

Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services - Cost of Living Briefing Paper

Introduction

As a directorate our long-term policy has been, as far as possible, to remove as many barriers to access as we can. We are aware that for many people in Portsmouth, including some of our most vulnerable communities, the biggest barrier to access is usually cost. Also, that the people who may derive the most benefit from our services are often the people who find them hardest to access.

With the cost of living in the UK increasing since early 2021 and inflation reaching a high of 7% in March 2022, this will undoubtedly impact people's choices. The World Bank has further warned that global prices will stay at 'historically high levels through the end of 2024' signalling that there will be no end to this financial crisis any time soon. Retail sales fell by 0.5% in May, reflecting how inflation is impacting the economy, according to ONS figures, as consumers have reduced their grocery spending. If they are reducing their grocery spending, this is indication that their spending power in general is seriously affected.

Whilst the current cost of living crisis is foremost in our minds, improving access has long had numerous benefits to us as a local authority. A lack of physical activity can affect people's health and wellbeing. For example, it can help to explain why some people develop illnesses such as cancer, diabetes and heart disease. However, the cost of using leisure centres for example may be a particular barrier for people living on low incomes.

The Marmot Review into health inequalities in England found that people with higher socio-economic positions in society have a greater array of life chances and more opportunities to lead a flourishing life, as well as having better health. We want to ensure that the cost of living crisis does not impact on people's health and life opportunities.

The cost of living crisis will also inevitably affect our visitor economy. Visit Britain's Covid-19 Consumer Tracker results highlighted several concerns and challenges for the cultural tourism sector. In order of risk, the barriers are viewed as the current state of the economy, the cost of travel for tourism (fuel), industry inflation to recover Covid costs, and Covid itself.

We are acutely aware that a significant proportion of our residents do not have a large amount of spare money - this was the case prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, and is likely to be even more so now. The latest Index of Multiple Deprivation, released in September 2019, records that Portsmouth's most deprived Lower Super Output Area is ranked 192nd in the country (in Charles Dickens ward), whilst the least is ranked 31,332nd (Drayton and Farlington ward) out of 32,884. The IMD data suggests that a significant proportion of Portsmouth's population - 75.2% - live in areas in the lower 50% of deprived areas in the UK. This is an over-representation of 25.2% compared to the nationally-based deciles.

The intention of this report is to outline the steps that the Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services directorate have taken, along with our partners, to make our services as accessible as possible for as many people as possible. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list as new offers and events are being developed on an ongoing basis, but it is hoped that it illustrates our directorate-wide policy towards supporting residents and communities in a challenging financial climate.

Arts and Events

Our events team organise, facilitate and support more than 350 events across the city throughout the year, the majority of which are free to access. These include annual events such as commemoration and remembrance services, entertainment based events such as Live at the Bandstand, Kite Festival and Car Boot Sales, and special occasions such as D-Day 75 and the Platinum Jubilee. We also managed the Big Screen in Guildhall Square, which features free screenings of major events, films and other events such as screenings from the Royal Opera House.

As an authority we support organisers of free events such as Parkrun. We have three Parkrun events in the city which attract hundreds of people every Saturday morning, as well as one Junior Parkrun. We also work with cultural partners and revenue clients, such as Portsmouth Creates who organise the annual We Shine light festival, which is free to all.

The whole of the seafront is free to access and to use. We are conscious that in a densely populated city where many people do not have access to a garden, access to spaces such as the seafront is very important for residents' physical and mental health. We lead on liaising with Coastal Partners who are delivering the seafront works which will lead to a greatly enhanced, free and accessible public space for residents and visitors to use and enjoy.

We provide Beach Huts at several sites on the seafront. In response to the length of waiting lists we also offer a number of offer weekly hire huts at a much lower cost for people who may not be able to commit to an annual rental. 20% of our weekly hirers are Leisure Card holders, who receive a 50% discount.

