as they grow to a point where they are touching the buildings on both sides. The Police come to the Cascades to use their cameras as they are lower down and give a better view.

He noted there has been some money spent on the cobblestones a while ago but that had been a bit of a disaster because they had to be planed back because people were falling over them.

He considered that, overall, the investment that had been made in the city centre had not always been the wisest and not what the retailers would think was the most necessary. Not having the central focus from a City Centre Management Team had led to disorganisation and money spent could have been better spent in area to actually benefit the retailers as well.

Julie Carolan, H&M

Julie advised she had worked for H&M in the city centre since 2001 and had seen it go from a thriving city to a huge decline. She considered Portsmouth was one of the worst cities that H&M operate in for turnover of trade and visitors to the city. This has led to a reluctance by H&M to invest in the store

for a refit with visitors from Sweden not only looking at the store but also the city and consider how a £2million refit investment will go.

- Julie observed, as someone who works and shops in the city, it is not a place you would be proud to bring your family shopping for the day. It is not an easy or safe place to shop most of the time with broken seating and an uninspiring high street.

She drew attention to the Visit Portsmouth website and noted that the main store highlighted was Specsavers and included Debenhams and Top Shop, both of which have now gone.

The advertising of the city centre, she considered, was quite embarrassing when we should be proud of what is around. She noted the placement of the market in Commercial Road can make it difficult to easily cross the precinct from one shop to another with the stalls not being grouped together in a coherent manner. She considered the city centre had turned back the years by more than 10.

Julie advised she had recently called a meeting with Councillor Pitt and the Police with 47 attendees from the city, including retailers and noted the culture had been encouraged downward rather than upward. She considered that if nothing is done the remaining retailers will go.

She considered Commercial Road should not try and compete with Gunwharf as they are two completely different shopping areas. The turnover of two of the biggest stores in Commercial Road would outreach the turnover of stores in Gunwharf and there are more visitors that go to commercial road regularly - local shoppers - as Commercial Road sells the affordable items and is an affordable place to shop. These regular shoppers need to be encouraged.

- Andy advised that most of the retailers, were now considering setting up a Business Improvement District (BID) that is focused on the city centre with retail at the heart. This would provide everything that the disbanded City Centre Management Team provided in terms of people who are answerable to retailers to demonstrate focus and effectiveness. The BID would provide a budget, marketing, focus and co-ordination for the city centre. The BID would bring in retailers to ascertain the problems and see if there is a commonality to the problems that could be worked on. The booking of busking sites could also move across from the council. BIDs have been successful in other cities.

The Panel asked about the loss of the big anchor stores in Commercial Road and in particular M&S.

Andy advised that M&S still own the building they were in. Julie thought it would be beneficial to try and contact M&S to try and encourage them back.

The Panel asked if they would like to see the City Centre Manager post reinstated?

Julie said they needed a nominated person they could direct problems and ideas to. She had been frustrated, as a retail manager, at what was happening around her, the city dying and the shoplifting. The retailers need someone who could head up that part of the BID as it is important to get the feedback from the retailers on how to make changes, what is positive and how the city is doing. She noted that online shopping does bring people into the city centre with H&M currently holding 400 parcels through the click and collect schemes.

Andy noted that, pre-covid, footfall in shopping areas was on a 3% per year decline. Since the pandemic that has slowed and whilst low is recovering. Online shopping has stopped growing at the same rate and is starting to plateau as retailers are starting to charge for returns which is impacting and driving consumers back to the shops. Retailers will always have to battle the convenience of online shopping so the provision of the experience with shopping is so important. Andy also noted the changes in Planning use classes with its aim for more diversification in the high street encouraging people to stay longer.

Jane Lamer welcomed all of the honest feedback that had been provided by Julie and Andy. She stated the service had had to adapt the markets they are now dealing with and noted the change they had thought would take 10 years had taken place in 2 with the pandemic. The changes in Planning Class use had impacted as well allowing for a mixed-use economy. The service had restructured earlier in the year and were currently recruiting for a city centre co-ordinator. The service will be refocusing and will cover all the cities centres with the new city centre co-ordinator and two part time market assistants. This would have to meet a zero-budget position or the service would make a loss and have to reduce services. Limited budgets impact.

Jane noted BIDs had been encouraged in several areas so it was positive that the City Centre was proposing to go ahead with one - it was very welcome, and the council would do everything it could to help facilitate but noted it has to be driven by the businesses.

Andy noted a good example of a mixed use in the high street with a new initiative in Redhill called The Light, which is a cinema and a whole leisure park, with bowling, shuffleboard, axe throwing, mini bowls, karaoke and rock-climbing walls. Something like this in Commercial Road would add about 40% to the footfall and encouraging footfall into the evening trade.

The Panel considered providing a City Centre Manager in partnership with the BID could be a recommendation. There was also a suggestion of a link between Gunwharf and Commercial Road, with a bus link or hopper bus. They considered this may be a good time to try and re-engage with M&S to encourage them back to the city centre, even if it was just the food hall. Andy and Jane provided some information on previous negotiations with M&S which had stalled but with the BID things may change for them.

