

EDCL Evidence Gathering Meeting 1:30pm 9 February 2023
Activity Room, City Museum

Present

Panel

Councillor Stuart Brown
Councillor George Fielding
Councillor Lee Mason
Councillor Abdul Kadir

Apologies

Councillor Gemma New
Tony Sammut, Spinnaker Tower

Witnesses

- Claire Looney, Seafront Services
- Lydia Mellor, PCC Events Team
- Sarah Lindley, Community Centres
- Ross Fairbrother, D-Day Story
- Matthew Sheldon, National Museum of the Royal Navy & Representing Mary Rose Trust
- Jane Singh, Portsmouth Museums Service
- Joanne Bushnell, Portsmouth Cultural Education Partnership
- Nicola Clannachan, Head of Housing Community Services

PCC Officers

- Clare Watkins, Business Development & Projects Manager
- James Daly, Cultural Development & Projects Officer

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Previous Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 30th January were reviewed. One typo in was noted and apologies had been received from Cllr Stuart Brown. The minutes were signed off as a correct record.

3. Witnesses

The panel received presentations from each of the witnesses in turn and after each presentation was given an opportunity to ask questions, the answers to which are summarised below:

Jane Singh, Portsmouth Museums Service

Jane attended to present on Tourism and Marketing and also as acting head of the Museums. In relation to Tourism and Marketing, less expensive and free activities are actively marketed as much as possible. Jane had brought along documents that are already in the public domain to consider.

In relation to Museums there had been consultation work carried out on engagement with museums. The City Museum is free and has a wide range of visitors. Cumberland House museum is also free and has a good local following. The Charles Dickens birthplace is open at weekends.

The service has a wide range of offer and a lot of free activities and talks to engage with people across the city.

Jane outlined the main strategic objectives of the service. to be more relevant, to be more in the thick of it and to be more environmentally sustainable. Already started some activities with a new exhibition opening in the summer all about the seashore with co-production and involvement of local people in the decisions being made.

The service has a new engagement officer and there are activities planned to reach out to young people and those who don't currently use the service.

The service has a range of volunteering activities and has engaged with the Kickstart programme - some of whom now work for PCC.

Work is underway to move collections online in order to make them more accessible.

The service aspires to create a focus group to ensure more engagement.

Response to questions from Members

- All Portsmouth museums are free to residents apart from the D-Day museum
- The Conan Doyle collection held in the Central Library has an extensive volunteer programme to work with the collection. The collection was bequeathed to PCC and they are currently considering how to archive the more than 60,000 objects. The collection is being used to upskill adults with learning disabilities which has proved very successful. This empowers people and gives them confidence and transferable skills.

Jo Bushnell, Portsmouth Cultural Education Partnership and Aspex

The service has been in the city for 42 years - Jo provided the panel with the Impact Report 2022. The service operates gallery space in the Vulcan building at Gunwharf and see to create activities and projects to bring together different elements. Their mission is to create an arena of collaborative community. They also work regionally

and nationally. They are a National Portfolio organisation supported by PCC and the Arts Council. 50% of visitors are from Portsmouth with a total of 20,000 - 25,000 visitors in the exhibition space.

Their learning activities have a community reach such as Family Saturdays which are free drop-in sessions. Portsmouth HAF work with the Portsmouth museum.

They have community engagement at key events and take their mobile arts studio out and about into the community such as the community parties at Hilsea, Cosham and Somerstown. They also attended the Mayfair and the Festival in Victoria Park and the Kite Festival which has huge numbers covering a broad demographic. They also attend Victorious festival every year.

The service works with schools, further education and higher education in Portsmouth and across the region. Running since 2005 is involvement with people with dementia and a carers support group. The service is reflective encouraging creativity from early years to a later point in life.

The service works with volunteers and took part in the Kickstart scheme.

They are part of the Cultural Education Partnership.

Response to questions from Members

- The service does not run studio spaces but they have one free of charge for a short term residence. They disconnected from Arts Space Portsmouth in 1991 and the upstairs of the premises is not used by them. Jo noted that space is limited and at a premium. Their offer is different from similar organisations.
- Jo agreed to send in a list of organisations they work with and details of the demographics from the Kite Festival.
- Aspex, Victorious and Portsmouth Creates are successful collaborations. They add value to any activity and had a huge audience at Victorious. Collaborations has also allowed them to take activities around schools in the city so those who could not attend Victorious could still take part.
- They created a film and presented it as part of We Shine on a wall which attracted a large audience. There were lots of visitors from North of the City at the school in Cosham, Court Lane with good conversations with parents and children who all came down to the wall outside of Astoria and were proud to see their work on display.

Lydia Mellor, PCC Events Team

Seafront services has supported over 200 events along the stretch of the seafront including large scale free events, such as the Kite Festival all attended by residents in the City.

The service supports commercial organisations, charities, schools, businesses and individuals. The programmes encourage people of all ages, genders and abilities to come together. The event spaces across the seafront are quite flat making them very accessible to all.

Lydia provided an example of events bringing communities such as the Jubilee street parties - applications were received from every ward across the city. The service supported organisers by providing PCC public liability insurance and with street closures. Lydia noted that the appetite for people to come together was huge especially after Covid. The forthcoming Coronation should have the same impact.

The service also puts on large scale events in Victoria Park which is quite a central local with good public transport access.

The service has also supported free community parties in Hilsea and Cosham which provided local residents the opportunity to engage with a range of different groups.

In relation to health and fitness there are events such as the Great South Run, and other walking and running local events.

This year will see Commonwealth day as an opportunity to celebrate all the cultures and religions across the city.

In relation to commercial events the service work with them to ensure free input across the city. They are hoping to expand the Band Stand events across the city along with the 60+ festival. The Southsea food festival allows support for local business prioritising Portsmouth based business.

