

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

**Date of meeting:** 31 January 2020

**Subject:** Space Chase: The Summer Reading Challenge 2019

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

**Wards affected:** ALL

**Key decision:** NO

**Full Council decision:** NO

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**1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1 To update the Cabinet Member for Culture and City Development on the Library and Archive Service's annual Summer Reading Challenge, including additional work undertaken this year to target disadvantaged pupils and looked after children.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 **That the Cabinet Member approves the continued delivery of Summer Reading Challenge PLUS in 2020 following this year's successful pilot.**
- 2.2 **That given increasing participation year-on-year, the Library and Archive Service explores external funding to support the purchase of additional Summer Reading Challenge materials and books for all Portsmouth Libraries.**

**3. Background**

- 3.1 The Summer Reading Challenge is an annual programme encouraging reading for pleasure by children aged four to eleven. It is by far the biggest reading programme taking place amongst the age group and is delivered by public libraries during the summer holidays. 2019 marked the twentieth year the Challenge has been organised by The Reading Agency. Each year the Challenge has a theme and this year's was 'Space Chase', marking the fiftieth anniversary of the first lunar landing.
- 3.2 Children are encouraged to borrow and read six items from their local public library. The emphasis is on reading for enjoyment and children discuss their

reading choices with library staff and volunteers, gaining incentives as they go on to complete the Challenge.

- 3.3 2019 has been the most successful year on record for Portsmouth, with 3,126 children signing up for the Challenge and 1,806 children going on to complete. This number represents around eleven per cent of all Portsmouth primary school pupils and is a six point eight per cent increase on last year's figures. The results for 2019 are the highest ever achieved in Portsmouth. Forty-five per cent of participants were girls and fifty-five per cent were boys.
- 3.4 Library staff attended most primary schools in the city in the run-up to the summer holidays in order to promote the Challenge in school assemblies. Posters and other publicity materials were sent to all schools and all pupils received a personal invitation to take part. Increasingly, schools are offering their own rewards and incentives to encourage participation. The School Library Service also awarded library furniture to the six schools that had the highest number of completed Challenges (see Appendix 1 for the 2019 results by school).
- 3.5 Library staff were supported by forty-two volunteers aged from twelve years and older. Young volunteers have supported the Library and Archive Service during the Challenge for a number of years now and are well-established. Collectively, these volunteers contributed some 500 hours of their time during the summer holiday. Primarily a children's activity, the Challenge has an impact on all library staff, as there is an increase in new items ordered and being receipted and greater footfall in all libraries. Between 8<sup>th</sup> July and 15<sup>th</sup> September, 42,371 children's books were issued and forty-two activities were delivered across the branches to over 850 children.
- 3.6 A very busy winners' event was once again held at Southsea Castle on Sunday 22 September, with support from colleagues in Museums and Visitor Service. Despite the very wet and windy weather, 3,381 children and their families attended to collect certificates and medals.
- 3.7 Whilst numbers of children finishing the Challenge have increased over the years, the Library and Archive Service is aware that more targeted intervention is needed to make the Challenge even more inclusive. This year, primary school pupils were invited to take part in Summer Reading Challenge PLUS, a new initiative to increase participation of disadvantaged pupils, who otherwise would not take part in the Challenge over the summer holidays (see Appendix 2 for a list of participating schools).
- 3.8 Schools undertook three visits to libraries with small groups of pupils in the second half of the Summer Term. The pupils borrowed items and discussed their reading choices with library staff and completed the Challenge before the start of the summer holidays. These pupils are then able to join their peers at celebration assemblies held in schools at the start of the autumn term when they often get additional rewards for participation.

- 3.8 The Virtual School also offered funding of £150 to schools in order to facilitate the participation of looked after children in the Challenge, another group of children who are under-represented (see Appendix 3 for participating schools).

#### **4. Reasons for recommendations**

- 4.1 Over 150 pupils took part in the Summer Reading PLUS initiative this year. Feedback from schools suggests this was a highly valued opportunity for these children, who otherwise would not have visited libraries or read widely for pleasure over the holidays (see Appendix 4). The last few years have seen a fairly consistent trend of around 10 per cent of Portsmouth primary school pupils completing the Challenge. In order for participation to grow, the Library and Archive Service has to take a much more proactive approach to engaging other groups of children in the city.
- 4.2 To date, the Summer Reading Challenge has been delivered within Library and Archive Service cash limits but year-on-year participation increases inevitably are a pressure on library budgets. More of the Challenge packs need to be purchased, matched by a corresponding increase in the number of children's books purchased to meet library demands. In addition, delivery of Summer Reading Challenge PLUS is staff and volunteer intensive.

#### **5. Integrated Impact Assessment**

- 5.1 An IIA is attached (Appendix 3)

#### **6. Legal implications**

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.
- 6.2 The promotion of the Challenge is consistent with the Council's statutory duties and powers as a library authority.

#### **7. Director of Finance's comments**

- 7.1 The 2019 Summer Reading Challenge and the Summer Reading Challenge Plus have been delivered from existing library resources.
- 7.2 As the event grows, it is becoming more difficult to fund the additional staff and resources required. Securing external funding to help support the event would ease this pressure.