Claire Watkins asked whether Andy had considered the recent Cultural 'World of Wonder' pop-up in Cascades a success. She noted there had been 66,000 visits through the QR codes.

Andy replied it was and that they had replicated it several times with other people, other museums. His preference would be to have a pop-up or interesting window display rather than just an empty unit as it benefits the centre either financially or experientially. He was happy to discuss further ideas for pop-ups.

The Chair ended the meeting at 14:15 and thanked the witnesses for attending.

The meeting concluded at 2.15 pm.

Councillor Russell Simpson
Chair

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Progress Update on the Former Debenhams Site, Commercial Road, Portsmouth

1. The Project

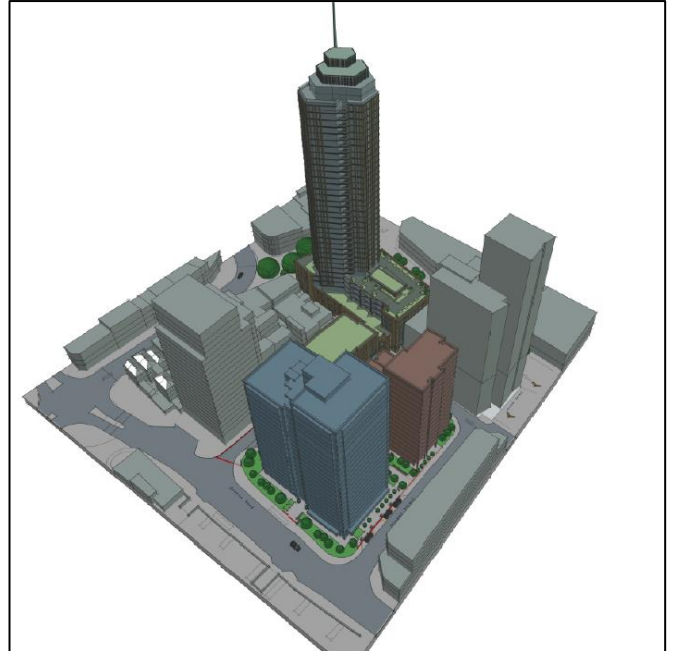
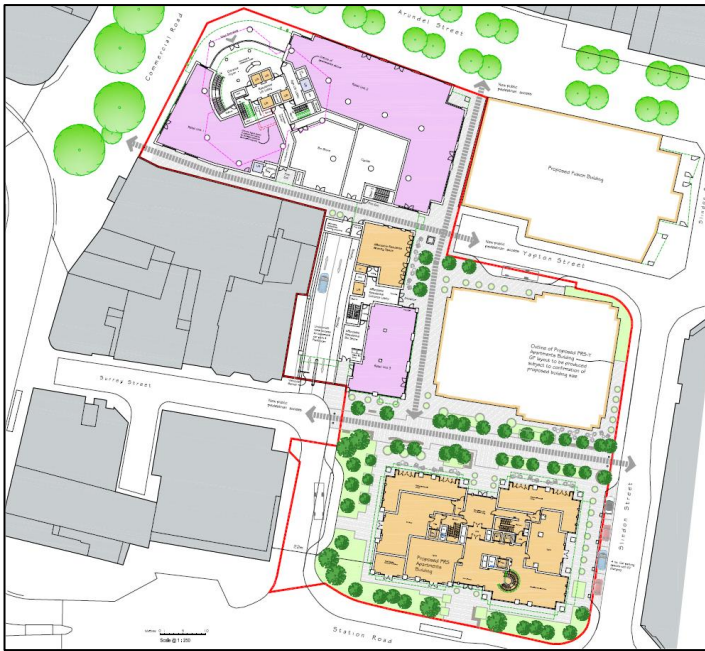
- Comprehensive redevelopment of the former Debenhams Site, including the Station Street car park site.
- Development proposals consist of:

A. the redevelopment of the former Debenhams store site, fronting onto Commercial Road and Arundel street for a major 38 storey buildings, accommodating ground floor retail units Commercial space high value residential apartments.

B. Five storey building accommodating ground floor retail units residential apartments

C. 24 Storey residential apartments block

D. 16 Storey residential block



2. Consultation Dec 2022 / January 2023

The outcomes of the Comprehensive outcomes of the public consultation:

- Clear message that student accommodation wasn't popular nor needed;
- Housing for local people
- Must be high quality design
- Public realm important – need for quality amenity space
- Parking / links to public transport

3. Progress

- Currently working with Planning and Regeneration Officers as part of a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA)
- Draft plans and technical documents submitted in November 2023
- Continual meetings / discussions on design and impact issues to ensure any technical issues are resolved before submission
- Outline planning application to be submitted January / February 2024.
- Determination ASAP in accordance with the PPA

Phil Salmon and Les Pink Dec 2023

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CULTURE AND LEISURE SCRUTINY PANEL

MINUTES of the meeting of the Economic Development, Culture and Leisure Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday, 14 December 2023 at 1.00 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Russell Simpson (in the Chair)
Councillors John Smith
Yinka Adeniran
Peter Candlish
Leo Madden
George Madgwick

Also present:

Claire Watkins - Business Development and Projects Manager
Rebecca Alexander - Economic Development, Places and Markets Manager
Jane Lamer - Head of Economic Growth and Skills
Allison Harper - Democratic Services

17. **Apologies for absence (AI 1)**

There were no apologies for absence.