Response to questions from Members

- The service has no concrete plans as yet on the relocation of the annual fireworks normally held in Cosham.
- The service will consider holding some events in Baffins such as Picnic events as the only event currently is a car boot in the summer.

Sarah Lindley, Community Centres

Community centres hire out their spaces to local groups - this is their core business. This helps promote social values.

There are barriers to access in the North of the city - the accessibility to services is not as good as in the south of the city. A volunteer hub has just been agreed to be set up in the Cosham community centre and there is a uniform swap shop in Paulsgrove library.

In the south of the city the barriers noticed are in trying to reach the BAME community and a new multicultural group for women is being set up.

The service is always looking for ways to work with other services in the city and has non-activity space that can be rented by commercial businesses to help with the costs of running the buildings.

The facilities in the North of the city are old and not fit for purpose so the service is in the process of looking at alternative options.

Response to questions from Members

- There are limitations with the buildings with the building in Cosham only having gone large room so it is a struggle with ad-hoc events coming in.
- In relation to affordability, the service has reviewed hire prices, when it was last reviewed Paulsgrove was brought down to the same as Cosham and honored arrangements that are already in place.
- In relation to the impact of the change over from the Cosham community area to a new building is they run the risk of it not properly being established and groups may go elsewhere and not return.
- Sarah agreed to supply the demographics of community use in the North of the city once ready.

Claire Looney, Seafront Services

Wide ranging public space which is very accessible for residents in the area and is free at the point of access. During the pandemic the use of the public open space increased by over 200% and the service has not seen a drop off since with people using it for lots of different reasons. Not having housing right up to the shore is a huge asset for the city.

Clare noted the ongoing coastal defence work ongoing which is currently impacting on public areas and will be ongoing for the next few years. She discussed the bus options for the seafront including the vintage buses that run during the summer.

In relation to water safety there are seasonal lifeguards indicating safe areas from July to September. The service works closely with the lifeguard volunteers and RNLI.

Beach huts are available to hire on a weekly basis for which leisure card holders can receive a discount - the use of this has increased.

In relation to accessibility for all to the beach and water, Clare updated on the design and issues with the ramps and matting being trialled. She highlighted the problems with the shifting shingle on the beaches which mean there is no easy solution to the problem. Disabled parking is available close to the matting.

Response to questions from Members

- There are plans to acquire extra beach huts with consideration being given to more accessible beach huts. There are plans for decking from the beach huts to the promenade.
- The issue of water quality sits under the environmental teams but the service is very aware of the problems.
- In relation to the sea defence work, consideration has been given to accessibility issues.
- The service has two wheelchairs to hire for getting into the water but there are problems getting back out. The wheelchairs were trialled but the practicalities of getting back out of the water mean that further risk reviews are needed.
- The affordability of parking on the seafront comes under the Parking service.
- The wooden area next to South Parade Pier comes under the Planning department and is an enforcement issue within their service.

Ross Fairbrother, D-Day Story

The D-Day Story is managed by PCC. The museum had received two lottery funded grants one for the Landing Craft and one to fully redevelop the museum.

The Museum has a target to re-engage with a new and younger demographic of visitors.

The Museum offers volunteering options and currently have over 30 volunteers as part of the team - there is a wide demographic within the volunteer community. The Museum took part in the Kickstart programme and have employed people through this avenue and for some this is their first experience of working.

In relation to accessibility, the building is completely accessible due to its flat design. They full range of accessibility options can be found here <https://thedaystory.com/plan-your-visit/accessibility/>

The Museum holds a number of different events during the year and have an active social media presence.

For schools, there are specific workshops held in November and March which are hugely popular.

The service offers discount to Leisure card holders.

Response to questions from Members

- The D-Day yellow plaques around the city were popular and a example of their interactive approach.
- The Museum has an international visitor market due to being the only Museum dedicated to D-Day. It is known across the UK. The Museum is free on some occasions such as Armistice Day.
- The Overlord Tapestry is still on long-term loan to the Museum.
- Discounts are available for veterans and the armed forces.

Matthew Sheldon, National Museum of the Royal Navy & Representing Mary Rose Trust

Matthew advised that he was also representing the Mary Rose Trust.

Both Museums had recently applied for an Arts Council grant but were not shortlisted.

In August 2021, they combined on a joint venture to market both Museums. They are separate Trusts, and they rely on self-generated income and although they have received some help from PCC, they receive no revenue funding. Covid and inflationary pressures have impacted on their incomes. There have been 470,000 visitors to the Historical Dockyard in the year to date.

The Trusts rely on admission fees but do discount quite heavily and there are targets for social benefit. Local residents are offered a discount from December to March which also includes some SO postcodes. Naval base employees receive a discount

as does the Portsmouth Leisure card but there is not a huge take up for this. The Trusts liaised with PCC on refugee discounts.

Matthew updated the meeting on the pilot project in conjunction with PCC to design a scheme to for families that would struggle to afford entry. Free annual tickets for 2 adults and 2 children were offered to all families in Portsmouth entitled to Pupil Premium in liaison with PCC education. Between mid-July and end of December, 2048 tickets were issued and 48% have been used. The tickets were used multiple times resulting in 7500 visits. Take up was strongest in PO1 and PO2 and weakest in the North of the City. The project will be reviewed in the coming months.

Response to questions from Members

- Jane Singh advised that when the scheme went live some schools put it on their website resulting in submissions from families that were not eligible. Proper targeting through Education is key. For larger families (e.g. with three or more children) this is not suitable which may impact on why there was not a larger take-up.
- The new 4D theatre at the Mary Rose will be opening soon.

The meeting concluded at 2:50pm