

Title of meeting:	Culture, Leisure and Economic Development Decision Meeting
Date of meeting:	11 th December 2020
Subject:	Portsmouth Creates
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 update the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Economic Development on the extensive work and activity which has been undertaken by Portsmouth Creates following their securing additional funding and to outline the monitoring of this work which has been put in place.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the work undertaken by Portsmouth Creates during the on-going pandemic be recognised as very significant in supporting the breadth and diversity of the creative industries across the city in these unprecedented times.**
- 2.2 That the proposed Service Level Agreement is adapted to recognise that the deliverables for the organisation have had to change in light of the pandemic circumstances.**

3. Background

- 3.1 A previous report was brought for consideration to the Cabinet Member for Culture & City Development in July 2019 outlining the establishment of a new independent organisation to take forward the delivery of a programme of work out of the research undertaken by Stephen Browning Associates on a new Cultural Strategy for Portsmouth.
- 3.2 Funding had been secured from Arts Council England for the original work by Stephen Browning Associates and, as outlined in the previous report, highlighted that there was an important story that needed to be told showing how culture in Portsmouth has dramatically changed over the last 10 years. It was also a starting

point for a future way forward for the city where they were seeking to present an exciting and practical vision for culture for the next 5 years.

- 3.3 Following the report to Culture & City Development in July 2019 Portsmouth Creates established itself as a community interest company with an inaugural cohort of trustees. They also managed to secure significant funding from both Arts Council England and the University of Portsmouth as well as from additional areas such as the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PuSH) so securing more than three times the initial funding allocation from the Council.
- 3.4 Portsmouth Creates launched amongst an innovative light installation in the Cascades multi-story car park in November 2019 and was widely welcomed as a new and different approach. During the launch Portsmouth Creates proposed a significant lighting festival for the city 'We Shine' for November 2020 which was well received as a new a different idea for the city where both artists and communities could get involved. They continued this work by supporting the Fratton Festival of Lights to ensure they directly engaged which communities who were already producing lighting events to they could also feel part of the plans for We Shine.
- 3.5 Portsmouth Creates undertook a selection process for the appointment of a Chief Executive who was due to start the Spring 2020 however, as with many cultural organisations this year their plans were significantly interrupted by the pandemic situation. Regrettably their Chief Executive appointment felt unable to take up their appointment resulting in a major setback for the organisation at the outbreak of the pandemic.
- 3.6 Despite this initial situation the trustees have sought innovative ways in which to support the wider cultural community of the city across many different formats during the pandemic period. Their fresh approach has resulted in many new and different partnerships being formed as well as clear and tangible opportunities being offered to creative individuals and cultural organisations over the last nine months.
- 3.7 In additional to regularly promoting and highlighting funding to support creative individuals and organisations at the outbreak of the Covid period, Portsmouth Creates organised a survey of local creatives to gather evidence regarding the impact of the pandemic and first lockdown. This information was submitted to the DCMS to inform their national level research. Of the responses received 58% indicated they had experienced a reduction in customer demand, which 50% indicated that cash flow was a significant problem. At the time of undertaking the survey 74% or responses rated the overall risk to their business at 8 out of 10. Unsurprisingly the report concluded that 'the loss of these organisations would be a catastrophe that Portsmouth's burgeoning creative industries would never recover from'.
- 3.8 Their initial pandemic project was the production and distribution of 1,500 colouring books and pens to vulnerable and shielded people and families. Made up of images donated by many different Portsmouth artists, designers and illustrators the project aimed to remind everyone to 'dream, hope, aspire - and believe' despite the circumstances. Following the initial success, a second print run of 1,500 were

commissioned. To date 3,000 copies of the book have been delivered to disadvantaged and hard to reach community groups including women's refuges, Red Cross and children in foster homes. The images have also been made available to download for free from the Portsmouth Creates website.

