

Agenda item:

Title of meeting: Culture and City Development Decision Meeting

Date of meeting: 19 July 2019

Subject: Portsmouth Museums Annual Update

Report by: Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services

Wards affected: All

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

1.1 To review the achievements of Portsmouth Museums in 2018/19 and to present the service's operational 'Plan on a Page' (PoP) for the following financial year.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **The review of last year's activity is noted especially the successful completion of the first year of operation of The D-Day Story.**
- 2.2 **Existing service commitments are noted including developing new income streams to maintain services, delivery of the final phases of the Transforming the D-Day Museum which ends in February 2021 and delivery of the Landing Craft Tank project in partnership with the National Museum of the Royal Navy, also delivery of the Wild about Portsmouth project which will transform access to the city's natural history collection and work with the newly formed independent body "Portsmouth Creates" on future joint cultural strategic opportunities and projects for the city .**
- 2.3 **Work towards a co-creation approach to service delivery in which residents become participants and work alongside staff to shape policies, plans and activity.**
- 2.4 **Deliver the Portsmouth revisited exhibition of paintings at Portsmouth Museum.**
- 2.5 **Prepare for the celebration of the 75th Anniversary of VE Day in May 2020 and the 125th Anniversary of municipal museums in Portsmouth in January 2020.**
- 2.6 **Provide public access to Southsea Lighthouse with the support of Coastal Revival Fund.**

3. Background

- 3.1 The D-Day Story opened to the public at the end of March with the formal opening by HRH Princess Anne in May 2018. The museum has successfully completed its first full year of operation achieving both visitor and income targets. Visitor surveys have shown that the response to the new museum is overwhelming positive. This is echoed by TripAdvisor reviews. In addition The D-Day Story has been nominated for a number of awards including the prestigious European Museum of the Year Award 2019. The museum won awards for best guidebook, best children's product (both Association of Cultural Enterprise awards) and volunteer of the year 2019 (Museum + Heritage awards). The National Lottery funding enabled an exciting programme of events to be delivered at the museum involving a number of partners - from Airfix to the National School of Needlework as well as local schools and colleges. The D-Day Story pop-up museum also attended events such as the Victorious Festival. Our third and final paid intern was recruited to work with local community groups on projects commemorating the 75th Anniversary of D-Day and the Normandy Landings.
- 3.2 The Soldiers of Sacrifice sculpture, created by artist Alfie Bradley, toured significant locations in the UK and France in March successfully raising the profile of The D-Day Story. The tour achieved 81 pieces of coverage in the press and 59 broadcast pieces, achieving a total coverage reach of 1.1 bn.
- 3.3 Museum staff continued to work in partnership with the National Museum of the Royal Navy (NMRN) on the delivery of the Landing Craft Tank (LCT) project: resurrecting a D-Day hero. This will see LCT 7074 restored and relocated to Southsea and open to visitors as part of The D-Day Story. An important role for us over the last year has been to ensure that the interpretation of the ship and her new displays reflect the people-focused approach of The D-Day Story. We are also leading on delivery of the LCT Activity Plan. The Community Participation Officer who will deliver the plan and the first of two project Apprentices joined the service in February and March respectively.
- 3.4 At Portsmouth Museum the 'You don't know Sherlock Holmes yet' exhibition opened in May and an exhibition celebrating 200 years of the Royal Academy in July (supported by funding from the RA). Smaller displays showcased other aspects of the city's heritage: archive photographs uncovered by the Paulsgrove Capturing the Spirit project; the 50th Anniversary of Sir Alec Rose sailing round the world; decorative items displayed under glass domes. The museum was also a beneficiary of The National Portrait Gallery's Coming Home initiative which has seen the original photograph of Isambard Brunel who was born in Portsmouth displayed in the city. Approval was obtained from the Royal Collections Trust for the loan of the Veterans' Portraits.
- 3.5 At Southsea Castle the Mary Rose Trust redisplayed the ground floor gallery of the Keep and new lighting was installed. At Eastney the Gas Engine House Volunteers

have been facilitated to continue their work with the support of the Community Project Officer and museum budgets.

