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**Title of meeting:** Culture and City Development Decision Meeting

**Subject:** Developing Watersports in Portsmouth

**Date of meeting:** 31 January 2020

**Report by:** Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services

**Wards affected:** All

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1. **Requested by**  
Councillor Steve Pitt, Cabinet Member for Culture and City Development
  2. **Purpose**
    - 2.1 To provide an update on progress with the "Developing Watersports in Portsmouth" strategy document, and highlight the next priority areas for action.
  3. **Background**
    - 3.1 Portsmouth's growth and character have been influenced by its geographical location and relationship to the sea. Home to the Royal Navy since the 17th century and located predominantly on an island, the city retains a strong maritime heritage distinguished by its historic, diverse and vibrant waterfront. The city has a rich natural environment with internationally protected harbours and other nationally and locally protected sites. The seafront is the main focus for leisure activity by the sea, and is home to many of the city's historic buildings and streets. There are over 6 million visits per year to the seafront.
    - 3.2 The seafront brings great benefit to the people of the city and its visitor economy, and a strategy is in place to develop the area further for leisure and tourism, including by attracting world-class events. There is more to the Portsmouth waterfront than Southsea, though. On the eastern coast, the internationally designated harbours are unique areas for people to enjoy. To the west, the Naval Base and Commercial Port give way to the shoreline at Tipner, leading up past Hilsea Lido to Port Creek, and leading towards Port Solent & Horsea Island in the northwest corner of the city on the northern reaches of Portsmouth Harbour.
    - 3.3 This abundance of waterfront opens up unique opportunities for the city. It means that Portsmouth can offer varied and attractive lifestyle choices to residents; can appeal to visitors looking for a range of experiences; and presents advantages for businesses and investors. These facilities support hundreds of individuals actively participating in sports or sports administration, to ensure that there is a vibrancy in



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the city. However, the council identified that there were improvements that could be made to the existing facilities that would improve access and participation, and develop the reputation of the city as a natural home for activities such as sailing, swimming, rowing, for example, and therefore developed the document, "Developing watersports in Portsmouth" to guide the approach to this. The strategy was adopted by the Cabinet Member in March 2016.

- 3.4 The city has thriving watersports and coastal recreation community and some excellent facilities. The challenge identified in the strategy document was to work within the national and local policy contexts to build on this foundation and harness the energy that exists to take the watersports opportunity and ensure there is a significant impact for residents, visitors and business.
- 3.5 In developing the strategy, we consulted with a wide range of partners. Four key themes were highlighted:
- Ensuring participation in watersports and coastal recreation is as safe, easy and inclusive as possible
  - Taking and making opportunities to make the most of facilities and assets across the city to improve the watersports and coastal recreation offer in Portsmouth
  - Building on the watersports and coastal recreation opportunity to promote the Great Waterfront City
  - Using the opportunity presented by watersports and coastal recreation to enhance the education and skills offer of Portsmouth
- 3.6 An action plan in support of the key themes was incorporated within the strategy document.

## **4. Information Requested**

- 4.1 A full report against the action plan as set out in the strategy document is attached as Appendix 1. Significant points to notes include:
- Ensuring water safety continues to be a priority - significant actions have been undertaken but recent internal audit activity highlighted further improvements to processes that could be introduced.
  - Engagement around developing Portsmouth as a home for events of significance continues and is an area where the city has the potential to develop further
  - Work to reposition the Watersports Centre facility on the Eastern Road has been successful, with an increased profile and improved offer.
  - Some development work has taken place with clubs in the city, notably Southsea Rowing Club, to support increased access and participation.