18. **Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)**

There were no declarations of interest.

19. **Scrutiny Review of the Economic Development & Regeneration Strategy focusing on High Street Direction (AI 3)**

Witnesses

Tim Keeping - Manager of Port Solent
Phil Salmon and Les Pink - Project Team for the former Debenhams site, Commercial Road.
Louise Whitmore - Love Southsea Market

Alice Masterman, Fludes, provided a written statement which was read out by Allison Harper, Democratic Services.

Councillor Madgwick left the meeting at 1:30pm.

Phil Salmon - Former Debenhams Site

Phil told the Panel that he is currently dealing with the extensive former Debenhams site in Commercial Road, which includes the former Station Street car park. The property had been vacant since the beginning of 2020 when Debenhams went into voluntary administration. Phil, along with the landowners, have been working positively with PCC planning department and the PCC Regeneration Team. A planning application is to be submitted

shortly with the draft technical documents having been submitted in November. A public consultation exercise had been held in December 2022 and January 2023 and the messages from the consultation were that there was no desire for student accommodation in the city centre. There was a need to provide high quality design housing for local people and the scheme must include retail spaces. The public realm was also important with the need for quality community space. Parking and public transportation were also considered.

The current design comprises a major tall building on the corner of Commercial Road and Arundel Street. The ground floor will be retail with two or three floors of commercial space and 30 storeys of residential. The other blocks within the scheme will be different forms of private rented residential.

Phil advised they had been working very closely with the planning officers who were keen for the visual impact to be considered as it will be a very tall building. Planning was also pushing for high quality design.

Phil advised the viability and deliverability of the scheme had been considered within the changing market and advised that, at the present time, there were no drivers for the retail spaces although there were drivers for the residential side of the design. The scheme will still go forward, and the retail space will be available in a flexible form. Other things also being looked at are transportation and the different forms of residential tenure, technical reports for air zone quality and contamination on the site. Discussions with planners and the Regeneration team on these elements continue. Phil advised they are really keen that the planning gets determined as quickly as possible.

Questions

In response to questions from the panel Phil and Les advised:

- The development would include 3000 square meters of retail space on the ground floor which can be subdivided as required into smaller units. The units need to provide as much frontage as possible either onto Arundel Street or Commercial Road and internally as well.
- They saw the retail market changing dramatically with it downsizing. They considered the units could be showrooms for a commodity which would then be dispatched to you via drones etc in the future. Hence the need for flexibility in the units.
- They had looked at the scheme as a whole and noted the main drivers were the private rented sector (PRS) so the design would be like a hotel reception area with work areas, café, bar, coffee shop and retail. With this type of accommodation people who train or study in Portsmouth are kept within the parameters of the city. It is a living experience in the PRS with a visiting area for people as well as the local people who live there.
- In relation to the surrounding area of the core development, they have considered the 'desire lines' i.e., where people are and where they want to

get to. The scheme has a criss-cross of desire lines. There is a strong desire line for people to get to the Post Office and the train station. Connectivity into the site from Commercial Road has to be an attractive and safe route and public realm. They are focused on creating a sense of place in the heart of the square actively fronted by cafes and a grand reception to the residential and the rest of the retail buildings.

- The scheme, ultimately, was about getting the units occupied and generating income offsite and spending to the city centre. There was a balance to be struck between the nighttime and daytime economy. They saw the ground floor and maybe the upper two floors of the corner of Commercial Road and Arundle Street being vibrant and then the vibrancy leading into the rest of the site.
- The aim was to encourage and keep people in the city such as those coming through university or doctors etc. The main thrust is private rented not traditional social housing and looking to create a vibrancy through the mix of people. In parallel, affordable housing was being considered as to how this could be included and keep the scheme viable. It may be key worker housing could be provided.
- Car parking was a key challenge. There would only be a provision of 34 car parking spaces, for people with access issues and electrical car charging points. Also, potential car leasing options for residents. It is a highly sustainable location with taxi ranks, trains, and buses right on the doorstep so in theory residents shouldn't need a car. There could be some underground car parking.
- They did not see car parking for residents competing with car parking for businesses and their customers.
- The developers were looking mainly at the site and how to make it work for the residents, rather than the development outside of the site. The advantage was that it will bring people to live right in the city centre and this, by its nature, improves the security of the area. They agreed that lighting makes a difference in this aspect.

Tim Keeping - Port Solent

Tim advised he manages Port Solent and works for Solent Commercial Properties as a consultant. He is also the Chair of the Business Improvement District (BID) in Southampton.

