

Progress update on Economic Development Culture & Leisure Scrutiny panel

Engagement with culture and leisure - widening social participation in Portsmouth

January 2024

This report provides an update on the Economic Development Culture and Leisure (EDCL) Scrutiny Panel's recommendations arising from a review into the engagement with culture and leisure to widen social participation in Portsmouth.

Background

On 18 September 2019, Scrutiny Management Panel prioritised the topic '*Engagement with culture and leisure - widening social participation in Portsmouth*'. The review commenced with meetings on 20 January 2020 and 25 February 2020 but further meetings were put on hold due to the pandemic.

The review recommenced on 12 January 2023, with further meetings on 30 January, 9 February and 13 March 2023.

The Panel received wide ranging evidence from both internal and external stakeholders (full details included in the Cabinet report dated 27 June 2023¹).

The Scrutiny Panel's recommendations were incorporated into a report dated 24 March 2023 (appended to the Cabinet report dated 27 June 2023).

The Scrutiny Panel made 17 recommendations, with further responses to additional points of relevance.

Progress to date

The following section highlights the key progress made for each recommendation as at January 2024.

	<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Update on progress</i>
1.	Consider greater advertising of the Portsmouth Leisure Card.	<p>As set out in the report of June 2023, the Leisure Card is advertised extensively across different services and partners without a marketing budget.</p> <p>To increase reach, during the course of 2023 (and into 2024) the card has been (and will continue to be) advertised via additional routes as follows: Education BookBags, Foster Carers Newsflash, HouseTalk and BH Live Sports Development Outreach team.</p> <p>In collaboration with BH Live the service have produced an A1 poster series for Leisure Card which is being advertised across the city.</p> <p>Going forward the service are looking at developing a newsletter with the support of the marketing team.</p> <p>Meetings have also been held with relevant stakeholders in key target areas of the city via providers of sheltered</p>

¹ [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 27th June, 2023, 2.00 pm Portsmouth City Council](#)

		housing, community centres and hubs together with City of Sanctuary and community leaders.
2.	Review and update the eligibility criteria.	The eligibility criteria is regularly reviewed with the Council's Tackling Poverty Officer to make sure it is up to date. It is not possible to expand eligibility without further funding to relevant affected services.
3.	Reviews the places the Leisure Card can be accepted with greater engagement with culture and leisure	This was actioned in Spring 2023 following extensive engagement with providers across the city. 10 new providers came on board. Since then, further engagement has led to an additional leisure provider joining the scheme. The review with potential providers is ongoing.
4.	Creates a webpage for listing Leisure Card participating partners.	This was already in existence prior to the review. Digital applications have also been available (in addition to paper applications) since 2022.
5.	Increases the number of Children We Care For and Foster Carers who are aware of and take up Leisure Card.	The service has reached out regularly to the Children We Care For team (including Fostering). Numbers for this cohort have risen over 200% since 2020, although from a small base. The service is also now advertising in Foster Carers Newsflash (see point 1) to increase this cohort.
6.	Reinstates the reports from the Audience Agency project to increase demographic knowledge on engagement with culture & leisure	Audience Agency working has moved on since the last of the detailed reports was undertaken and there is a considerable amount of audience data, specifically designed for cultural organisations and data reports available directly from Audience Agency which can then be tailored to organisational need. Detailed Audience Spectrum information, along with national cultural participation monitoring is regularly updated and free of charge. Nominal fees are charged for bespoke reports and other opportunities such as collaboration with their wide-ranging cultural networks.
7.	Congratulates the Kings Theatre on their work with different ethnic groups and dementia groups	The Kings Theatre continue to work with a wide range of different community groups in innovative ways seeking to make culture accessible. Most recent initiatives have included a new partnership with First Bus offering a special '5 for £5' on bus tickets for family groups attending the pantomime using a service which stretched from the north of the city right to the theatre's main entrance. The Kings Theatre Arts Academy are also currently encouraging community members for their new show choir 'Resonate' with auditions being held imminently.

