

Economic Development Culture and Leisure Scrutiny Panel

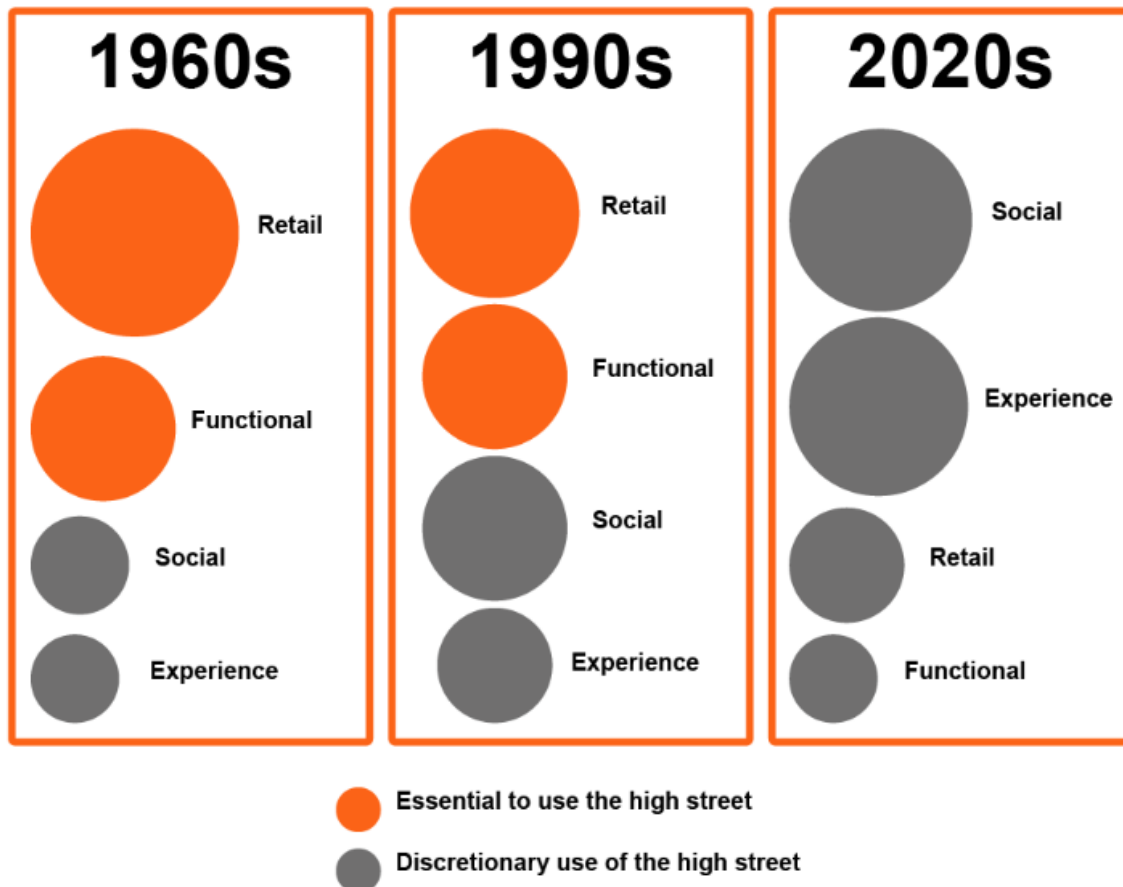
November 2023

Briefing paper from Culture & Leisure services

"Since the Economic Development & Regeneration strategy 2019-36 was written pre covid 19, the Economic Development & Regeneration strategy concerning high streets needs to be reviewed. The panel suggests a review of the Economic Development & Regeneration strategy focusing on high street direction."

The Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy was approved by Full Council on 15 October 2019.¹ It is well established that since that time, the Covid pandemic has caused considerable economic distress to the high street, with many store closures and significant changing patterns of behaviour in relation to high street demand. The development of the high street offer therefore needs to change to reflect these changing behaviours and priorities.²

Research by the Local Government Association 'Creating resilient and revitalised high streets in the 'new normal'', published in January 2022, identifies the main usages of the high streets in the 2020s:



¹ [Economic development and regeneration strategy - Portsmouth City Council](#)

² [Creating resilient and revitalised high streets in the 'new normal' | Local Government Association](#)

In this model, 'functional' uses of the high street refer to activities such as banking, postal and medical services (e.g. pharmacies). The model clearly demonstrates that the future of the high streets in the UK is focussed on social and experiential uses. Culture has a key role to play in this arena as will be demonstrated by this briefing paper.