Port Solent was built 35 years ago. In that time there has been a huge increase in casual dining with people eating out more than they did 35 years ago. Port Solent has evolved its offering to customers with it being almost exclusively dining. They compete heavily with Gunwharf, but they do have the benefit of free car parking. They also compete with Whiteley.

The buildings need major refurbishment. Tim noted that what had really helped was the tenure in which the site was held - a long leasehold from Portsmouth City Council which was owned by Unilever pension funds. The

pension fund, as landlord, during Covid was not chasing cash as it is part of a much bigger portfolio and retailers were offered fairly generous rent-free periods to retain them on site. Expiry was pushed back with generous extensions. Some of the operators, with bounce back loans, rent freezes and business rate freezes and then grants were doing better than they had in years. A lot used that money to reinvest in their businesses, hence the current growth on the site. However, occupiers are starting to feel the pinch, with increases in energy costs and price sensitive customers alongside the increase in the minimum wage coming in next year. A lot of the businesses are now only opening a few days a week to breakeven.

Tim observed it is an extremely fragile market at the moment and there may be more casualties to come. The landlord has the ability to ride this out. It is a much bigger problem than streetlights and hanging baskets with Covid knocking out 10 years of change on the high street.

Questions

In response to questions from the panel Tim advised:

- There is no bus service to Port Solent as this had been heavily subsidised by PCC. The removal of the bus had a big impact on the ability of occupiers to recruit due to difficulty of getting to and from the site without their own transport.
- The events held at Port Solent were primarily to put money in the tills of the occupiers and to attract customers from a 'three-ringed' area. Throughout the year there are regular markets to attract more footfall to Port Solent. There are also car meets, music events and the Christmas Market which can be challenging in terms of the number of people and the amount of car parking available. The field opposite has been used as an overflow car park on occasion but getting permission for this from PCC was challenging. Being able to use it on a regular basis would be helpful.
- Port Solent had tried on several occasions to have a public taxi rank on site. However, with Port Solent being off the island, taxi firms are not keen as more money can be made in the south of the city.
- Having a flexible but strategic thinking landlord had helped keep occupancy rates high. Port Solent was a unique site in that respect. However, service charges for maintaining the site are rising. Port Solent has a complicated ladder of service charges as everyone pays towards the marina maintenance and upkeep.
- To help drive footfall to the Port Solent events, PCC could support by helping with the overflow car parking as this can cause access issues during very big events.
- Tim explained how Port Solent has become a popular parking spot for campervans overnight before boarding a ferry to France and that they had embraced this. Tim considered that the land south of the marina could be

a good revenue stream for PCC for overnight campervan parking which would then free up the Port Solent car park for customers. He had calculated this could generate a revenue stream of £60k per year after running costs for PCC.

- Port Solent had considered if a park and ride scheme would be beneficial and considered the signage to the site was pretty good.
- With the proposed Tipner Site and a potential bridge, Tim considered Port Solent could become a neighbourhood centre.
- Tim stated they compete on the leisure spend directly with Gunwharf, but Port Solent is not interested in the outlet aspect of retail. With Gunwharf moving the price point of their retail offer they risked losing the resident catchment and he considered that Commercial Road could become an extension of that outlet shopping with lower price point outlet shops.
- The successful element for a BID is to write a manifesto based on what people say they want and actually setting out to deliver it, that is the essence of a BID. The business plan is written around what people say are the problems and then saying you can fix these problems, but money is needed. A successful BID is about delivering realisable results in a timeframe that most levy payers would understand.
- Key is the people on the BID board, with a corresponding officer in the City Council. This gives the ability to be agile and the ability to get on with something once the decision has been made. There is no committee to go through.
- A BID has to remain relevant and keep talking to levy payers and have good strategic representation on the board. A good diversity policy is key to include sectoral size, geography, and size of business. Key is representatives from all sectors including food and beverage and independent retailers.
- The start has to come from the local authority but is very quickly passed on to the private sector to take forward. Some funding will have to come from the local authority to start - about £100k - as there is a need to pay external consultants to keep the BID on track, the cost of marketing, collateral materials etc. It's important that it doesn't just become another branch of the city council.

Louise Whitmore, Love Southsea Market

Louise told the panel that she had run the Love Southsea Market for 15 years. When the market first started, Palmerston Road had a thriving high street with John Lewis and Debenhams in situ. The market bought in a lot of independents. The idea for the market was to get independents from their kitchen table to market stand to shop and there had been a number of successes over the years. The market had remained in Southsea and kept the pound in Portsmouth.

Louise considered Palmerston Road had now changed as there was no longer the same number of shops, but an increase in coffee culture. Debenhams was currently being developed to provide some retail units, flats and a doctor's surgery. She considered Southsea was doing well with the market getting lots of traders coming through.