Museums

Of Portsmouth City Council's six museums four offer completely free entry to all visitors - Cumberland House Natural History Museum, Southsea Castle, Portsmouth Museum and Art Gallery and Eastney Engine House. Charles Dickens Birthplace offers free entry to Portsmouth residents.

Our only charging museum is D-Day Story. The museum offers a discount when booking online, two free days a year, seasonal discounts for residents in the off season and Leisure Card discount year round. Second World War veterans are free and there is a discount for serving Armed Forces personnel.

The Museums Service host a number of free events across all sites throughout the year, such as Heritage Open Days. The Hotwalls Studios are free to visit and browse.

We have hosted regular events at our museums as part of the HAF programme - Holiday Activities and Food. Activities are free for children who qualify for free school meals, and include healthy and nutritious food.

Business Support

Our Business Support team manage the Portsmouth Leisure Card. The Leisure Card was implemented in June 1998 following a decision by Policy and Resources Committee to prioritise tackling poverty as a corporate objective. The purpose of the card is to provide discounted access to culture & leisure facilities for those on low incomes.

The card is available to persons in receipt of means-tested benefits within postcodes PO1-PO6:

- Universal Credit
- Income Support
- Income-based jobseeker's allowance
- Income related employment and support allowance
- Working tax credit
- Housing benefit
- Council tax support (excluding single person's discount)
- Pension credit - guaranteed credit element

The card is also available to:

- Foster carers and Looked After Children (including those in Supported Accommodation). This includes those under the care of Portsmouth Family Placement Team but living outside the city boundaries (where there are no placements available in the city) but where education and leisure is undertaken inside the city.
- Asylum seekers (in receipt of Home Office Section 95 support)

The card is valid for a period of 12 months and offers a broad and dynamic range of activities across culture & leisure facilities in the city (mostly at a 40% discount). This includes:

- Aikido martial arts for adults
- Allotments
- Beach Hut hire
- BH Sports Centres: Charter, Mountbatten, Portsmouth Gymnastics Centre, Wimbledon Park.
- D Day Story
- Museums workshops
- Exploria
- Great Salterns Golf
- Number 6 Cinema and New Theatre Royal
- Portsmouth Guided Walks and Portsmouth Historic Dockyard
- Tennis
- Tongues & Grooves Poetry & Music Club

The Leisure Card is promoted through our Library Centres, Housing Centres, Flagship Magazine, the city's DWP Office and the Council's Revenues & Benefits Team.

Sports and Recreation

We offer the following free Sports and Recreation facilities:

- Nine Tennis courts
- Beach Volleyball court
- Hilsea splash pool
- Hilsea Pump track (BMX)

Residents on eligible benefits can apply for a discounted membership at the Mountbatten Centre, Pyramids and Charter Community Sports. The BH Live Access Card is basically the same as our Leisure Card, and costs £26 per month, a 30% discount on the usual amount.

Exploria, the soft play facility at The Pyramids, offers specific sessions for leisure card holders on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday at 9:00am and a Wednesday After School at 4:15pm. £3 play or £6 play and bounce. Both are roughly half price.

Our sports facilities partner, BH Live, offer a number of low-cost activities. These include:

- Over 50's activities such as Walking Netball, Nordic Walking and Walking Football - £3
- Junior Activities - £3.50
- Portsmouth Interaction from free to £1.50 we offer a range of sessions. Self-referral or GP referral needed
- Under 12's free swim scheme – Public sessions only. Children need a library card as proof. There is a one-off set up fee of £3.50

The Andrew Simpson Sailing Centre offers access to all for children who family have low or no income can get to sea in a variety of craft. They also have grant funding available for school use.

Southsea Tennis Club accept Leisure card and 50% off membership and they also make tennis equipment available for a small refundable deposit.