- 3.9 In a spirit of optimism, Portsmouth Creates launched their 'We Believe' campaign in June. Based on the reality that many creatives had not been able to access any Government funding they launched a Crowdfunder project to secure funding to micro-commission 20 local artists to make works for a number of walking art trails across the city. The Crowdfunder project was successful and secured the funding needed to deliver three walkable art trails over the summer months. The Council made use of our poster sites free and encouraged people to engage with art in unexpected places.
- 3.10 In August Portsmouth Creates took on their biggest, and to date, most successful project to enable them to directly support Portsmouth's creative industries with the launch of the 'We Create Market'. Following successful negotiations by Cllr Pitt with the owner's agent, the former Debenhams store at Handleys Corner in Southsea was secured as the venue. It has provided a platform for artists and makers with an open door policy to creatives in the city aiming to go some way to help artists with the postponement of regular events such as Crafts in the Tower. Portsmouth Creates has subsidised the cost of pitches and window displays and the offer has proved phenomenally successful with twice as many applications as available stalls.
- 3.11 Using free support from a range of local business the internal space at Debenhams was transformed into a Covid-safe environment for creatives to directly sell to the public on the second weekend of every month. September was able to offer opportunities for 64 artists and their success expanded to 124 opportunities for the large October market which also included a platform for Portsmouth based community radio station Unmade offering a platform for DJs and sounds that are not currently represented within local nightlife or radio. Across the four days over 10,000 people attended the market, generating approximately £150,000 for the traders.
- 3.12 Over 200 traders had been booked to participate in the November We Create marketplace, which Portsmouth Creates was understandably unable to deliver due to the second lockdown period. However, they have continued to be inventive with the production of an A-Z directory of traders who were due to be there to providing more routes for the public to access work and directly purchase from artists.
- 3.13 Portsmouth Creates have been in contact with Solent LEP, Arts Council England's Digital Culture Network and housing association Abri to facilitate a range of potential business support and mentoring opportunities for the local creatives. These will be offered initially on a first come first served basis to the November We Create Market traders who were unable to participate due to lockdown. A fourth and final market is planned to be held in December, Government advice depending.
- 3.14 Peter Davison has recently joined Portsmouth Creates on a year-long secondment from Arts Council England, as Head of Programmes and Development. He is tasked

with securing fundraising to assist and secure Portsmouth Creates position and sustainability; building the CIC's reputation, networks and trust with stakeholders, prior to a permanent CEO being recruited at a later date.

- 3.15 Further to the findings of the Covid-19 impact survey, Portsmouth Creates identified that pastoral support was lacking within the creative community and that creatives were well placed to support one another in addressing some of the key themes highlighted. Diminished confidence and the need for advice/mentorship were key areas of concern.
- 3.16 Portsmouth Creates awarded a small commission to local creative Ben Clabon to run '*Take Time Portsmouth*'; a project whose inception began during lockdown and which has continued to provide a free, accessible weekly virtual meeting platform for local creative practitioners. The sessions bring creatives together in a friendly and supportive environment, enabling them to network, share opportunities and ideas, as well as peer-to-peer mentoring the sharing of skills, expertise and industry insight. With 27% of participants in Portsmouth Creates' DCMS survey stating that wellbeing/anxiety of themselves/staff members was an issue, *Take Time Portsmouth* has offered an invaluable space to support personal and mental wellbeing in this first year of the pandemic.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 As stated in the previous report the establishment of a new independent organisation with support from new and different stakeholders is critical to the aspiration for the delivery of the cultural strategy. The new model has already clearly been able to attract in significant investment and is delivering tangible projects despite the pandemic where the impact is resulting in a positive outcome for creatives based in the city.
- 4.2 Through the pandemic situation Portsmouth Creates are confident they can continue to support the following of their strategic priorities in the short term:
 - Improved use of existing resources (buildings, equipment and people)
 - Identification of new funding sources
 - Raising the profile of and for creative industries across Portsmouth

Other areas such as skills development and training, leadership development and support for governance have been temporarily been put on hold as they are not prioritised as key areas of support in the feedback Portsmouth Creates have had from artists during their regular surveys and questions over the last few months.

- 4.3 It is necessary for officers to make members aware of the altered delivery of this new organisation and for the Service Level Agreement to be amended to effectively reflect this.

5. Integrated impact assessment

- 5.1 An Integrated impact assessment is attached.

6. Legal implications

6.1 The proposed amendment/updating of the Service Level Agreement will be beneficial as it will clarify the parties' expectations and agreed deliverables against which to assess outcomes going forward. Awaiting legal comments

7. Director of Finance's comments

7.1 Portfolio funding of £100,000 to support the establishment of Portsmouth Creates was agreed 19th July 2019. No further expenditure is anticipated.

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

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - 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:

Title of document	Location
Portsmouth Creates Report Decision Report	Link to Culture & City Development meeting July 2019

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