As instructed by the Scrutiny Panel Members at the meeting on 26 October 2023, the type of high streets that this paper is concerned with are any high streets within the Portsmouth city boundary, excluding commercial outlet centres (e.g. Gunwharf) and also excluding local small parades. The model proposed in this paper could therefore be applied to:

- Commercial Road, Portsmouth city centre
- London Road, North End
- Fratton Road, Fratton
- Tangier Road, Baffins
- High Street, Cosham
- Albert Road, Palmerston Road, Elm Grove, Southsea.

Culture is a key driver to support the growing social and experiential uses of the high street. Moreover, culture, based on a sense of place and ownership, builds civic pride in a local area and cultural activities require in-person settings, which drive secondary spending³. As such, culture helps to build the social fabric of the community, thus having the potential to combat issues such as anti-social behaviour and vandalism.⁴

This briefing paper will consider the potential offer to the high streets from Libraries Service, Museums Service and HIVE Portsmouth. It will then consider a potential pop-up collaborative project model which could comprise all three services.

Libraries and Archives Service

The service has a total of nine library centres, with three of these in key high street locations:

Southsea Library sits in the pedestrian precinct corridor between Palmerston and Marmion Roads. It supports the retailers in the area by opening seven days a week - within six months of the library opening, footfall in the area increased by 5%. Activities at this library include Scrabble Club, Slow Sew and Create and Chatter Craft and the library has an active Friends Group.

Cosham Library is located adjacent to Cosham High Street. The library is open six days a week and in July 2021 re-opened following a major refurbishment, including new IT suite.

North End Library is sited at Gladys Avenue, at the main roundabout in the commercial thoroughfare. This is the most successful library in the north of the city, in terms of numbers of children participating in and completing the Summer Reading Challenge. It is open six days a week and is a key community resource in the area.

It is worth noting that the Mobile Library has a timetable of stops prioritising in the north of the city, including two supermarket car parks. Following Arts Council England funding, the Library Service also have two tuk-tuks to add to this provision to bring library provision and community engagement activity to the north and south of the city.

³ [A High Street Renaissance | Arts Council England](#)

⁴ [Arts activities may improve self-control and reduce antisocial behaviour among teenagers | UCL News - UCL – University College London](#)

Currently the Library Service offers mini book collections in the foyers of the library and these are often also promoted on its social media pages. For example, Cosham Library currently has a 'Cuffing Season' display to appeal to young adult audiences. Other mini library collections have included Black History month and Pride, together with local history collections.

Mini library pop ups can also centre around wellbeing, via the Reading Well Books on Prescription scheme, which is delivered by the Reading Agency in partnership with Libraries Connected and Arts Council England. This promotes health and wellbeing and can be used to develop social reading activity and communities based around shared reading.⁵



There is also opportunity to develop pop-ups in relation to the **Archive Service**. The service has recently recruited an Outreach Officer for the Portsmouth History Centre, this will enable archives to be taken out into the community. In addition, one of the Arts Council England funded Doyle Detectives undertook some research into the Conan Doyle collection regarding racing cars earlier this year and developed his own mini exhibition, which was on display at the Portsmouth History Centre until the end of October 2023.

Museums Service

Temporary museum exhibitions have a key role to play to generate audience and publicity for the museum service itself. The Museums Association paper, *Empowering Collections 2030*⁶, makes several recommendations that can be applied to temporary 'pop-up' exhibitions:

⁵ [Reading Well | Reading Agency](#)

⁶ [Empowering Collections - Museums Association](#)

- A proactive approach to democratisation of collections, i.e. 'getting them out there'
- Support partnerships and knowledge sharing
- Collecting in partnership with communities
- Use collections/ projects to create social impact
- Improve transparency and accessibility of collections - including online

Museum pop up exhibitions reflect the move away from traditional exhibitions towards creating social, recreational and participatory experiences; the direction in which the high street is moving.⁷

The Museums Strategy, adopted by the Council in March 2022⁸ identifies a new story for Portsmouth Museums, one that identifies '*Portsmouthness*': the qualities, characteristics and distinctiveness of the city. This will engage residents in the history of Portsmouth as *their* history and provide an opportunity for co-production, working with communities, going forward. The Portsmouth Museum and Art Gallery cares for over 10,000 pieces of art, many of national significance and there is an aspiration to create spaces where these artworks can be effectively displayed and engaged with.

Cascades: World of Wonder pop-up

During the covid pandemic, Portsmouth Museums needed to find a way to support the community and develop a new audience through new avenues of engagement. An opportunity arose to use an empty shop window in Cascades which featured a mix of unusual objects, to capture the attention of passers-by, and those who would not normally visit museums.