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- 4.2 There are some areas of the strategy that have yet to be progressed, which include:
- Developing a wider forum of interested parties to progress common issues and interests
  - Fully realising the educational and employment potential of the water-based leisure and recreation opportunities in the city
  - Developing a clear approach to key sites that could support watersport development on the city.
- 4.3 These issues will form the priority work for the next phase of implementing the strategy, alongside continuing to develop the work of the Andrew Simpson Centre and ensuring that water safety measures are implemented.
- 4.4 The water sports activities continue in Portsmouth with PCC's delivery partner, Andrew Simpson Trust who operate the facility on the Eastern Road (ASWC):
- Users of the facility has now reached an annual figure of 7,500
  - The Centre has contributed to the annual turnover of the foundations UK operations to over £1m
  - The High Ropes facility makes a significant impact and is offered as part of a 'day of activities', which may include archery or using the windsurfing simulator, especially if the weather is such that waterborne activities become limited due to safety
  - The sea defence work has already had had an impact on the accommodation offer that was originally planned for the Centre where they could have offered this facility for courses longer than one day to complete. This accommodation was also to be used for team building leadership courses
  - There will be an annual event on the sports pitches adjacent to the Centre and the centre will also be the finish line for the UK's 'Bike for Bart' fundraising cycle event.
  - There is an ambition for a joint PCC/Foundation event for Portsmouth to become the UK host centre for world fundraising event 'Bart's Bash', which is a sailing event taking place on the same day in 81 countries who participate throughout the world
  - The Portsmouth Sail Training Trust is now well established and part of the Andrew Simpson Foundation who work alongside the Eastern Road offer but are based in the Naval Base. Their offer is access to high quality fast day boats, which gives the user the feel of keel boat sailing in a safer environment
- 4.5 The Tudor Sailing Club will also be affected by the sea defence work, particularly with access to their slipway but a good relationship with the ASWC means they will share each other's slipways when their own is out of action for the work to be carried out. This club also has an active juniors section where boats owned by the club, rather than its members can be used by juniors who can join the club in their



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own right without necessarily having other members of their family as members. Like all community sports clubs, they have full safeguarding systems in place.

- 4.6 Locks Sailing Club is probably the oldest sailing club in Portsmouth having been established in 1907. They published their development plan in 2017 and their key elements are:
- Increasing boats availability to those members who can't afford their own
  - Members duties will include taking new members out as crew
  - Participating more fully in local, regional and national events
  - They also want to work with other watersports providers/events in the city
- 4.7 Portsmouth Sailing Club are based in Old Portsmouth and they will celebrate their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020 and the club are keen to become involved in all waterborne events in and around Portsmouth. In 2017 and 2018, they worked with the 1851 Trust and the ASF to offer sailing activities to those young people of Portsmouth who would not usually get the opportunity to sail in a keel or racing boat and it was targeted at this who are economically inactive. It was oversubscribed but even though members gave their time and craft freely, it still cost to set up and funding was not available for 2019. However, there is still a desire to continue with this and there is a need to establish exactly how much funding would be required.
- 4.8 Portsmouth (Southsea) Rowing Club will not be affected by any sea defence work in 2020 however future phases will have a marked effect on them. They have a long-term self-repairing lease with PCC but open water rowing is not a mainstream sport and they do not have a large membership base and the building is in need of some maintenance and modernisation. Since Portsmouth Harbour has become a major port, it has had a serious impact on their access to the water from their club. This has become worse since the channel was widened and deepened for the new aircraft carriers. The club has tried to grow a junior section but this does have risks with access to the water so close to the shipping channel. The club hold a regional regatta every year but even this takes place in the relatively quiet section between Canoe Lak and South Parade Pier.
- 4.9 Portsmouth Canoeing Club was established in 1979 and is loosely based in Portsmouth having members from all over Hampshire. They regularly paddle in and around the Solent but they have an international perspective with annual canoeing expeditions overseas. This club is an active member of Portsmouth Sports Council.
- 4.10 Currently a number of significant water based and water related events are under consideration for both 2020 and 2021 and further details of these will be announced once more information is agreed with the event organisers.



