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(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

<b>Title of meeting:</b>	Culture, Leisure and Economic Development Decision Meeting
<b>Subject:</b>	Gadgeteers: The Summer Reading Challenge 2022
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	18 November 2022
<b>Report by:</b>	Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services
<b>Wards affected:</b>	All

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1. Requested by Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Economic Development

2. **Purpose**

To inform the Cabinet Member on the Library and Archive Service's delivery of the Summer Reading Challenge in 2022, including the number of children participating in libraries and online; the Winners' Celebration Event at Southsea Castle and the second year of our involvement in a national pilot scheme to increase participation amongst disadvantaged pupils.

3. **Information Requested**

3.1 The Summer Reading Challenge, delivered by public libraries in partnership with The Reading Agency, encourages reading for pleasure for children aged 4 to 11 over the summer holidays. In 2021, a year of Covid recovery, the Summer Reading Challenge was delivered in 193 local authorities across the UK, with a total of 503,856 children participating nationally as well as an additional 7,400 children internationally through the British Council.

3.2 Children are encouraged to read anything they like, stories, poetry, non-fiction, graphic novels, eBooks and eAudiobooks. The recommended number of books to read is six but in recent years, children have been given the opportunity to set their own reading targets. Children receive stickers and other incentives as they progress, being given a certificate when they complete the Challenge and an invitation to a special celebration event at Southsea Castle, where they can claim a medal.



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- 3.3 The Challenge has a different theme each year. This year, The Reading Agency partnered with the Science Museum Group and the theme, Gadgeteers, focused on science and innovation.
- 3.4 After a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, library staff were once again able to visit school assemblies towards the end of the summer term to promote the Challenge in person. Around half of the city's primary schools were visited in person, with the rest receiving a PowerPoint presentation for school staff to deliver in-house. Bookmark invitations and other promotional materials were also sent to every primary school pupil in the weeks before the summer holiday.
- 3.5 Gadgeteers launched on Saturday 9 July. In the following ten weeks over 35,000 children's items were borrowed from Portsmouth Libraries. A total of 2895 children signed up to take part in the Challenge, either in a physical library or online and 1393 children went on to complete the Challenge. This is an increase of just over ten per cent from last year's total of 1266.
- 3.6 The option to participate online, which has grown during the pandemic was once again available, with children given the option of recording their reading choices and unlocking rewards and other incentives. As in 2021, the majority of families participating preferred to engage with library staff in our buildings. Physical library visits accounted for eighty-six per cent of these figures, an increase of six per cent on last year.
- 3.7 The mobile library worked in partnership with Cumberland House to promote the Challenge at its regular Canoe Lake stop on Fridays during the holidays. Museum colleagues created a children's trail on the theme of inventions inspired by nature with the answers located in and around the Museum and Mobile Library.
- 3.8 As a further incentive, Portsmouth School Library Service (SLS) have offered the top six schools (in terms of completers per number of pupils on roll) some book-themed beanbags as prizes for their school libraries. See Appendix 1 for more detail on pupil participation by school.
- 3.9 Libraries received funding from the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme and purchased 3000 additional core packs that were distributed to a number of providers across the city and a small number of schools. The aim of this activity is to better target disadvantaged pupils and their families, so they can be encouraged to visit libraries and take part in the Challenge. Central Library also programmed six family days over the summer holidays, which

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offered storytelling, craft and physical activity as well as a hot meal. These children were also actively encouraged to take part in the Challenge. In order to broaden the reach of this activity, the Library and Archive Service will provide similar activities in more library locations across the city in 2023.

- 4.0 Working in partnership with Museum colleagues, Southsea Castle once again proved a very popular location for the Winners' Event. The event was rescheduled to Sunday 2 October as the original date of Sunday 18 September was the day before the state funeral of HM Queen Elizabeth II. By using areas in front of the site as well as the Castle we could provide a number of activities that were well received by families including a storyteller; science workshops; facepainting, treasure hunts and special appearances from The Gruffalo. Around 3000 children and families attended. We were also joined by a PCC Countryside Officer and representatives from Groundlings Theatre, who welcomed the opportunity to engage with a diverse range of families from across the city. The event is a great opportunity to evaluate the impact of the Challenge on families (see Appendix 2).

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

**Appendices:**

Appendix 1 - Number of children completing the Challenge by school, as a percentage of pupils on roll.

Appendix 2 - Feedback received from families at Southsea Castle during the Winners' Event.