8.	Congratulates the Groundlings Theatre for their work with the Detectives	In a similar way to the Kings Theatre, Groundlings have continued to develop and strengthen their community links with a particular focus on their immediate neighbourhoods in Portsea. Developing their youth theatre groups they have provided routes for performance both in their venue but also in collaboration with other cultural organisations such as Victorious Festival.
9.	Congratulates the Guildhall Trust on their work with schools	<p>It is worth highlighting that work to transform the basement of Portsmouth Guildhall into an exciting, new creative space for young people and to redevelop the venue's main customer toilets began in October.</p> <p>The £1.3million project will see the main basement area and associated rooms remodelled to provide an innovative space where young people aged 11-25 will be able to meet and explore their creative potential.</p> <p>The welcoming and safe space, to be named The Base, will open in late Spring 2024 as one of the most unique and innovative creative facilities in the country, giving young people access to a band rehearsal room with backline equipment, a small studio with a DJ mixing space, a large AV suite with specialist software, a small performance space and a lounge/exhibition area.</p> <p>Collaborating with schools, colleges and cultural partners from across the region, The Base will be a catalyst for creativity and collaboration, with specialist programmes and workshops delivered by some of the foremost practitioners in the sector to support young people in achieving their objectives.</p> <p>Post pandemic it is widely reported that young people have become more disengaged and isolated with 1 in 4 suffering heightened anxiety and poor mental health. The Base will remove barriers to engagement and offer a nurturing environment for all, including students and young people from low-income families and under-represented groups.</p> <p>Engaged in the project since its inception, young people have informed the design and facilities that The Base will offer, and now a larger Youth Advisory Panel is being established that will continue the development and creation of the space.</p> <p>The majority of funding for the project is from Portsmouth City Council and Arts Council England.</p>
10.	Returns the price of the piano hire in Central Library to its previous price	This was not recommended following the presentation of the 'Library and Archive Service Charges' report to Culture, Leisure and Economic Development Committee 17/03/23 in which increases were 'agreed and

		implemented from 1st April 2023, in order to ensure full cost recovery of these services’.
11.	Congratulates the Library Service for the removal of fees and fines	<p>Portsmouth was one of the first library authorities to remove fines for late return of books in 2018. For many years previously, no fines and reservation fees had been charged to children but adults were still subject to fines and reservation charges for items on loan to other customers or on the shelves at other libraries in the city.</p> <p>The cost of administering fines was outweighing the income generated from fines and the process of penalising customers was increasingly becoming a negative experience for customers and staff and another barrier to library usage as those customers, often on low incomes and facing a large fines bill, were unlikely to return.</p> <p>Following the pandemic an increasing number of library authorities have gone ‘fines free’.</p>
12.	Keeps all library buildings open to the public as they are an essential space	<p>Residents of Portsmouth continue to enjoy access to a comprehensive library offer across the city. They are essential community hubs and a key provider of low or no cost activities for people of all ages, backgrounds and cultures. The cost of living crisis has furthermore made libraries a key venue in the ‘Warm Spaces’ campaign. No one is more than a twenty-minute walk from one of nine branch libraries.</p>
13.	Repairs the moving floor of the Mountbatten Swimming Pool which is a key feature for accessibility	<p>As previously reported officers can confirm that access to the pool is currently not impacted despite the moveable floor not being operational, it is fixed at a depth that allows a comprehensive swimming programme to be delivered including activities such as learn to swim, school swimming, aqua aerobics, family swimming and general casual use together with a competition standard 25 m pool which can be used by competent swimmers and local clubs.</p> <p>Although the moveable floor is not currently operational a solution has been found to allow the boom to move in isolation so also allowing 50m galas and training to be hosted.</p> <p>Officers can also confirm that the pool is fully accessible for the disabled with specialist changing facilities and hoists allowing access. In addition in the last couple of years access into the pool has also been improved with the installation of some new steps with a gradual gradient that allow those with mobility issues to enter the pool.</p>