Questions

In response to questions from the panel Louise advised:

- To help the continuation of the Love Southsea Market, PCC could provide a more permanent structure - along the lines of Covent Garden. This would be a covered structure where traders could come along and set up their tables. It should be a simple structure and not enclosed and this was not conducive to people shopping from the stalls.
- The market had not been so successful in Whiteley as people were more inclined to buy from a shop than the market stall. However, in Southsea people were more inclined to shop from the stalls of an independent trader than a corporate trader. Portsmouth and Southsea residents have a certain pride in their city.
- A market in Commercial Road needed a lower price point than the Love Southsea market - Louise envisaged this as selling items that are typically sold in Tik Tok shops or the old Charlotte Street market.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and noted that the next Scrutiny Panel meeting had been moved from 5th to 8th January.

The meeting concluded at 2.46 pm.

Councillor Russell Simpson
Chair

Incorporation of Youth Engagement Programmes into a 'Pop-Up' Collaborative (Museums, Libraries, Archvies And The Hive) Project Model:

Background:

The Culture & Leisure Services briefing paper for the November 2023 Economic Development Culture and Leisure Scrutiny Panel referenced the 'Finding Their Voice' youth engagement project developed and delivered by The D-Day Story (September 2022 - September 2023). The project comprised a series of outreach workshops at the Portsea, BYAC, and Hillside Youth Centres and at the Brook Club and visits to The D-Day Story. The majority of young people participating in the project were aged approximately 11 – 16. The museum had not previously worked with the young people involved and the project staff worked closely with the Youth Centre staff and managers to facilitate and deliver the project.

The following reflections are a result of this project and a variety of other cultural, 'informal learning' projects developed and delivered for young people with a variety of interests and needs in Portsmouth. These projects were designed for young people who had not necessarily visited or participated in projects delivered by the museum / heritage site and who often had limited access to their local heritage and cultural offer. Creative arts workshops and activities were used as a strategy to engage the young people and to help develop their trust and confidence.

From experience successful youth engagement projects:

- Require time to establish relationships and the trust of the young people.
- Are most effective when delivered with the active support and involvement of youth organisations and their youth workers.
- Combine both outreach workshops at the youth centres with visits arranged to the heritage site or museum. Transport is often required with all costs covered to remove any financial barriers to engagement.
- Sufficient staff to support the project and engage the young people including experienced professionals to deliver workshops e.g. artists / creative practitioners. This potentially will require a high adult: young people ratio.
- Flexibility to allow projects to adapt to the interests of the young people. Whilst outcomes are almost always successful, they are not necessarily the outcomes envisaged at the start of the project.
- Sessions / workshops generally take place in the evenings with the possibility of some taking place at the weekends or during the school / college holidays (although consideration has to be given to those young people with weekend or holiday jobs).

- Realistic expectations – whilst some young people may engage briefly in an individual activity, a few will commit and engage for the duration of the project over several weeks. Developing a project that comprises a series of 'stand-alone' activities that are structured towards creating an authentic final outcome (such as an exhibition) allows young people to 'drop in' for individual sessions whilst also offering greater development opportunities for those young people who wish to commit more fully to the project. This strategy will allow a greater number of young people to participate as asking young people to commit to an entire project from the start can create a barrier to participation.
- Success can be measured in a variety of ways. For example, the number of young people who accessed the project even for one activity, the quality of the final outcome and, importantly, the 'value added' outcomes such as the development of young peoples' confidence and skills and those young people who progress onto other opportunities e.g., other projects and programmes or formal education opportunities.
- A high-quality outcome (e.g., an exhibition, performance or event) to showcase the work of the young people is important to demonstrate to them that their work / skills are valued. It also provides the young people with additional evidence of their skills and commitment when completing CVs and personal statements.
- Attendance of parents / carers / family and friends at showcase events is possible but not guaranteed.

Since 'youth engagement' programmes provide positive opportunities for young people aged approximately 11 – 24 from a wide range of backgrounds, requiring a variety of support with varying levels of confidence 'a one size fits all' approach is not appropriate. There are other models of youth engagement projects (such as Youth Forums, Young Curator groups etc.) which are particularly effective for young people who already have the confidence to participate independently or who have already developed a relationship with the museum / heritage venue through other projects and activities. This type of youth engagement model could work effectively within the framework of a 'pop-up' collaborative cultural project model.

High Street Cultural Pop-Up Models and Youth Engagement Projects

A high street 'pop-up' cultural model could support and enhance youth engagement projects in a variety of ways.

- The available temporary exhibition space in museums and heritage sites to display and showcase work such as exhibitions and events created by young people is often limited. A 'pop-up' cultural venue could offer additional space to showcase the outcomes of youth engagement projects.
- Available accommodation in the youth centres to deliver outreach workshops and activities can be limiting and temporary 'pop-up' cultural venues might incorporate the space required for workshops to take place which could benefit both youth engagement projects and the wider community. This opportunity may be impacted by the need for transport for the young people and / or the times the workshops take place (see practicalities below).
- Subject to the availability of museum curatorial staff to provide support and expertise, a 'pop-up' cultural venue could provide opportunities for young people to engage with museum collections in more depth with the opportunity to co-curate displays and exhibitions inspired by the museum for their local community.
- Young people could be involved in developing holiday and weekend events and activity programmes at the 'pop-up' cultural venue for the local community.
- In addition to structured youth engagement projects, a 'pop-up' cultural venue could also provide work experience and volunteering opportunities. As with any work experience programme, sufficient time to plan the programme, staff to support the young person and meaningful activities for the young person to undertake would be essential to ensure that it is a positive experience and success. A work experience / volunteering model of youth engagement may appeal to young people aged 15 - 24 with greater time flexibility and who are pro-actively seeking volunteer or work experience.
- The collaborative 'pop-up' model (Museums, Libraries and Archives and The Hive) offers additional opportunities for young people to access a range of cultural and support services.

