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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CULTURE AND LEISURE SCRUTINY PANEL

MINUTES of the meeting of the Economic Development, Culture and Leisure Scrutiny Panel held on Monday, 30 January 2023 at 4.00 pm at the Executive Meeting Room, Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor George Fielding (in the Chair)

Councillors Abdul Kadir
Lee Mason

1. Apologies for absence (AI 1)

Apologies were received from Councillors Madgwick, New and Brown.

2. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

There were no declarations of interest

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting - 12 January 2023 (AI 3)

The minutes of the meeting on 12 January 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

4. Review: Engagement with Culture and Leisure - widening social participation in Portsmouth (AI 4)

Witnesses

- Susanna Collier - Groundlings Theatre
- Andy Grays - Guildhall Trust (attended)
- Paul Woolf - Kings Theatre (attended)
- Angela Parks - New Theatre Royal (attended) vice chair of art space portsmouth, run consulting business.
- Aysegul Epengin - Portsmouth Film Society (attended)
- James Ralls - Victorious Events (attended) Terri Ralls, Portsmouth Creates.

PCC Officers

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

The panel received presentations from each of the witnesses in turn and after each presentation was given an opportunity to ask questions. The main points are detailed below.

Angela Parks - New Theatre Royal

- Across the whole company there is difficulty engaging with those from lower incomes or those with other barriers to access. The best way to engage people is by organisations they already have a link with.
- A central, detailed list of organisations to link with would be highly valuable to cultural organisations when trying to reach out to hard-to-reach parts of the community to encourage engagement.
- One challenge is finding an audience for events so a suggestion was made for a general Portsmouth City Council social media account to promote events and a 'What's On' in Portsmouth and Southsea (especially free events) which could be utilised by organisations running cultural events. This would help better promote events across the city.
- Two diverse characteristics that prevent people from accessing culture and leisure - one is income, the other is within certain communities/areas there is a feeling of 'this is not for them'. More could be done to encourage these sectors to feel comfortable or less intimidated in the different settings/venues. A Platform for cultural organisations to come together and promote opportunities with entry points lower down the scale (smaller events).
- There was awareness of the Portsmouth Card but discount was not given for this. However, free spaces are offered to the same groups of people eligible for the Portsmouth Card. If the Theatre has tickets left at short notice, particular organisations/charities are contacted, and the spare tickets offered for use by the organisation.
- The theatre offers concessions - details of which to be sent into the panel.
- Other events are run as free as possible especially for those who would struggle without a discount.
- The theatre tends to run professional productions rather than amateur productions. The tough financial period the theatre has just gone through limits the ability to offer discounts due to its own financial circumstances.
- A strategic away day had been held to define forthcoming objectives which included a special post dedicated to community projects. More details would be available in the next 6 months.

Actions

- Angela Parks to send in details of New Theatre Royal concessions/group discounts.
- The Operations Director, Sheena, to be asked to provide written answers to questions submitted.

James Ralls - Victorious Events

- As many local people and local organisations as possible are involved and engaged in Victorious events.
- Engagement is also with Portsmouth Creates, the Council and the University.

- In the last year, Portsmouth Creates involved 2.5 thousand people in projects across the city. These are not just in Southsea but across the city, including the North of the city.
- Issues arise with transport problems and moving people around the city; geographical issues and space.
- People in Portsmouth are keen to attend but don't often come out of their immediate living areas. Portsmouth is hungry for culture so trying to bring it to them instead of the other way around.
- Victorious are keen to have smaller events across the city - there is space but need the willingness and planning. They work all around the country and in Europe.
- 25% of local caterers are given a stall for free. Small stalls are filled with people making homemade items that come through either Portsmouth Creates who run the 'We Create' markets and local creatives.
- Victorious have 180 local bands involved and this year will be taking one local band from Portsmouth on a tour bus touring around - 'The Road to Victorious' and they will then record an album.
- Insurance cover required for businesses to attend events is signposted through their insurers to arrange a package just for that specific event.
- Victorious had not heard of the Portsmouth Card and do not offer discounts for it or for people on lower incomes. Victorious tickets start cheap and increase in price as the year goes on and the event date is closer.
- Victorious involves charities and provide free tickets for people with access needs. British Sign Language interpreters are at both main stages.

Action

- Fuller details of charities and local organisations helped by Victorious. Details of literacy programme work and free infrastructure loans to be sent to the Panel.

Andy Grays - Guildhall Trust

- The Charitable Trust set up a learning participation programme in 2013 and the 'Get Involved' programme.
- The Trust have a close working relationship with the Portsmouth Music Hub.
- Parts of the building are given over free for community use with a close relationship with the Community Hubs.
- In 2018 started producing their own events such as Comic-con to engage with a wider demographic.
- Commercial events are run to maintain commercial viability and produce income to maintain the building and venue.
- The Trust go into schools to offer free workshops and content to give young people the opportunity to join in, not just with performance but

also with off stage skills such as stage management and lighting technicians.