		As part of required lifecycle maintenance requirements the pool will need to be refurbished in approximately 3 years' time in 2027 and it is intended that at that point options be considered on the provision and installation of a moveable floor if required, until then the pool remains fully accessible.
14.	Supports the mobile library service	Locations furthest from our 9 branch libraries are served by a mobile library. By the end of March 2024, there will be two electric 'tuk tuks', supplied with funding from Arts Council England. These will be able to promote library services in school playgrounds, local parks, the seafront and local high streets.
15.	Considers the installation of new facilities in the north & north-west of the city	<p>Whilst no specific new facilities have been installed in the north and north-west of the city since this report was published a range of projects have been hosted in this geographical area of the city.</p> <p>Following on from the very successful We Shine in November 2022 with hubs in both Hilsea and Paulsgrove further activity, such as the Live at the Bandstand on Tour programme and a new youth theatre initiative by Chichester Festival Theatre have been devised for this area of the city.</p>
16.	Creates a cultural network	<p>The funding of Portsmouth Creates is primarily to support and further develop cultural networks right across the city and into the sub-region.</p> <p>Our funding recently resulted in a successful bid by Portsmouth Creates to Arts Council England leveraging in £650,000 over three years. This Place Partnership funding, along with core funding from the founding partners including PCC will drive an ambitious programme to drive growth, develop talent and improve inclusivity in the cultural sector. Further iterations of the successful We Shine event are planned for 2024 and 2026 with a literature focus to their work for 2025.</p>
17.	Welcomes the creation of the Museums Trail. Recommends it is extended to other cultural premises	The Tourism Team completed the Old Portsmouth Kids Guide along with a new Millennium Trail Guide to complement the updated panels along the walk. Both are available at Information Points in the city.
18.	Access, health and wellbeing as provided by Museums Service	<p>Many volunteer roles are referrals from the HIVE to support people back into work and benefit their mental health.</p> <p>Changing places toilets are being installed at Portsmouth Museum in February, audio guides have been recently updated at D-Day Story.</p>
19.	Outreach activity provided by Museums Service	The service is reaching out to communities in the North of the city through a programme of pop-up museums. The first one will open in February in Cosham Library. The

		<p>"Finding their voice" project engaged dozens of young people across the city.</p>
20.	Volunteering offer by Museums Service	<p>The Museum Service offers a range of volunteering opportunities in collections/ research/ public engagement/ front of house roles. There are 80 active volunteers currently. Recently the team of LCT7074 volunteers won the prestigious Marsh Volunteers for museum learning Award (British Museum).</p>
21.	Contribution of Conan Doyle collection to widening access to culture	<p>We are continuing to work with Conan Doyle 'Detective' volunteers to deliver community based interactions that allow access and publicise and utilise the Conan Doyle Collection to local and international audiences.</p>
22.	Contribution of Arts Council England project towards access to culture & leisure	<p>The ACE funded Volunteer Futures project has been developed to improve the retention and sustainability of volunteers engaging with PCC Cultural Services internally and externally. The project aims to support individuals with additional support needs who may face barriers to volunteering such as asylum seekers and refugees, the homeless, and those with disabilities (both physical and learning), learning difficulties, and other groups. Overall, the project seeks to improve the accessibility and diversity of volunteering.</p> <p>At the time of writing, 557 volunteers have been engaged and supported (the original project target was 500).</p>
23.	Contribution of seafront to health and wellbeing	<p>The seafront continues to support many different users and we encourage as much use of this shared public space as possible.</p> <p>Recent new initiatives have included hosting the European Kite foiling Championships which had an extensive education programme encouraging young people to excitingly engage with the seafront in a safe environment.</p> <p>We continue to support a seasonal service by the RNLI to encourage sea swimming and continue to have a designated swim area marked off by buoys. We have worked with partners to accommodate other regular activities as the coastal defence works have moved to different areas and activities such as Park Run have been able to continue with minimal disruption.</p>
24.	Contribution of Libraries Service to access to culture and leisure	<p>The Library and Archive Service makes a significant impact on access by providing regular opportunities for people of all backgrounds, abilities and cultures to take part in leisure and cultural activities. Many of these are provided free of charge to the customer or at very low cost and at a range of easily accessible venues. As well as providing books, eBooks and eAudio books to customers, libraries provide access to online newspapers, magazines, free music downloads and streaming. For those that cannot get online at home, libraries provide free internet access and informal IT learning opportunities. Many</p>