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Signed by:

**Stephen Baily**

**Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services**

**Appendices:**

**Appendix 1:** Numbers of children starting and completing the Summer Reading Challenge, relative to pupil roll.

**Appendix 2:** Schools participating in Summer Reading Challenge PLUS 2019

**Appendix 3:** Integrated 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:

<b>Title of document</b>	<b>Location</b>

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**

## Appendix 1: Numbers of children starting and completing the Summer Reading Challenge, relative to pupil roll.

SCHOOL	Started	Finished	% of roll started	% of roll finished
Mayfield School	144	101	43.5	30.5
Corpus Christi RC (A) Primary School	103	82	33.2	26.5
Medina Primary School	62	54	30.2	26.3
Southsea Infant School	78	65	28.9	24.1
St Swithuns RC (A) Primary School	111	79	31.3	22.3
Madani Academy	10	8	24.4	19.5
Langstone Infant School	79	48	29.6	18.0
Bramble Infant School and Nursery	42	28	25.1	16.8
Cumberland Infant School	38	29	22.0	16.8
Solent Infant School	49	38	18.1	14.1
St Judes CE (C) Primary School	90	54	22.1	13.2
Wimborne Junior School	44	45	12.5	12.8
Gatcombe Park Primary School	35	26	17.0	12.6
Wimborne Infant School	29	24	14.1	11.7
St John's Cathedral Catholic Primary School	35	25	14.8	10.6
Craneswater Junior School	74	46	15.9	9.9
Court Lane Infant School	64	35	17.8	9.7
Solent Junior School	60	34	16.4	9.3
College Park Infant School	58	33	16.3	9.3
Lyndhurst Junior School	72	42	15.6	9.1
Meon Infant School	35	16	19.7	9.0
Langstone Junior School	68	34	17.7	8.9
Ark Ayrton Primary Academy	48	37	11.4	8.8
Flying Bull Primary School	53	41	10.8	8.4
Stamshaw Infant School	30	19	12.8	8.1
Moorings Way Infant School	27	11	19.6	8.0
Northern Parade Infant School	40	26	11.3	7.3
Highbury Primary School	43	29	10.6	7.1
Cottage Grove Primary School & Nursery	45	32	10.0	7.1
Fernhurst Junior School	37	23	10.7	6.7
Copnor Primary School	80	45	11.8	6.6
Devonshire Infant & Nurture Assessment Unit	22	12	12.1	6.6
St Pauls RC Primary	50	25	12.9	6.4
Northern Parade Junior School	48	29	10.1	6.1
Milton Park Primary School	48	23	12.6	6.0
Stamshaw Junior School	22	13	10.1	6.0
Beacon View Primary School	41	25	9.7	5.9
Court Lane Junior School	60	28	12.6	5.9



Meon Junior School	40	20	11.5	5.7
Isambard Brunel Junior School	26	16	8.6	5.3
Manor Infant School	25	11	11.6	5.1
Penhale Infant School	23	12	9.4	4.9
St George's Beneficial CE (C) Primary School	23	15	6.8	4.4
Arundel Court Primary Academy	40	24	6.7	4.0
Meredith Infant School	22	10	8.9	4.0
Newbridge Junior School	41	19	8.5	3.9
Westover Primary School	25	13	7.5	3.9
Portsdown Primary School	18	11	4.5	2.8
Charter Academy	7	5	1.1	0.8
Redwood Park	2	1	1.5	0.7
The Victory Primary School	17	3	3.5	0.6
St. Edmund's	8	6	0.8	0.6
Trafalgar	8	3	1.2	0.5
Springfield	11	4	1.0	0.4
Miltoncross School	5	2	0.6	0.2
Ark Dickens Primary School	7	1	1.6	0.2
Admiral Lord Nelson	2	2	0.2	0.2
Priory	3	1	0.2	0.1
Castle View Academy	3	0	0.5	0.0
Mary Rose School	3	0	2.0	0.0
Portsmouth Academy	4	0	0.6	0.0

## **Appendix 2: Schools participating in Summer Reading Challenge PLUS 2019**

Ark Ayrton Primary Academy  
Corpus Christi Primary School  
Gatcombe Park Primary School  
Medina Primary School  
St. Paul's Primary School  
St. Swithun's Primary School  
Southsea Infant School.

## **Appendix 3: Schools receiving funding from the Virtual School to encourage participation by looked after children**

Beacon View Primary School  
Highbury Primary School  
Southsea Infant School

## **Appendix 4: Teacher feedback from a participating Summer Reading Challenge PLUS school.**

The Summer Reading Challenge was such a positive experience for our chosen children. They loved visiting the library and for most it was the first time they'd been through the doors. One of our Year Twos was so taken with the experience she took her mother down to the library and joined the week after their first visit. Another...does not go out and about within the city and really only goes between home and school. Reading and writing are not priorities for her family and she has worked really hard to learn to read and to increase her English vocabulary in her three years with us. She was so, SO pleased to be involved in the challenge, even walking to and from the library was special for her and her little face was beaming when she received her certificate and medal...The challenge has really opened up a whole new world to her. Every one of our children has benefitted from the experience, some were still wearing their medals today. As I walk around the school they come to tell me about the books they have chosen and which they'd like to choose next.

We'd jump at the chance to provide this opportunity again for our more vulnerable children, I cannot emphasise enough the difference it has made in 'closing the gap' between these chosen children and opportunities other children take as a given.