



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

**Date of meeting:** 3 August 2021

**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

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**1. Purpose of report**

1.1 To review achievements of Portsmouth Museums in 2020/21 and to present the service priorities for the current financial year (Appendix 1).

**2. Recommendations**

**It is recommended that:**

2.1 **The achievements of 2020/21 are noted.**

2.2 **The museums service's engagement with vulnerable and marginalised members of the community through its involvement in the city's Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) and Kick Start programmes is noted.**

2.3 **The Museums Strategy is completed and an application for National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) status is made to Arts Council England.**

2.4 **The Business Plan for The D-Day Story with Landing Craft Tank 7074 is finalised to ensure the viability of the museum and to generate the surplus required to fund the ongoing maintenance of the ship.**

2.5 **Research is undertaken to identify the specific barriers to access to the council's museums within the city.**

2.6 **Work continues to prepare the services application for Accreditation which is due at the start of the next financial year.**



- 2.7 Museum staff work on the development of an exhibition showcasing the city's remarkable civic silver collection and what it tells us about the life, times and people of Portsmouth.**

**3. Background**

- 3.1 Last year was shaped by the Coronavirus Pandemic. This meant staff mostly working from home or furloughed and a shift from in person activity to virtual. Staff became adept at creating digital content although there were major challenges downloading images from the museums' MODES catalogue.
- 3.2 However, museums were opened between lockdowns, achieving visitor numbers above what was predicted for the sector especially at The D-Day Story. Visitor feedback indicated the importance of getting good Covid-19 protection measures in place.
- 3.3 The service achieved some major outputs whilst ensuring opportunities were maximised for access to museums around the various lockdowns.

**4. Reasons for recommendations**

- 4.1 The major achievement in 2020/21 was the completion of the capital element of the Landing Craft Tank project and the arrival of the ship on the Seafront. The progress of the ship along Clarence Esplanade was a remarkable spectacle that took place in August after the end of the lockdown, bringing smiles to the faces of the people who were present. The ship opened as part of The D-Day Story albeit briefly in December 2020.
- 4.2 In addition, building on the work undertaken to develop the new Museums Strategy, a number of virtual workshops were carried out with stakeholders to explore what makes the city different and how this should be reflected in the service. Work continued on the 'happy museums' initiative to enable staff - paid and volunteer - through training and greater familiarity with the work of the service to provide even better standards of customer care. This included Welcome Host training with exam (which was passed by everyone taking part). Preparations for accreditation - the national standard for museums in England - began with the revision of Documentation and Collection Care and Conservation Policies and their formal approval.
- 4.3 Other highlights of 2020/21 included the opening of Portsmouth Revisited II at Portsmouth Museum and Art Gallery and the World of Wonder natural history display at the Cascades Shopping Centre, delivery of an extensive programme of virtual events for Heritage Open Days in September and publication of a new guide to the Overlord Embroidery. Over 20,000 records were created or updated pertaining to the natural history collection. The handling collection was



audited (over 600 items) and rationalised including a significant backlog of objects acquired for handling purposes which had never been processed or used and were taking up valuable storage space. A long overdue major overhaul of the electrics at Portsmouth Museum and Art Gallery was also completed.

- 4.4 This year, the museums service is very pleased to be a key contributor to the city's Holiday Activity and Food programme; to deliver fun and food during the summer school holidays to some 2,800 people (children and parents) ideally with the support of colleagues from other council services and freelancers from across the city. Museums are also actively involved in the Kick Start initiative - with young people employed in customer care roles on Landing Craft Tank, working on the digitisation of collections, with more about to join the team at Southsea Castle and Cumberland House (8 young people in total). The service is also contributing to Portsmouth's Thriving Communities (social prescribing) project and are improving the family friendly offer at Portsmouth Museum and Art Gallery; both projects have received funding from Arts Council England (ACE).
- 4.5 Work on the Museums Strategy needs to be completed including consultation. This document is essential for accreditation (see below) and will underpin our application for ACE National Portfolio Organisation funding. This would bring significant additional funds to the museums service over a four to five year period enabling the service to extend our reach more effectively across the city. To achieve this the strategy will have to align with ACE Let's Create strategy and its priorities around equality and diversity.
- 4.6 Although a Business Plan for The D-Day Story with Landing Craft Tank has been prepared (and shared with the Overlord Embroidery and Portsmouth D-Day Museum Trusts) the financial elements require further work. They need to be finalised as soon as possible especially in light of the ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic and to ascertain our ability to generate the surplus required for the maintenance of Landing Craft Tank - ie major interventions required in the next five to ten years.
- 4.7 The service plans to undertake research to identify the barriers to access for communities under-represented in the museums' visitor demographic. This work is subject to ACE funding and will involve people from across the museum team to ensure staff have a greater insight into what can be done individually to help eliminate barriers.
- 4.8 Accreditation is the national benchmark for museums in England. Museums are due to reapply early next financial year. It is important therefore that the service reviews, updates, and gets formal approval where necessary, for all the documents required. Outstanding items include the Access Policy (new requirement), Emergency Plan, Documentation and Collection Care and Conservation Plans as well as the Museums Strategy. Work is also ongoing to improve standards of collection care and documentation to enhance access - specifically ensuring that collections are properly/fully catalogued and fully



located following recent and not so recent moves (this is an audit requirement as well as being good practice). Work on the collections is supported by a number of volunteers. With the support of property services it is intended to improve the condition of the Furniture Store (part of the Decorative Art Collection) at Portsmouth Museum & Gallery.

- 4.9 In May 2022 an exhibition is planned that will showcase the city's civic silver collection. The exhibition will not only be visually stunning but as the pieces also reflect significant moments in the city's history it will be very engaging and accessible to a diverse audience.

**5. Integrated impact assessment**

- 5.1 IIA attached at Appendix B

**6. Legal implications**

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report. However, Legal Services will advise and assist as required in the context of the individual proposed actions listed as they are implemented.

**7. Director of Finance's comments - subject to Sue Page approval**

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

- 7.2 Any financial implications resulting from the business plan for the D-Day story and LCT will be reported at a future meeting.

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Signed by:

**Stephen Baily**

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

**Appendices:**

**Appendix A - Museums Business Plan on a Page 2021/2022**

**Appendix B - 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, Leisure and Economic Development**