Practical Considerations:

All the above would be dependent on the availability of specialist staff support (for example, curatorial staff to support the development of a 'pop-up' museum, professional artists / creative practitioners to facilitate creative workshops, youth workers to support the young people and project officer(s) to co-ordinate the youth engagement programme). Funding for the development and delivery of activities would also be required.

The following practicalities would also influence the format and outcome of the youth engagement project:

- Shop leases may be very short-term.
- Potential for last minute change of venue or dates.
- Evening opening of a 'pop-up' cultural venue may not be an option.

In summary

Previous youth engagement projects have demonstrated that young people do want to engage with their heritage and history but rather than a lack of interest it is often practical barriers such as cost, transport and the opportunity to visit which stand in their way.

Developing the trust and confidence of the young people involved is essential for success. Therefore, an outreach programme of activities at youth centres may still be required when developing a youth engagement programme for a 'pop-up' cultural venue. This would potentially include visit(s) to the relevant museum or library so that the young people appreciate the connection between the outreach workshops, the museum / library and the 'pop-up' cultural venue. As mentioned above, if working with young people who had already established a relationship with the museum / library or who had the confidence, an alternative model could be developed such as a youth forum with agreed outcomes from the start, working to a more specific time frame.

A visit(s) to the museum(s) / library / archives should still be an integral part of any youth engagement programme as this might represent the first opportunity for some young people to visit and engage with their local heritage.

Developing and incorporating a youth engagement programme into a 'pop-up' cultural project model could extend the opportunities available to young people to engage with their local heritage and provide them with relevant and practical experiences. Youth engagement projects provide an ideal opportunity to develop the skills and confidence of young people. They can also signpost young people to further informal learning opportunities such as volunteering and for some young people they can provide a 'stepping stone' to further 'formal' learning opportunities at college or university.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CULTURE AND LEISURE SCRUTINY PANEL

MINUTES of the meeting of the Economic Development, Culture and Leisure Scrutiny Panel held on Monday, 8 January 2024 at 10.00 am at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Russell Simpson (in the Chair)

Councillors John Smith
Yinka Adeniran
Peter Candlish
Leo Madden
George Madgwick

ALSO PRESENT

Stephanie Parker - Economic Growth Skills & Employment Officer
Rebecca Alexander - Places and Markets Manager
Jane Lamer - Head of Economic Development and Skills
James Daly - Culture Developments and Project Officer
Claire Watkins - Business Manager, Culture and Leisure
Allison Harper - Democratic Services

20. Apologies for absence (AI 1)

There were no apologies.

21. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

22. Minutes of Previous Meeting 29 November 2023 (AI 3)

The minutes of 29 November 2023 were approved as an accurate record.

23. Minutes of Previous Meeting 14 December 2023 (AI 4)

The minutes of the meeting of 14 December were approved as an accurate record.

24. Scrutiny Review of the Economic Development & Regeneration Strategy focusing on High Street Direction (AI 5)

Witnesses

Christine Taylor - Curator of Natural History, Cumberland Museum
Grace Scott - Museums Engagement Officer
Ross Fairbrother - General Manager of the D-Day Story
Cathy Hakes - Head of Museums Service
Dave Percival - Libraries and Archive Services Manager
Catherine Ramsay - Business Development and Projects Manager

The Chair advised that this meeting would be focusing on cultural engagement within the context of the High Street.

Cathy Hakes - Head of Service, Museums

Cathy told the panel the Museums Service was keen to bring the heritage out into the different areas of the city. She advised that the current big project was the D-Day 80th anniversary programme for 2024. The plan is to place small pop-ups from the museums into the city libraries with the first going in in a few weeks' time in Cosham library. The service is actively fundraising and raising sponsorship and as the programme moves around the city, they are looking at different ways to engage local people with the museum service. The Museum Service had received £21,000 sponsorship money to fund educational visits for school children to the D-Day Story. The link up will start in the north of the city where the pop-up museums will commence. The service will be working with Cultural Development to potentially place some pop-ups in the city centre.

Cathy advised that the constraints they have are in funding the displays. They are considering other libraries such as Paulsgrove and North End. There is an issue of resources as they, along with the library, need to build and create displays that attracts enough interest to foster engagement from local people.

To better advertise the pop-ups, creative window displays in empty shops would be beneficial, and also out on the street, carrying out live re-enactments to engage people.

Cathy advised it would all be ready to launch by the end of January.

