

**THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY**  
(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Equality Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

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

**Subject:** Water Safety

**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**

1.1 Cabinet Member for Culture and City Development

**2. Purpose**

2.1 To update Members on the results of a recently completed Water Safety audit and the actions and mitigations taken since the report.

**3. Information Requested**

3.1 Culture, Leisure & Regulatory Services have always taken a lead on the provision of adequate water safety measures across the seafront and other key areas where the responsibility for the land has fallen under the service.

3.2 This challenging area has rightly had a high level of scrutiny from the Councils Internal Audit team to ensure that our provision is more than adequate and is regularly reviewed. The frequency of audits on this particular area has been high with an average of one review per year for each of the last four years.

3.3 As a coastal city water safety is paramount to ensuring that the public remain safe whilst enjoying the water and that the Authority is fulfilling its legislative responsibilities in providing support, guidance and the relevant equipment in areas of need. Areas in particular need include bodies of water where there are a range of tidal conditions and other hazards as well as areas that are visited in high numbers by tourists and residents.

3.4 As a service we already take responsibility for key areas of the city's water edge including highly visited areas such as the seafront. We take responsibility for the regular review of all water safety signage ensuring that it is accurate and up to date to reflect the localised environment, support and pay for the contractual engagement of the RNLI to provide a high season service across the seafront and co-ordinate twice yearly meetings of the Water Safety Forum which includes key partners such as the RNLI and Queen's Harbour Master along with active local

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water users such as Portsmouth Canoe Club and the Portsmouth Volunteers Lifeguard Service.

- 3.5 The most recent audit testing however highlighted that there was no formal guidance or strategy regarding Water Safety and responsibility for the areas of water. It was also highlighted that there was an assumed responsibility by Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services as they had covered key areas of the city resulting in other services not being held to account for areas they may be responsible for or align services being provided to avoid duplication of the work. Audit also referenced that there was a risk that Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services are using their own department budget to remedy issues that should be covered by other services and/or external parties such as the Ministry of Defence.
- 3.6 It is important to note that despite our perception of the importance of this area of work there is no national guidance on how Local Authorities' should approach Water Safety and what measures they should put in place. Even the more recent tragedies such as that which took place on Camber Sands beach where 9 deaths occurred over a 4 year period from 2012 - 2016 have not resulted in any national guidance being issued. We therefore place significant importance on our contractual relationship with the RNLI in order to provide us with an accurate and updated position from industry specialists.
- 3.7 The key actions from the most recent Audit report will be to establish an internal Water Safety Forum which will work to collectively ensure that water safety issues are considered in a cohesive manner across the Authority with intelligence shared from the equivalent external Water Safety Forum which already meets twice per year. This body will also take responsibility to draft and implement a council wide water safety strategy and policy document

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

**Appendices:** None

**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>
Internal Audit Report PCC1920-017 Water Safety	W/CUL/Seafront/Watersafety/PCC Audit Reports/Report 2019