Portsmouth Guildhall

Like most of our revenue client organisations Portsmouth Guildhall offer free or cheap activities for residents and communities. These include:

- Tickets for the Community (Free)
- Recharge singing group (£3 including refreshments)
- Skiffle sessions (Free)
- Creative Careers Roadshow and Careers Days (Free)
- Autumn Workshop Programme (Free)
- Urban Vocal Group Youth Groups (Free)
- Dance Live! Workshops (Free)
- Galleries - Portsmouth Music Experience and Discovering the Guildhall (Free)

Libraries and Archives

Portsmouth City Council's Libraries are free to join. The City Council runs nine libraries around the city and one mobile library which visits places which are further from a branch library. Libraries are a trusted service and provide a warm and dry environment. Libraries nationally have already experienced an increase in demand and an increase in people using IT to access money saving advice, switch suppliers etc.

Books are free to borrow and there are no fines for late return. Reservations for in-stock items are also free. Most other libraries nationally still charge fines, however we have found that fines are an economic and psychological barrier to access.

Our Libraries service offers free access to computers with internet and free WiFi in all libraries. Applications can be made in libraries for the PCC Leisure Card, which offer further free or low cost activities to residents. Libraries also offer free online services including music downloads, magazines and newspapers (including The Portsmouth News); ebooks and eaudiobooks, as well as access to free local and family history information. Free learning opportunities include IT and craft courses delivered by City of Portsmouth College.

Free children's activities in libraries include Rhymetimes and storytimes for babies and toddlers; free school holiday activities including the annual Summer Reading Challenge; and Code Clubs. Regular groups for adults include Reading Groups; support groups for vision impaired people; Scrabble clubs; Rummikub; Knit and Knatter; and art clubs.

The service also organise and host lots of free occasional talks and exhibitions throughout the year.

Parks and Open Spaces

There are 760 hectares of publicly accessible green space in Portsmouth, which includes Parks and Gardens, natural and semi-natural green spaces, green corridors, outdoor sports facilities, amenity green space, play areas and ball courts, allotments, cemeteries and graveyards, countryside and civic spaces. This represents 3.64 hectares of green space for every 1,000 residents in the city.

Portsmouth City Council's Parks and Open Spaces service manage an extensive portfolio of open spaces, including Southsea Common, Victoria Park, Alexandra Park, Great Salterns and Canoe Lake. These are cared for by our Grounds Maintenance team.

We also manage countryside sites at Portsdown Hill, Hilsea Lines, Baffins Pond and Milton Common. Although the primary role of our cemeteries at Kingston, Milton and Highland Road is to provide a burial service, these are also important publicly accessible green spaces.

Our partners Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust run the wildlife reserve at Farlington Marshes.

Our Parks and Open Spaces team manage 120 play areas, splash pools, skate areas, Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs) and outdoor fitness equipped sites. These are all free to use and readily accessible.

We provide 11 allotment sites, including one in Havant, consisting of over 1,800 plots. Leisure Card Holders receive a 40% discount on allotment fees.

Community Centres

There are 10 council owned community centres within the CLRS directorate, nine of which are managed by charitable community associations and one directly managed by Culture.

The community associations have open memberships and the centres are run on a day-to-day basis by committees of trustees elected by and from the membership plus some representatives of user groups. They also rely on significant volunteer input across a range of functions including organising events and fundraising, running groups and carrying out minor repairs and decoration. Under their leases from the council the associations occupy their centres rent free and retain all income generated from the hiring of the premises.

Below are example of the kind of events and groups that our supported community centres offer.