- The Trust engaged with 40 schools in the first year, 62 schools in the second year and was due to engage with 72 schools (roughly 6000 young people) in 2023.
- There was awareness of the challenges in terms of cultural engagement in particular, the divide between the different parts of the wider city as well as for people from low income households.
- The Trust have £550k from the Arts Council for a creative space for young people which will offer free provision and free access for young people to come together, focusing on 14 - 25-year-olds.
- The Trust does not give discounts for the Portsmouth Card. Prices for the commercial events are set by the promoters. The Trust is working on a monthly pass with their events and ticketing partner, which will offer hugely discounted access to as many events as they would like in the Studio.
- The Trust offered a series of discounts depending in liaison with potential hirers.
- The main hall is offered free one day a year to the Lord Mayor and some discounts are offered to Portsmouth City Council. There is a free annual summer ball for those young people who cannot attend the usual summer balls.
- The toilets and basement are being refurbished.

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Susanna Collier - Groundlings Theatre

- The charity took over the operational running of the Theatre in April 2020 and the charity values are about community.
- There is a drama school, including for adults and productions are self-produced. This involves stage management and participation and engagement in the arts.
- The Theatre is run mainly by volunteers, and they put on local events for arts and crafts.
- The space is also hired out commercially to produce income. The charity survives on its own income and grants and has no ongoing funding.
- The theatre is located in the Charles Dickens ward with good engagement with the local community.
- Pricing is reviewed regularly and the recent panto was half the price compared to the other pantos in the area.
- If tickets are not all sold the theatre reach out to local communities to use the tickets.
- There are group pricing options available.
- Groundlings had not heard of the Portsmouth Card and did not offer reductions for this.
- They do provide concession ticket prices.
- There was a discussion about the Charles Dickens project which provides a 2 year pathway for young people with particular needs in

which they are able to use the Conan Doyle collection on a one to one basis.

- There is a challenge in terms of access to the upstairs areas for those with disabilities - fund raising is ongoing.
- The charity is hoping to employ a Community Lead Developer when funds allow. A grant has been applied for to deliver a bursary for drama scholarships. Drama school taster sessions are free.

Paul Woolf - Kings Theatre

- The charity has many challenges in terms of funding and the building repair, age and design that impacts on community work.
- Commercial events govern the prices to be charged.
- The annual Panto is the theatre's own programming allowing links to the community to be built with the ability to set prices and see a different demographic attending. 6500 seats are released at £10 a ticket.
- Community programming in the year includes two amateur dramatics productions who receive the benefit of professional resources. There is a scholarship available.
- The theatre reaches out to different parts of the community, more deprived areas. The Arts academy goes into schools.
- The charity is highly dependent on volunteers.
- Suggestion of working more collaboratively with the other venues in the city to all deliver at an affordable price.
- The Charity does not give discounts for the Portsmouth Card but noted they have given away over a thousand free tickets during the year. They will pick performances and give away tickets. Similarly, if there are unsold tickets they will go to organisations and give the tickets away.
- Seats are blocked out in the venue for disabled access in the stalls. This access is being considered in the regeneration scheme.
- Initiatives on discounted tickets have been tried with the Albert Road small traders.
- The venue was given over to the Dementia Singing Group who attended once and did not return, despite being offered it any daytime.
- The different pantos at the different venues appear to have different audiences so not competing on prices.

Action

- Detailed plans for the refurbishment of the shops to be sent in to the panel.

Aysegul Epenjin - Portsmouth Film Society

- The Southsea Community Cinema is 9 months old and fills the gap for less mainstream films.
- Looking for partners to share the building or investment to help with moving past the first hurdle.
- The Elden building screening room at the University has been offered to them free of charge which will help to reach as many people as possible.

- Challenge that people do not know the cinema exists. The venue is run by volunteers.
- Private screenings are offered, and the venue is good for family screening. Private hire helps with the funding.
- There is a training room available on the first floor for use by community groups. This is going to be used for a film making course.
- Discounts could be offered for Portsmouth Card but overall funding needs to be considered. Senior sessions were offered on a Tuesday afternoon but there was no take up.
- Preparations are underway for the outdoor cinema in the Summer (June, July) to generate income.
- There is disabled access with a disabled toilet next to the cinema room. All the furniture is moveable to allow for disabled access. The maximum wheelchair capacity is 4 - 5.
- The venue has given screenings to local schools. They engage on a one-to-one basis to show films for schools in the mornings. The space can also be used for educational purposes.
- There is production plan for March with a comedy show, magic show and live music programmed.

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The meeting concluded at Time Not Specified.

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Councillor George Fielding
Chair