A community artist was commissioned for a shop window display, 'A World of Wonder', which opened two weeks before the second lockdown (November 2020). CCTV captured 66,000 passing footfall by February 2021 and remained occupied until September 2021. A QR code as part of the display led to 202 page views, with visitors spending 65% more time on the page than other Portsmouth Museum pages. There was also an opportunity for members of the public to send in paper butterflies and moths which were added to the display and led to further invitations for the Natural History team to engage at other events. Between April and August 2021, 700 information sheets were taken away by visitors to the window.



In addition to World of Wonder, Beaulieu Motor Museum have been making use of one of the empty units in Cascades for pop-up exhibitions over the past 2 years.

⁷ Museum Management and Curatorship, *New Ways of Experiencing Culture: The Role of Museums and Marketing Implications* (Neil Kotler, 2001).

⁸ [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 8th March, 2022, 1.00 pm Portsmouth City Council](#)

Further pop-up 'mini' museums are planned; the ambition is for these to go into all our libraries (including our high street libraries) on a yearly exhibition cycle. The pop-up exhibition theme for 2024 will be D Day 80, which to date is confirmed for Cosham Library to launch in January, 2024. Community engagement will take place to plan what the mini-installation includes. The service are currently looking for sponsorship to fund the pop-ups for the remaining libraries.

Pop-up spaces involving the Libraries and Museum Services could also include representation from our Parks Countryside Team. One of our Countryside Officers has been working collaboratively with both Libraries and Museums Service over the past year. The officer has, under a gazebo, held mini pop-up family friendly events at natural history events (jointly with Cumberland House) and also had a stall at the Summer Reading Challenge winners event at Southsea Castle, with child friendly activities to promote pollination, including making seed bombs.

The HIVE Portsmouth

The HIVE works in partnership across the city with voluntary, private and public sector groups to connect local people, groups and organisations to nurture individuals and communities to build a healthier and happier city.⁹ The HIVE is not a statutory service and its primary location is situated in Central Library, a warm and safe community space in the city centre.

Subject to resourcing, HIVE Portsmouth could have small pop-up venues in other libraries across the city, where these sit in high street locations. Such pop-up desks could be around themes such as health and wellbeing, volunteering opportunities or digital inclusion. There would also be the potential to recruit volunteers via the HIVE Volunteer Bureau, to manage such pop-up spaces.

Current high street or community locations where HIVE has supported include:

- Baffins Pantry, Tangier Road
- Portsea Pantry, John Pounds Centre
- Paulsgrove Food Pantry, Paulsgrove Community Centre

With the Council's purchase of the Fratton Bridge Centre, there is opportunity to have HIVE support on Fratton Road.

Examples of Cultural Services pop ups in the UK

The following include some examples of successful pop-up models from across the UK.

Exeter: Libraries Unlimited reutilised a former GAP retail unit into an art studio workshop hosted by a local professional artist/creative. Shoppers were invited in to partake in workshops, view exhibitions and had opportunity to browse a mini library and find out about library activities.¹⁰

Leicester: the Museums service have pop-up stalls at community events across the city. This enables promotion of the museums and forthcoming exhibitions. This can include objects to handle and family friendly activities. This has included a pop-up in the local shopping centre.¹¹

Aberdeenshire Council: mini pop-up museum displays are available in several libraries to share museum collections with the community.¹²

⁹ [Portsmouth City Councils strategic relationship with The HIVE Portsmouth.pdf](#)

¹⁰ [Pop up library on Exeter high street - Libraries Unlimited](#)

¹¹ [Pop-Up Museums – Leicester Museums](#)

¹² [Pop-up Museums - Live, Life Aberdeenshire \(lifelifeaberdeenshire.org.uk\)](#)

Museum of Homelessness 'Secret Museum' (London) was available for 11 days only. Stories and objects were hidden in central London locations, with clues for participants to find the museum. The museum included both outdoor and indoor locations.¹³

The Mary Rose Museum operated as a pop-up museum at festivals and events, taking artefacts, replicas, activities and a small shop around the UK, whilst the museum was undergoing renovation.¹⁴



Youth Engagement model, D Day Story - opportunity for High Street pop-up

In the past year the Museums Service have worked with local creatives / professional artists and the Council's Youth and Community Service to engage young people in a project opportunity.¹⁵ The Youth Clubs involved included Portsea, Buckland, Brook (Somerstown) and Hillside (Paulsgrove). Outcomes of the project included:

- Increased confidence
- Development of life skills / CV development
- Positive mental health and wellbeing
- Challenging perceptions of access and ownership to the city's heritage

'It [the project] is a great achievement and definitely something they [young people] can mention on a CV to show commitment and dedication' - Youth Centre Manager.

