

Title of meeting: Culture, Leisure and Economic Development Decision Meeting

Date of meeting: 16 October 2020

Subject: Museums annual review and forward plan

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 2019/20 and to present the museum service 'Plan on a Page' (PoP) for the current financial year.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 **The achievements of 2019/20 are noted.**
- 2.2 **A new Museums Strategy is developed in dialogue with stakeholders.**
- 2.3 **The Landing Craft Tank (LCT) project is completed in partnership with the National Museum of the Royal Navy, opening in 2020 as part of The D-Day Story.**
- 2.4 **Audiences are broadened and better understood by involving them in the work of the museums service and through special projects, programming, evaluation, and visitor surveys.**
- 2.5 **Standards of customer care are raised through training and performance monitoring and that the museums service continues to develop volunteers and paid staff to create a single integrated team.**
- 2.6 **Preparations begin to renew Accreditation with Arts Council England.**

3 Background

- 3.1 Last year was dominated by D-Day 75 and the national commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the D-Day Landings in which the city of Portsmouth played a leading role. In the final month of the year Covid-19 struck. This has had major impact on plans for 2020/21 with staff working from home, museums initially closed and services maintained digitally, some museums reopening with reduced capacity and other measures to limit the spread of the virus, some plans abandoned as no longer feasible (activities to celebrate 125 years of civic museums in Portsmouth for example), others delayed (such as the opening of Portsmouth revisited II) while other opportunities emerged including collecting, the City's experience of and response to Covid-19.

4. Reasons for recommendations

Achievements in 2019/20 include:

- 4.1 Projects and activities that enabled people to engage with The D-Day Story and the Landing Craft project (funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund) including:
- D-Day 75 community projects in which community groups explored different aspects of D-Day and conflict more generally; work led by the third of our project interns.
 - We knew something was happening where re-enactors walked the route taken by soldiers through the city on their way to embark for D-Day.
 - The work of the Young Shapers facilitated by Unloc which gave young people the opportunity to develop and deliver events for visitors to The D-Day Story.
 - The work of the Pigeon Squad, a group of young people, led by writer in residence Steve Tasane to retell the story of Gustav the Pigeon.
 - The arrival of The D-Day Story tricycle and volunteers to ride it in the city as a means of raising awareness of the Landing Craft Tank project and starting point for community conversations.
 - The Landing Craft Tank Journey project which worked with communities and museum colleagues in Tyne & Weir, Norfolk, Southampton and Liverpool to uncover the story of LCT 7074 from manufacture in the North East via Normandy to Liverpool Night Club.
- 4.2 At Portsmouth Museum and Art Gallery we hosted displays, exhibitions and activities featuring:
- The Portsmouth Charter (including the loan from the Bodleian Library)
 - The Portraits of the D-Day Veterans commissioned by HRH Prince Charles (on loan from the Royal Collection).
 - Portsmouth revisited including loans from Tate Britain, Sheffield Galleries and the Royal Collection. The Royal Collection funded the conservation of one work that had never been on public display before.

- A complete skeleton of a Dodo on loan from Cherry Records which formed the centre-piece of the exhibition D is for Dodo, E is for Extinct.

- 4.3 Building work was carried out at Dickens' Birthplace, Southsea Castle and Eastney Beam Engine House. Work continued on the Wild about Portsmouth project to transform standards of collection care, documentation and access to the natural history collections for audiences ranging from children to specialists. Staff and volunteers successfully completed Welcome Host Gold training (delivered by members of the team trained to deliver the course), took the exam (City & Guilds Level 2), with two members of the team (one paid / one volunteer) achieving the result 'outstanding'. At Portsmouth Museum and Art Gallery we also welcomed our first tenant, LMJL Millinery.
- 4.4 Marketing for museums had some big wins with the world focus on Portsmouth for D-Day 75. South Western Railway named a new train 'The D-Day Story, Portsmouth' and displayed 100 posters across their network promoting the museums, supplemented by a local poster campaign and a dedicated window display in John Lewis, Southsea. Two large billboards promoting The D-Day Story were booked for October half-term and remained in place for much longer; one through to August 2020.
- 4.5 The Portraits of D-Day Veterans and the Portsmouth revisited exhibitions had poster campaigns, print adverts, articles and social media promotions. D is for Dodo E is for Extinct was promoted locally. All out of home marketing was supported by digital marketing via websites and social media. New websites were produced for all our museums (except DDS which already has one).
- 4.6 A total of just under 305,000 people visited our six sites in 2019/20 (4% less than the previous year). Visits to the D-Day Story would have achieved over 100,000 visits without the Covid-19 lockdown in March.