- 3.6 The application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund in support of work on the city's Natural History Collection was successful. Wild about Portsmouth will see standards of collection care and documentation raised and more public involvement with the collection. Two project staff were recruited followed by some 20 volunteers. Storage areas have been reorganised and storage furniture acquired (recycled!) from a number of sources (including the Natural History Museum, London). Staff and volunteers are working together to reorganise and catalogue the collections. In addition the Natural History Curator has raised awareness of the city's Natural History Collection with local specialists through social media and a launch event in December 2018. The project also includes funding for events and workshops with the first of these delivered in October half term.
- 3.7 Other collection focused activity included photography of the sculpture collection as part of the Art UK project, work on the D-Day Jeep to bring it into full working order for use at outreach and other events. Staff have also transferred information about items in the D-Day Collection from donor and other files onto the collections database. This means that all the information we have about each item in this collection can be found in one place. Donations were made to the museums service in 2018/19 including a pair of 1960's Roller Coaster Cars from the 'Wild Mouse' ride at Clarence Pier.
- 3.8 A full marketing plan was implemented during the year with a major focus on the opening and first year of operation of The D-Day Story. The DDS campaign consisted of a landmark billboard at Waterloo station, inclusion in the destination London Underground campaign, advertising across the South Western Railway network, an outdoor campaign in Portsmouth with posters and banners, promotion on Big Screens at Guildhall Square and Victorious plus the very successful Soldiers of Sacrifice campaign. Other marketing for the whole of the service included the production and distribution of regular event leaflets, limited print advertising, a radio campaign in the summer months, digital and social media promotion and a number of group marketing initiatives. Visitor Surveys were undertaken at The D-Day Story, Portsmouth Museum and Cumberland House.
- 3.9 The percentage increase in Facebook page likes is shown below (and the actual numbers for January 2018 and 2019 respectively).

Charles Dickens' Birthplace Museum: **9.9%** (from 1,202 to 1,321)

Cumberland House: **47.1%** (from 986 to 1,450)

The D-Day Story: **17.9%** (from 4,580 to 5,402)

Portsmouth Museum: **11.5%** (from 4,044 to 4,508)

Southsea Castle: **28.4%** (from 1,150 to 1,477)

All sites except Dickens exceeded the 10% target for increase in social media activity, and Dickens missed out by just 0.1%. There was great percentage growth from Cumberland House, and good results for both D-Day and Portsmouth museums given they were starting from much higher baselines.

3.10 Portsmouth Museums received a total of 311,607 visits in 2018/19, 78,825 (31%) more than the previous year. The number of visits for each site is shown below.

	<u>2017/18</u>	<u>2018/19</u>	Percentage difference
The D-Day Story	*57,486	84,024	+46%
Southsea Castle	126,007	114,575	-9%
Cumberland House	64,590	72,183	+12%
Eastney Beam Engine House	597	562	-6%
Dickens' Birthplace Museum	3,217	3,108	-3%
Portsmouth Museum	42,855	37,155	-13%

* Total for 2016/17 the last full year of operation of the D-Day Museum.

3.11 The number of visits for The D-Day Story and Cumberland House is very encouraging; the visits for Southsea Castle and Portsmouth Museum are a concern. Closer inspection reveals that Southsea Castle underperformed in April and August (the numbers for August being 10,823 i.e. 32% down on the previous year) and Portsmouth Museum performed particularly poorly in June and July (the total for both months being 5,690 i.e. 43% down on the previous year). April was particularly cold and wet last year which may explain the underperformance of Southsea Castle an essentially outdoor venue and June and July were particularly hot and not ideal for museum visits which will have contributed to the reduced visits at Portsmouth Museum.

3.12 This year the visits at Portsmouth Museum for the first two months are already 2,724(i.e. 44% above last year).

4. Reasons for recommendations

4.1 The recommendations are based on the service plan on a page for the year ahead (Appendix 1). Planned activities are listed under the six key aims for the service.

4.2 Due to the continuing financial pressures faced by the council the Museums service has to generate additional income of £39,000 pa from 2019/20 in order to maintain services at current levels. The focus is on under-utilised spaces at Portsmouth Museum including former office space with a view to making them available for hire to small businesses. In addition we plan to lower the fees and charges for use of the Briefing Room at The D-Day Story so it can be used by community groups and other organisations on a regular basis. Both initiatives will generate income through rental and secondary spend in the museum shops and cafes.