Fratton Community Centre Fratton Friends Groups:

- Monday - new age kurling £3, seated exercise £3
- Tuesday - Tai Chi and Bingo
- Wednesday - Arts and Crafts £3
- Thursday - Variety Club £3
- Friday - Senior Citizens Lunch Club

Havelock Community Centre:

- Ian's Guitar Lessons - Saturdays, 10am - 11:30am (Free)
- MBS Flow (Exercise class) - Sundays, 9am - 9:45am (Free)
- Ukrainian Coffee Morning, inc. English Language Lessons - Wednesdays, 9am - 11am (Free)
- Chat Over Chai - Thursdays, 12:30pm - 2:30pm (£1 including tea and coffee)
- Connor's Toy Library - Mondays, 9:30am - 11:30am (£2 including a drink)
- Bridge - Mondays & Thursdays, 1pm - 4pm (£2 including a drink)
- Kurling - Mondays, 2pm - 3:30pm (£2 including a drink)
- Pleasure in Painting - Wednesdays, 9:30am - 12:30pm (£2.50 includes a tea/coffee)
- Saturday Activities 50+ - Saturdays, 9:30am - 12:30pm (£2.50 includes a tea/coffee)
- Needles & Pins - Fridays, 9:30am - 12pm, inc. a tea/coffee (£3)
- Seated Movement to Music - Tuesdays, 2pm - 3pm (£3)
- Scrabble Club - Tuesdays, 1pm - 4pm (£3) *Not on last Tues of month
- Grannies & Toddlers - Thursdays, 10:15am - 11:45am (£3.50)
- Havelock Howlers - Wednesdays, 11:30am - 1pm, inc. a tea/coffee (£3.50)
- Bingo - Wednesdays, 2pm - 3:30pm, inc. a drink (£4)

Havelock Community Centred also hosts the following free and voluntary donation support groups:

- NA - Thursdays, 6:30pm - 8:30pm
- NA Cultural Vibes - Sundays, 1;30pm - 3:30pm
- AI - Anon - Mondays, 7:45pm - 9:15pm
- Shift Creative (Mental Health) - Saturdays Fortnightly, 12pm - 3pm

Milton Village Hall:

- Beetle Drive - Tuesdays 2nd monthly 2pm-4pm (£2 including tea and coffee)
- Cribbage (Experienced) Tuesdays Weekly 2pm-4pm (£2 including tea and coffee)
- Cribbage (Beginner and all levels) Fridays Weekly 9.30am-11.30am (£2 including tea and coffee)
- Bingo n Brunch - Wednesdays 3rd monthly 11am-1pm (£3 including brunch or £1 including tea & coffee only, Bingo tickets from 50p)

Registrars

Although our Registration Service is a statutory duty, our fees for weddings and civil partnerships are very competitive compared to commercial venues, with the price of the main ceremony room at Milldam House starting at £290. Milldam House also has a statutory ceremony room where smaller ceremonies with two witnesses can take place for £46.

During the Covid pandemic many couples took advantage of restrictions to have smaller and more affordable weddings, demonstrating that there is a demand for affordable options for marriages and ceremonies.

Regulatory Services

Within Regulatory Services the vast majority of services are free of charge as the City Council has statutory obligations to enforce the legislation that we are responsible for. An example of a non-statutory service is our pest control service. We offer reduced rates for residents who receive qualifying benefits, and we are highly competitive in offering lower rates than commercial providers. Costs vary depending on the particular pest being dealt with, but reduced rates are up to 50% off the full price.

Links

[Portsmouth City Council - Events Team](#) and [Events Calendar](#)

[Southsea Seafront](#)

[Portsmouth Museums](#)

[The D-Day Story](#)

[HAF Fun Pompey](#)

[Portsmouth Libraries and Archives](#)

[Portsmouth Leisure Card](#) and [Leisure Card Discount List](#)

[Portsmouth City Council Sports and Recreation](#)

[BH Live - Concessions and Access Card](#)

[BH Live - Mountbatten Centre](#)

[BH Live - Exploria](#)

[Andrew Simpson Watersports Centre](#)

[Portsmouth Guildhall](#)

[Portsmouth City Council - Parks and Open Spaces](#)

[Victoria Park NLHF Project](#)

[Community Centres](#)

[Portsmouth Register Office](#)

[Portsmouth City Council Regulatory Services - Pest Control](#)