Our plans for the current year are shown in Appendix 1.

- 4.7 **The Museums Strategy** is due for revision and update. This was kick-started towards the end of last year with a peer challenge review, carried out by Tony Butler, CX of Derby Museums Trust, and a facilitated workshop with staff. A series of workshops is currently underway to explore Portsmouthness and the stories Portsmouth Museums should tell with representatives of the city's communities. In addition we plan to carry out market research to explore barriers to access to further inform the strategy. In light of the considerable investment in the Eastney Beam Engine House - part of the scheduled ancient monument - a way forward is required to ensure that momentum is maintained.
- 4.8 **The Landing Craft Tank (LCT)** project will end in 2021. Conservation of the ship is complete, it has arrived on site and the two D-Day Tanks (also conserved) loaded on board. Our role is to operate LCT as part of The D-Day Story. This project has been affected by Covid-19 and a key issue at the present time will be our ability to deliver the Business Plan and generate the surplus required for future maintenance.

- 4.9 **Activities designed to develop new and existing audiences, inspire and engage people** include delivery of the activity / audience development plans linked to our three live externally funded lottery projects (ie Transforming the D-Day Museum, the Landing Craft Tank project and Wild about Portsmouth). These have all been adapted and extended reflecting the impact of Covid-19. We have also contributed a number of online tours of the city's collections to the national Heritage Open Days programme. The Collecting Covid-19 project is underway in partnership with The News and as this is a shared experience to which everyone can relate we are keen to display some of the items acquired and celebrate the city's unsung heroes as soon as possible. In order to reach new audiences we are also working with Cascades to create an eye-catching window display featuring the city's stunning natural history collections (which are now much easier for staff to use as a result of the Wild about Portsmouth project). We are also keen to demonstrate the potential of museums to animate and contribute to the regeneration of high streets as a result of this initiative.
- 4.10 **Raising standards of customer care and empowering staff** to deliver is an important aspect of the service. We have therefore developed and begun to deliver the 'Happy Museums' project which aims to set the standards to which we aspire and equip staff to achieve them. We are also looking to create a bespoke form for performance development reviews which better suits the work of the team.
- 4.11 As a result of training programmes involving both paid and unpaid (volunteer) staff, teams are working together in a more integrated and effective way. The opening of Landing Craft Tank as part of The D-Day Story which will be dependent on volunteers will provide the final push towards achieving this.
- 4.12 **Accreditation** is the national benchmark for museums in England, managed by Arts Council England. We were due to reapply in 2021 but this has been postponed until 2022 due to Covid-19. Preparing for Accreditation is a massive undertaking and it will require us to review and update exiting policies and plans as well as producing some new ones (for all of our sites).

5. **Integrated impact assessment**

- 5.1 IIA not required as implementing previously agreed strategic aims.

6. **Legal implications**

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report. However, Legal Services will provide legal advice and assistance as necessary in the context of specific elements of the service plan as they are implemented over the plan period.

7. Director of Finance's comments

7.1 The recommendations contained in this report will be implemented within the existing approved budget resources of the Museums Service.

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Signed by:

Stephen Baily
Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Portsmouth Museums Plan on a Page 2020/21

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, Leisure and Economic Development