Consideration of this project indicates the potential to incorporate a youth engagement strand into a possible future High Street pop-up model. The model would be a joint venture between Culture Services and Youth Services, with a community pop-up venue as the outcome.



¹³ [Secret Museum — Museum of Homelessness](#)

¹⁴ [The Mary Rose Museum: Touring the UK with a pop-up museum \(museumsandheritage.com\)](#)

¹⁵ [Agenda for Cabinet Member - The Leader \(Culture, Leisure and Economic Development Portfolio\) on Friday, 17th November, 2023, 10.00 am Portsmouth City Council](#)

Opportunities for young people regarding the cultural pop-up could include the following:

- Co-production / co-curation - this could involve artefacts, replicas or art work based on a particular museum collection.
- Design and graphic art
- Mini- events / exhibitions held at the pop-up
- Social media promotion.

The pop-up space could include the following activity areas:



The pop-up programme, once established via an initial pilot, could engage youth centres across the city and 'pop-up' in different high street areas, depending where Council owned property was available (or a smaller version could 'pop-up' using a gazebo/market stall style). The Council's purchase of the Bridge Centre in Fratton offers opportunity in the upcoming future.

The pop-up would not only have the opportunity to engage young people but there would be potential for cross-generational work, if there was appetite in the community for adult volunteering and engagement at the pop-up. Creative workshops at the pop up would not just engage young people but the community as a whole.

The development of the Culture community pop-up would comprise 3 stages:

1. Outreach work at identified youth and community centres in the city
2. Engagement of young people to chosen Museum and Library venues
3. Development of pop-up e.g. professional oversight of art work display / curated library.

The activity area of the pop-up might include arts workshop or 'escape room' style challenges based on the Conan Doyle collection leveraging its unique connection to the city.

The alternative to an empty shop pop-up could include the utilising of front facing library window displays at key locations, or a display in Cascades.

Outcomes

The potential outcomes for a Culture community pop up in the high street include:

- Improvement of the high street environment - active, occupied, engaged units
- Breaking down of perceived barriers of access to culture

- Display of authentic project outcomes for the community - community owned curated displays of produced artwork
- Development of the social fabric of the community
- Improved inter-generational and cross-community relationships
- Development of life / work skills and confidence
- Positive mental health and wellbeing

Engaging High Street businesses with the city's culture

The Council may consider asking High Street businesses to display themed copies/ replicas of objects from the Council's collections. This could form a trail across the high streets of the city and could utilise QR codes to discover more information about the collection and the Council's cultural services. The objects would enable a talking point between the businesses and customers, could drive footfall to different areas of the city and raise awareness of the city's culture in the community.

Potential project funders

The following funding bodies may be appropriate regarding the development of a Culture pop-up project. Funding is criteria based, depending on the funding stream applied for.

National Lottery Heritage Fund look to fund projects in line with their new ten year strategy, Heritage 2033.¹⁶ Their funding priorities include:

- Promotion of inclusion and involvement of a wide range of people
- Boost to the local economy
- Encourage skills development and job creation
- Support wellbeing
- Create a better place to live, work and visit
- Improve the resilience of organisations working in heritage

Arts Council England's ten year strategy 2020-2030, 'Let's Create' is focussed around three outcomes and four investment principles:

<i>Let's Create: Outcomes</i>	<i>Let's Create: Investment Principles</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creative People (everyone included)• Cultural Communities (collaborative approaches)• Creative Cultural Country (innovative & international)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ambition & quality• Inclusivity & relevance (diversity)• Dynamism (responding to upcoming challenges)• Environmental responsibility

The Dulverton Trust is an independent grant awarding charity.¹⁷ It supports organisations addressing social issues, protecting heritage and the natural environment. It has previously provided small grants to The Portsmouth D Day Museum Trust.¹⁸

Proposed witnesses to call to EDCL Scrutiny Panel

Cathy Hakes, Head of Museums (PCC)

Dave Percival, Head of Libraries & Archives (PCC)

¹⁶ [National Lottery Grants for Heritage – £3,000 to £10,000 | The National Lottery Heritage Fund](#)

¹⁷ [The Dulverton Trust](#)

¹⁸ [Portsmouth D-Day Museum Trust – The D-Day Story, Portsmouth \(thedaystory.com\)](#)

Angela Gonzalez, Library Supervisor, Southsea Library (PCC)

Christine Taylor, Natural History Curator (PCC)

Grace Scott, Engagement Officer (PCC)

Katherine Webber, Museum, Heritage and Education Professional (external)

Ross Fairbrother, Manager, D Day Story (PCC)

Catherine Ramsay, Business Manager, HIVE (PCC)

Laura Weston, Education & Learning Officer, Conan Doyle (PCC)