4.3 Although the capital phase of the Transforming the D-Day Museum project is complete (apart from the outstanding items of snagging), the project Activity Plan runs until 2020. The main focus for 2019 will be activity to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of D-Day and the Normandy Landings including completing the D-Day 75 Community Projects, the international D-Day conference and associated activity for visitors in July, also the writer in residence project culminating in the publication of a children's story book. In addition the National Lottery Heritage Fund has asked

that we review what the Activity Plan has achieved to date against our original objectives and to make any adjustments needed to address any areas of weakness. This gives us the opportunity to ensure that this Activity Plan aligns with that for the LCT 7074 project as they run over the same period.

- 4.4 The Landing Craft Tank (LCT) project continues. LCT 7074 will be operated as part of the D-Day Story. She will arrive on site in spring 2020, opening to the public a few months later. The museums service is leading on the delivery of the project Activity Plan and preparing for operation of the ship as part of The D-Day Story. The two D-Day Tanks, previously on display outside the museum will be conserved as part of this project and displayed on board LCT. Museum staff are also actively involved in the development of the new displays and supporting Legal Services with the drafting of the service level agreement with the NMRN.
- 4.5 Volunteers have made an important contribution to the Transforming the D-Day Museum project and the first year's operation of The D-Day Story. They will play an even more pivotal role going forward as LCT 'Navigators'; the people responsible for day-to-day visitor services on board. We need to ensure an effective and seamless relationship between paid staff and volunteers in order to deliver the high standards of customer care to which we aspire. This will be a priority for the next 12 months.
- 4.6 The Wild about Portsmouth project will continue as planned with the support of volunteers and this year we envisage making significant inroads into the historic documentation backlogs involving the Natural History Collection. This work is essential if the museums service is to retain Accreditation with Arts Council England (due for renewal in 2021). A programme of activities will continue to engage people - from families to specialists - with these collections. This year we will also be involving museum visitors and other stakeholders in shaping plans for the future redisplay of the natural history museum (with a view to pursuing external funding in future years).
- 4.7 Portsmouth Museums has a track-record of engaging community groups with its work and understands the positive benefits this can have for the people involved. In the past this type of activity has been project-funded and has ended as soon as the money ran out. Building on our own good practice and that of other museums we propose therefore to explore ways of embedding community participation in our approach to service delivery so it becomes integral to the way the service operates on a day to day basis. This will also help us to meet the requirements of Accreditation with Arts Council England (the service is due to re-apply in 2021).
- 4.8 The 'Portsmouth revisited' exhibition will open in September 2019 at Portsmouth Museum. The original plan was to pair paintings from Portsmouth's Fine Art Collection with a number of prestigious loans from national and regional institutions to evoke new and different responses to views of the city. Unfortunately without additional funding the service is not able to meet the additional security costs associated with the loans (including constant invigilation). We therefore propose that the focus of the exhibition will be the city's collection supplemented by works borrowed from individual lenders.

- 4.9 The museums service will plan activities to celebrate the 75th anniversary of VE Day in May 2020 and the 125th anniversary of the opening of Portsmouth's first municipal museum in January 2020.
- 4.10 The council has been awarded £50,000 from the Coastal Revival Fund for a project to open and interpret the history of the lighthouse to members of the public. The first phase of work is to cost up the works, then review the budget and investigate options for additional funding.
- 4.11 Portsmouth museums will be working with the newly independent organisation "Portsmouth Creates" in their aspiration of the delivery of the cultural strategy. Initial discussions illustrate a number of commonalities including opportunities for young people to be employed in the creative sector, raising a profile for the creative industries, in addition to working with them on the UK City of Culture bid in 2025.

5. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

- 5.1 A preliminary EIA has been completed

6. Legal Comments

- 6.1. There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report. However, Legal Services will advise and assist as required in the context of specific elements of the Service Plan as they are implemented.

7. Director of Finance comments

- 7.1 The activities of the Museum Service will continue to be delivered within approved budgets with specific projects supported by additional grant funding.

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Signed by:
Stephen Baily
Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services

Appendices: **Appendix 1** - Portsmouth Museums, Operational Plan on a Page 2018/19
 Appendix 2 - Preliminary Equality Impact Assessment

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

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

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

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 Signed by:
Cabinet Member for Culture and City Development