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

**Appendices**

**Appendix 1 - Progress against action plan**

**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:

<b>Title of document</b>	<b>Location</b>
Developing Watersports in Portsmouth	<a href="https://democracy.portsmouth.gov.uk/documents/s10686/03.0%20Developing%20Watersport%20in%20Portsmouth%202016%20-%202020.pdf">https://democracy.portsmouth.gov.uk/documents/s10686/03.0%20Developing%20Watersport%20in%20Portsmouth%202016%20-%202020.pdf</a>

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### Appendix 1 - Progress against action plan

Action	Status	Commentary
<b>Ensuring participation in watersports and coastal recreation is as safe, easy and inclusive as possible</b>		
1.1	Completed	<p>The RNLI was commissioned to carry out the RA, PRE and signage survey on the South East, East, North and North West of the Island. These reports were integrated into capital bid for funds to complete the project. A successful bid enabled us to install the new signage and PRE exactly as per the recommendations of the RNLI. The monitoring of the PRE is being managed with the Parks team.</p> <p>Appointed an external consultant to report on the strategy about the issues of Tombstoning, particularly in Old Portsmouth.</p> <p>Multi agency working group has been set up to find a way to deal the increasing Anti-social behaviour associated with Tombstoning.</p>
1.2	Complete	
1.3	Work in progress	I have met with regional RNLI staff
1.4	Future priority	



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	designated routes for paddling		
1.5	Bring together a watersports forum of groups and businesses to explore opportunities for joint working and promotion	Future priority	
1.6	Work with NGB's for watersports, local groups and Portsmouth Watersports Centre to develop a wider range of opportunities to take part in (pop-up events) watersports festival etc. linked to the developing events strategy	Future priority	
<b>Taking and making opportunities to make the most of facilities and assets across the city to improve the watersports and coastal recreation offer in Portsmouth</b>			
2.1	Develop plans for improving watersports infrastructure in the city, including water access, changing and storage facilities and consider linked opportunities	Future priority	
2.2	Ensure asset and facility issues are considered as part of watersports forum discussion	Work in progress	
2.3	Work with Portsmouth watersports Centre to develop awareness and usage of the Centre	Work in progress	The procurement of Andrew Simpson Sailing Foundation to manage this asset has resulted in much more community oriented facility. As a foundation with no shareholders all profits are distributed with the various foundation venues. Portsmouth venue is now one of the largest in the portfolio and has been supplemented by the managed takeover of the Portsmouth Sail Training Trust that



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			gives greater access to the water in keel boat. The Foundation has reviewed the Watersports Centre and are aiming to improve engagement with Portsmouth schools and colleges. The summer of 2019 has seen the Centre being used a great deal more. Facilities have been enhanced, with a pop up café as a trial with hot and cold refreshments and cold snacks.
2.4	Review watersports property holdings and usage to create a comprehensive plan for their development (including a particular review of the Camber)	Future priority	
2.5	Engage with Hilsea Lido Trust to explore future options for watersports development on the site	Complete	A bid to the Coastal Community Fund to enable further development of the site was unsuccessful.
2.6	Consider opportunities for using inland water sites including Northharbour lake, Long Curtain Moat, Tipner Lake and Canoe Lake to create a new dimension to watersports offer in Portsmouth	Work in progress	
<b>Building on the watersports and coastal recreation opportunity to promote the Great Waterfront City</b>			
3.1	Work with partners including other LA's and DMP to promote Portsmouth and the south coast as a visitor and business destination in light of the opportunities presented by the	GREAT UK project complete - further work in progress	Ongoing development of the leisure marine sector through the Economic Development Strategy





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	AMC series spotlight, through joint bid to Great UK Challenge Fund		
3.2	Pull together an event and experience based programme to promote opportunities in the city, linked to other models for information on safe access and usage	Future priority	
3.3	Ensure event and experience issues form part of watersports forum discussions and consider options for developing local watersports festival or other flagship events, building on existing local expertise	Future priority	
<b>Using the opportunity presented by watersport and coastal recreation to enhance the education and skills offer of Portsmouth</b>			
4.1	Continue to play an active role in the development of the UTC	Complete	UTC now fully operational within the city
4.2	Support the development of wider educational and skills opportunities in the city, including as an offshoot to the AC Series	Future priority	