**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>

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### **Appendix 1**

**Number of children completing the Challenge by school, as a percentage of pupils on roll.**

Cumberland Infant School	23.7%
Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School	18.0%
Langstone Infant School	14.6%
Southsea Infant School	13.1%
Bramble Infant School and Nursery	12.4%
St Swithun's Catholic Primary School	12.4%
Meon Infant School	11.1%
Solent Infant School	11.1%
St Jude's CofE Primary School	10.6%
Medina Primary School	10.5%
King's Academy College Park (Infant)	10.1%
Moorings Way Infant School	9.9%
Mayfield School	8.8%
St John's Cathedral Catholic Primary School	8.1%
Stamshaw Infant Academy	8.1%
Copnor Primary School	7.3%
Gatcombe Park Primary School	7.3%
King's Academy College Park (Junior)	7.3%
Court Lane Infant Academy	7.2%
Stamshaw Junior School	6.7%
Highbury Primary School	6.6%
Wimborne Primary School	6.5%
Cottage Grove Primary School	6.4%
Penbridge School	6.3%
The Flying Bull Academy	6.1%
Court Lane Junior Academy	6.1%
Solent Junior School	5.8%
Portsdown Primary School	5.4%
Devonshire Infant School	5.4%
Craneswater Junior School	5.4%
Beacon View Primary Academy	5.3%
Ark Ayrton Primary Academy	5.3%
Fernhurst Junior School	5.2%
Manor Infant and Nursery School	4.9%

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Arundel Court Primary Academy and Nursery	4.6%
King's Academy Northern Parade (Infant)	4.6%
Meon Junior School	4.4%
St Paul's Catholic Primary School	4.1%
New Horizons Primary School	4.0%
Milton Park Primary School	3.6%
Langstone Junior Academy	3.4%
Westover Primary School	2.6%
Newbridge Junior School	2.3%
King's Academy Northern Parade (Junior)	1.9%
St George's Beneficial Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School	1.5%
The Victory Primary School	1.0%
Mary Rose Academy	0.6%
Ark Dickens Primary Academy	0.3%

## **Appendix 2**

### **Feedback received from families at Southsea Castle during the Winners' Event**

*The Challenge has boosted my son's confidence in his reading skills. He started the summer as an average reader and is now reading above his age level thanks mostly to the Challenge.*

*[Child] was excited to choose stories for the reading challenge. She was keen to use her letter sound knowledge when sharing the books.*

*She started reading more fluently after the Challenge.*

*We have really enjoyed taking part. We went to the library more than we would have and we will be going back. The girls have thoroughly enjoyed choosing themselves books at the library.*

*I liked it because I like reading and it made me want to read more. I liked the fact I'd get a medal. It made us go into Carnegie Library for the first time.*

*[Eleven year-old child] really enjoyed his last year of participating in the Reading Challenge. He has been doing it since he was five!*

*They enjoyed it like last year and are raring to do it again.*



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*Both girls enjoyed taking part in the reading challenge this year and it has helped their understanding and reading skills.*

*[The Challenge] made him excited to read and discover new genres.*

*We love this idea. It really helped my daughter aged 6 get into reading a lot more. She has become more confident in reading, too.*

*My son can't stop reading but he still loved the extra encouragement to complete the Challenge. My daughter hates reading but this gave her a much-needed boost and was a positive experience for her.*

*It was our first year and it was great. Wonderful incentive to get him reading to us for a change.*

*Our child enjoyed the Gadgeteers. Kept [him] interested in reading through the summer.*

*My daughter has done the Summer Reading Challenge for five years and is excited to do it each year. It definitely encourages her to read during the holidays.*

*The idea of The Gadgeteers was amazing for both children and parents. It kept the long summer holidays well entertained with lots of reading. I have personally benefited more than the kids as I learned about new authors.*

*Was brilliant to keep my daughter's reading on track over the summer. Fantastic day today - science show amazing.*

*We had such a fun day and took some great books home from the mobile library. Thank you for a great event.*

*Great to encourage visits to the library. Amazing event as always.*

*Was a great way to read as a family and great to get an award for reading. Brilliant day.*

*This is the fourth Reading Challenge we've done. We absolutely love it! We've been to other districts during the summer and noticed that none do it better than Portsmouth! It's super motivational for my daughter as we are so grateful for the winner's party.*

*My son loved the Reading Challenge and the wooden medal is great for the environment.*

*[Child] enjoyed taking part. He really enjoyed the medal event - especially meeting the Gruffalo.*

*[Child] loved the Reading Challenge and today was a brilliant free event for the family.*