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Title of meeting:	Culture, Leisure and Economic Development Decision Meeting
Subject:	Silver City Exhibition Progress Report
Date of meeting:	18 November 2022
Report by:	Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services
Wards affected:	All

1. Requested by Councillor Steve Pitt, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure & Economic Development

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The Purpose of this report is to update the Cabinet Member on progress since the Silver City exhibition opened on 27 May 2022.

3. Information Requested

- 3.1 An initial report about the Silver City exhibition was taken to the previous Cabinet Member on 8 February 2022, prior to installation and opening.
- 3.2 The exhibition was opened on Friday 27 May by the Lord Mayor and the then Commander of the Naval Base. This was the first exhibition opening event that the museum had hosted since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Young Creatives provided actors as silver statues, based on characters in the exhibition, and also performed for the public the next day.
- 3.3 The exhibition attracted a total of £67,000 of funding from six different sources - the Decorative Arts Society, the Silver Society, the Goldsmiths Charity, the Paul Mellon Centre for British Art, the Portsmouth Cultural Education Partnership and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project curators developed partnerships with specialist organisations such as the Silver Society and the Company of Goldsmiths and with academics and researchers.
- 3.4 The exhibition includes loans from the Royal Navy Trophy Centre, Portsmouth Cathedral, the Company of Goldsmiths and from private collections. The loan of the Seymour Salt from the Company of Goldsmiths is a major opportunity to show

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Portsmouth's wedding gift to Catherine of Braganza in the city for the first time since she married Charles II in 1662.

- 3.5 The process of developing content for the exhibition drew on lessons from the D-Day Story project. The displays have been framed around a number of themes - Royal City, Proud City, Naval City, Forces City, World City and People's City - and emphasise people and their stories as part of the city's wider story. Workshops were held to discuss objects and stories, including colleagues from the City Council, the Royal Navy and the University of Portsmouth.
- 3.6 An extensive outdoor marketing campaign kicked off in time for the opening of the exhibition and covered the city and the surrounding areas. Highlights included adverts using the fish imagery on the side of 25 buses. The campaign ran for an extra two weeks on top of the four weeks paid for and gave excellent reach to residents and commuters in our target area. The adverts were spotted in Fareham, Havant, Paulsgrove, Portchester and Hayling Island as well as frequently in Portsmouth. Another highlight was an advert editorial in the Art and Crafts section of The Guardian - the Saturday Guardian has a national circulation of 867,000. In addition to our outdoor and print advertising we have so far paid for sponsored Facebook posts, the first reaching 46,896 people and making 76,684 impressions, with a later post during July reaching 53,642 people. More marketing activity is planned for the winter months.
- 3.7 The engagement programme to complement the exhibition has benefited from external funding and has supported a range of events. Objects from the exhibition are the basis for the Libraries Service's Short Story Challenge and funding from the Portsmouth Cultural Education Partnership enabled us to develop a digital learning pack. We have hosted three Summer HAF events inspired by the exhibition, helped 12 young people in care achieve their bronze Arts Award through the exhibition and hosted a tour of the museum and exhibition for refugee teens working with the British Red Cross. Funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund enabled us to engaged Play Practitioners who have conducted Silver City scavenger hunts and family tours of the exhibition and have also hosted Silver City collage workshop with women refugees from the City of Sanctuary group. We have also developed a Silver City trail for the whole museum and have plans for stop motion animation workshops in the winter for community groups to participate in.
- 3.8 We have hosted several tours as part of the 60+ festival and are hosting a range of talks and workshops based on elements of the exhibition. Speakers have included local silversmith Barbara Tipple and Rear-Admiral Roy Clare, the former Director of the National Maritime Museums. Future speakers include Rosemary Baird (Curator Emeritus of Goodwood), Peter Goodwin (former Curator of HMS Victory), Rosalinda Hardiman (former Curator of Art), Colin Farmery (Pompey History Society) and Dominic Fontana (former Senior Lecturer in Geography). We have also hosted a

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Silver City inspired Lino Printing workshop with Gabriella Grant and a silver ring making demonstration by Buckwild Bespoke.