Christine Taylor, Curator of Natural History, Cumberland Museum

Christine gave details on the project in Cascades Shopping Centre during the Covid lockdown. It was set up with the idea of engaging people while the museums were closed and was initially going to be in place for a few weeks but ended up being in place for over a year.

The project involved putting historical objects in an empty unit in Cascades as Cascades was one of the few places open during lockdown. 60,000 people came by and viewed the exhibition. There were QR codes in place between August 2020 and April 2021 and over 700 activity sheets were distributed. The windows required regular cleaning due to the amount of people looking through the windows and this window cleaning gave an opportunity to engage with people who were curious about the displays. Christine advised that other locations were also considered but Cascades was a prime high street location that was being frequented at the time.

Christine advised that, anecdotally, people came to specifically visit the display which had been designed to look very attractive and exploratory. Positive feedback was given on the display. Christine advised there was a webcam counting people and the count on the security cameras of people who stopped in front of the display was over 56,000 by February 2021. A

66% uplift was achieved on visitors to the website due to the use of the QR codes.

Christine advised that Cascades was more of an installation rather than a pop-up. The overall cost was just over £7,000 mainly from the High Street Fund. Most of the objects came from a collection which has a trust fund so there was no cost in that respect. It took about 3 months to set it up as they were hampered by the restrictions on the amount of people in a room at a time.

Christine noted that what would be useful would be things that are more for pop-ups when attending displays or exhibitions. She agreed with the panel that it would be useful to have key items that could be stored as a communal resource and reused for multiple people to access when needed, such as display units, pop-up banners, AV equipment, and screens that could be reused and repurposed.

Jane Lamer advised that there are some resources available, held by culture, that are shared for different types of displays. Efficiencies are made but there is a fairly limited resource for pop-ups.

Grace Scott - Museums Engagement Officer

Grace explained to the panel that natural history collections, compared to other museum objects, have additional needs that are more organic and may need a case that can start at about £5,000. It is an expensive investment, but it would pay off in the long term as it can be reused for any object afterwards. She noted the amazing installation in Cascades and the positive impact it had on the high street and the Cascades Shopping mall.

Grace told the panel that the service also does in person events, such as people from the Young Creatives dressing up as silver street performing statues promoting the Silver City exhibition at the Cosham Christmas lights switch on and the Hot Walls Christmas market. They also took part in the Red Bull theatre at the We Shine festival which encouraged in person physical engagement. These were funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and bring a vibrancy to an area. The D-Day Story pop-up is more of a digital interaction with TV screen, big graphics, and vinyl archive images. For the Cosham pop-up, the museum has researched people or soldiers from Cosham, so it is unique to the area. The displays can then be reused for the next theme or exhibition.

In response to a panel question, Jane Lamer advised that there are storage places across the city in different locations. External funding is always sought if possible but internally capital spend could be used but there are a lot of demands on that fund. Although different directorates have items to use there is not a centralised list.

The Panel noted that having items in one central place for reuse can save money and is a cheap way of doing pop-up shops. PCC has the infrastructure to be able to do this very easily.

Ross Fairbrother - General Manager of the D-Day Story

The Chair advised that an email statement had been provided by Katherine Webber, D-Day Story, which had been circulated to the panel.

Ross observed that pop-up museums present a real opportunity to engage with people who normally may not come to museums across the city, or who think that museums are not for them.

Ross told the panel that the D-Day Story was extensively redeveloped a number of years ago and that it is a modern, contemporary museum. It had been developed to ensure content is accessible for a more general audience. Pop-ups present an opportunity to engage more people in a way that you might not do in a museum space. They also present an opportunity to make it more personal such as in Cosham with stories of local people. This can create a real pride of place. The museum often goes out with a pop-up stand and a jeep to events such as Armed Forces Day or Victorious and that attracts people to engage in conversations and engages them personally.

The museum also holds temporary exhibitions in the museum itself which engage local groups. The exhibition on 'Sewing Memories' enabled the artists they worked with to run extra workshops with LGBTQ groups, young carers, and vulnerable adults.

Ross noted, Katherine's report which referenced the recent Youth Engagement Project and the outputs from that project which were showcased in the museum which engendered a positive reaction from visitors and the community.

Ross advised they have a lot of engagement with local schools, mainly primary, with a large number of school visits throughout the year. November is the main month for the school's education programme.

Grace Scott advised that Southdown's college, Textiles and Fashion Course do a small display every year in the D-Day story with garments they have made inspired by the collections at the D-Day Story. The D-Day story is keen on giving a platform to schools and colleges as is the library service.

The Chair asked if the engagement is offered to secondary schools as well. Grace replied it was but mainly to primary schools. There is a writing competition for secondary schools but that was a difficult age range to reach out to. Ross advised the Youth Engagement Project was for secondary age.

Ross confirmed there were opportunities with the pop-ups to cross promote the other museum services across the city. Grace advised that vouchers are set out in community areas where there are low-income families for things like a free train ride in the museum or to participate in a craft session for free to encourage visitors to all the museums.

The Chair asked what they felt was missing from the high street that would support them and improve things.