- 3.9 Project funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund has enabled us to appoint a dedicated Digital Engagement Officer. The museum's Facebook page has consistently reached more than 30,000 people over 28 day periods and increased levels of engagement, with interactions from 3,800 different profiles. Over the 90 day period up until 12 October the museum's Instagram had a 75% increase in account reach and an 83.6% increase in engagements. The growth in the museum's Instagram profile is very positive as it tends to reach a younger audience and is particularly suitable for sharing images and promoting exhibitions and events. In July 2022 the number of visits to the museum's Twitter profile reached to 10,100 and tweets posted that month were seen by 10,900 people, and in August the tweets reached 17,200 impressions and 15,600 visits. These are impressive figures as the Twitter reach has more than tripled since the exhibition opened. The most popular tweet, sharing a Silver City blog post by a University of Portsmouth History student, earned 1,012 impressions. Social media has been a very important tool for the promotion and information sharing of exhibitions and events. We have been able to update our audience with new material about Silver City, including upcoming events, detailed posts about specific pieces and provide the audience an insight into the exhibition before they visit. Using social media regularly has grown our audience and engagement for Portsmouth City Museum as a long-term legacy.
- 3.10 We have produced a bespoke retail offer to coincide with the exhibition. The exhibition book by the co-curators, fully funded by the Paul Mellon Centre, has sold 59 copies at the time of writing at a total income of £941.24. Other products have included replicas of the articulated fish model and the town criers badge.
- 3.11 The exhibition has delivered a legacy for the museum in three new high specification display cases suitable for displaying high profile loans from major institutions. Infrastructure in the exhibition gallery has been upgraded and a number of objects from the collection were framed and conserved.
- 3.12 Visitor numbers for the period June to September 2022 were 13,605, compared to 11,200 in the same period last year and 14,114 in 2019. Comparisons of visitor numbers are still problematic in the post-Covid climate as visitors readjust to travelling and visiting attractions but a 21% increase on last year and only 3.6% under 2019 is positive.
- 3.13 The exhibition has recently been reviewed in the Burlington, a prestigious specialist art magazine with an international audience. This is a positive development and it is

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encouraging to be able to highlight the exhibition, the silver collection and the city to a specialist audience.

- 3.14 We have been capturing feedback from visitors during the exhibition, including asking visitors to put silver stickers on a map of the city to let us know where they are visiting us from. We have asked visitors from further afield to fill out postcards to tell us where they have travelled from to visit Portsmouth. The responses ranged for all corners of the globe including Nigeria, Hong Kong, Canada, Australia, Nepal, India, Thailand, Poland, Hawaii, New Zealand, Denmark, USA, Italy, Trinidad and Tobago.
- 3.15 Feedback on the exhibition has been very positive. Oli, a young person from Artsworld, said: 'I liked the exhibition, especially the fish, the pocket watch and the flask. I like these I would like to have them. I like pocket watches and flasks and they are historical and silver. I like silver.' Jade, age 30, from Southsea said 'This exhibition is wonderful! I love visiting Portsmouth Museums. Staff here are so lovely and welcoming and the displays are great! Thank you!' Mahbuba said: 'What a beautiful exhibition. It has brought so many memories for me. I arrived from Zanzibar in 1964 and have lived in Portsmouth since. My best memory as a 12 year old is going to Alec Rose's shop and he would give us veg for free because he knew we couldn't always afford it. God bless him and his wife.'
- 3.16 A significance assessment of the civic collection was carried out by Dr Tim Schroder, the President of the Silver Society and a former Prime Warden of the Company of Goldsmiths. This assessment found that the collection is of national importance, particularly for its 16th and 17th century objects. If it were an accessioned museum collection it would likely be worthy of consideration for designation by Arts Council England. The exhibition has also opened up the collection to new research by leading historians. The maker of the Great Mace and the Portsmouth Flagons, Wolfgang Howzer, has been identified for the first time. The Bodkin Cup has been attributed to Robert Amadas, Henry VIII's Master of the Jewel House, and work is ongoing to identify how it came to Portsmouth.
- 3.17 Long-term plans for the collection after the end of the exhibition are focused on options for redisplaying the Lord Mayor's corridor in the Guildhall to ensure the collection's long-term care and to improve access for visitors. We also want to ensure that the collection's potential for research is maximised. The whole collection has been photographed to a professional standard and these images are available for use by PCC.
- 3.18 It is intended to bring a full evaluation report to the Cabinet Member once the exhibition has closed in late February 2022.

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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:

Title of document	Location