Cathy said it was about joined up working and being able to find those opportunities that they may not necessarily know about due to the size of the council, for instance, if a shop becomes empty in a high footfall area that they could use. Having the resources behind the team so they could move quickly to fill that space after engaging with the public to see what they would be interested in.

The Panel asked what they felt the council does well that they would like the council to continue.

Grace mentioned the fantastic support the council gives to the cultural events and activities happening in the city such as with Portsmouth Creates where people can view their city with pride seeing the incredible art installations etc. This motivates people to go out and explore parts of the city they may not normally go to. This support had allowed the museum service to work with incredible creative organisations, do cross promoting and engage with people.

Ross noted that the impact this has on people should not be underestimated especially when they experience something for the first time. The pride local people have in the city and in the culture is huge.

Cllr Adeniran joined the meeting at 10:44am

Cathy told the panel that she has been liaising with Economic Development on several occasions and the business team to collaborate on projects across the city.

Cathy advised they are keen on doing more contemporary collections such as the culture of skating in the city, and other more modern history collections. When considering pop-ups in the high street the service goes out and engages with people to provide options rather than just imposing on them.

The Panel considered the need for better communication about cultural events going on across the city and suggested, for example, leaflets in the annual council tax bills.

There is a need for better awareness, communication to encourage more footfall in the high street and encourage more spending in local businesses.

Cathy observed Portsmouth has a wonderful museum service which they were all passionate about and they would like to encourage everyone to use the museums. She noted there had been a significant uplift in visitors - 10,000 ahead of the previous year.

Dave Percival - Libraries and Archive Services Manager

Dave told the panel that libraries work with the cultural services and would be part of the D-Day events in 2024. The library also works with the Rotary Club on Cosham awareness day, and they take the mobile library out onto the high street when members of the outreach team talk about the library and

encourage people to visit the library itself, which has great community resources and had capital investment over the last few years.

The library service supports a lot of the city council wider consultations which brings people into the libraries with new audiences and potential new members.

A lot of the libraries are in high street settings. North End library is an important, popular library and outside of Central and Southsea library is one of the biggest issuing libraries in the city. Funding has been received to carry out a refurbishment of the North End library which will commence on 22 January. Arts Council funding for the library's improvement fund allowing for improvements such as office pods and meeting spaces.

The Alderman Lacy library takes part in the Baffin's Christmas markets hosting the Father Christmas grotto each year which brings in many pupils from schools and their families and engaged a lot of local residents.

Of note, is the mobile library which attends some supermarket sites in the city which is a great opportunity for promoting services - not just the library.

The Beddow Library by Milton Park do an annual Halloween trail across the local shops and businesses there.

Southsea library is the most obvious high street location and is often used as a showcase for a lot of activities and art exhibitions. There has been recent recruitment to the history centre and for a new outreach officer to work with the family history resources.

The service is exploring external funding to build a Portsmouth music project which would enable QR codes on buildings that were music venues in the past. This would engage people who would not normally engage in the archives or libraries.

In relation to the question about what would work better in the city, Dave considered forward planning was really important to allow services to come together to create pop-ups and support each other. He also agreed with the idea of sharing resources.

Dave noted that local businesses help with promotions such as the distribution of promotional leaflets and posters, such as with the forthcoming Bookfest. Other venues are also used for these events.

The Chair noted the success of North End library with the summer reading challenge, but noted it is not so successful in schools completing it in Stamshaw, Hilsea, Copnor and Pauslgrove and wondered why and what could help get these venues better utilised.

Dave noted that Southsea library is only 10 years old whereas North End is 61 years old and needed refurbishment to show the community the investment in their area and space. With the reading challenge, the library

service is trying to promote the reading challenge plus schemes and have concentrated on schools in Paulsgrove and Cosham this summer to try and address the issue. The key is parental engagement.

Dave advised they do not do book exchanges as they tend to work more in rural areas, but the Somerstown hub has an informal library with a little box of donations. Paulsgrove Community Centre sometimes has collections of children's books as some people are not aware of the library nearby. They also have a second hand book shop.

The panel thought the word 'library' can be a barrier for some people but noted the new 'Tuk-tuk' which aims to encourage people to think again about the libraries. Dave advised the aim was to use the Tuk-tuk in high street settings and parks and to work with council departments to promote all services. It is fully sustainable, environmentally friendly and stands out with its bright colours. Dave said it is about evolving with the time and promoting the electronic elements of the service such as free music downloads and magazines.

Catherine Ramsay - Business Development and Projects Manager

Catherine told the panel they are a charity working in partnership with land-based museums and libraries and are looking at having desks in other settings in the city. The Hive is mainly based in the Central Library.

The Chair noted the importance of the Hive and the support it provides and asked what more could be done to help.

Catherine stated it is not about money but about the staffing of the Hive as it is a really small team with people who go out and do outreach. To sustain it on a regular basis they were reliant on recruiting volunteers. When you have volunteers, you need people to manage them. That continuing working with people in the city who want to become involved and harnessing their help with the resources to manage them properly.

The meeting concluded at 11.13 am.

Councillor Russell Simpson
Chair

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