		<p>activities are provided throughout the year that encourage participation in culture and creativity, including the annual literary festival, BookFest, which takes place in Feb/Mar for children and adults; the Summer Reading Challenge; regular rhymetimes and storytimes for babies, toddlers and young children and school holiday activities for families. There are many adult reading groups supported by libraries and other informal activities such as board games and social groups take place in the venues.</p> <p>The library outreach team oversees the books at home service to residents who cannot easily get to libraries and there is a comprehensive offer to children and adults with vision impairments.</p>
25.	<p>BH Live Sports Development programme contribution to access to leisure, health & wellbeing</p>	<p>In 2023 BH Live provided a Social Value benefit to Portsmouth of in the region of £7m compared to £6.4m the year before. The social value calculation gives insight to the value in community savings generated across four key areas; Health Care, Education, Wellbeing and Crime.</p> <p>Some of the highlights delivered by the BH Live team during 2023 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with the PCC Wellbeing Team to provide membership to their Healthy Weight programmes across the city. At the end of the year there were approximately 50 participants with half taking up a two month fitness membership offer. • They had total of 401 members sign-up to their GP Referral Schemes in 2023, with 310 current active members. • BH Live completed a grand total of 1917 exercise referral appointments throughout the year across all of their schemes. These appointments consist of initial assessments, programmes, exercise sessions, mid and final appointments. • BH Live deliver a number of additional programmes including: • Stroke Referral Scheme – a maintenance programme for those who have suffered a stroke. The scheme delivers gym sessions, Stroke swim and seated chair classes. • Cardiac Rehabilitation Phase 4 – BH Live run 2 maintenance classes for those who have suffered a cardiac event and are wanting to improve their fitness. They also provide gym programmes for those who want to progress. • COPD (Chronic Disruptive Pulmonary Disease) Maintenance classes – BH Live currently run 2 classes at the Mountbatten Centre and 2 classes at the Pyramids Centre for COPD members. • Parkinson’s Sessions – BH Live currently run a 2hr supervised gym session weekly, an aqua/swim

		<p>session and a tailored circuit class all aimed at those with Parkinson's Disease.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cancer Pre-hab – BH Live are working with Southampton Hospital to deliver pre-rehabilitation for those that are to undergo major surgery and are needing to gain a higher level of fitness to increase the chance of success. <p>Female</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• BH Live was engaged in supporting the development of a series of women and girls' seminars to improve health and build confidence, with a role out planned for 2024.• A female only gym session has been planned to build on the female only swim offer at Charter Community Sports Centre.• Opportunities have been identified that map to national initiatives as well as feedback to local community engagement. Safe space running for females utilising the track, and baby sling fit class are current opportunities. <p>Low Income</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Further push of the PCC leisure card is having a positive impact and identifying more opportunities to promote through stakeholder relationships both internally & externally.• Promotion of the leisure card across BH Live sites as well as supporting the promotion across the city has seen a rise in the number of users across BH Live sites. <p>Minority groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partnering with PCC social care who have care responsibilities for unaccompanied minors (asylum seekers) to engage in gym, swim, and active opportunities.• Specific HAF delivery in partnership with City of Sanctuary saw BH Live build on early engagement of how they further support those seeking asylum in Portsmouth.• Partnering with local faith group Oasis of Love to support engagement for their members to engage in active lifestyle activity. This includes a youth programme of 6 weeks over the summer holidays to finish with a family sports festival at the Mountbatten Centre. <p>Disability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A partnership is ongoing with Cliffdale Primary School and Redwood School for pupils to access BH live venues to deliver on opportunities to be more active through sport as well as through play at Exploria. The Pyramids party rooms can be used as an ideal set of classrooms and then also give young people more access to Exploria soft play.
--	--	---

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creative Advances delivery was a huge success and subject to finding further funding BH Live hopes to continue to engage this organisation in supporting more adults with disabilities.• Following community engagement BH Live have been asked to deliver some after school style activity to support young people with Special needs.• BH Live maintain a comprehensive and all-encompassing disability tennis programme which is considered one of the most inclusive in the region. Their commitment to inclusivity is evident through their extensive offerings, including 2 weekly Headway sessions for those recovering from head injuries, a weekly Downs Syndrome Active session and partnerships with Harbour School for children with special needs. BH Live have a close collaboration with Hampshire & IOW disability and the LTA.• Level Water continue to part fund 1-2-1 swimming lessons for children with physical disabilities, they currently have 12 swimmers per week accessing lessons at Mountbatten through this scheme and have integrated 3 disabled swimmers into their regular classes. <p>Over 50's</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'TOFF' (The Over Fifty Fives) delivery has a good mix of activity, the membership continues to grow and BH Live have a good relationship with the group. They have now moved to Wimbledon Park.• A Nordic walking / fitness instructor is now in place and trained which is a huge positive to deliver an often-requested activity across the city.• Walking Netball and Walking Football are still popular and happen on Monday morning and evening respectively. <p>Interaction (Program for the Recovering Mentally III)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are currently approximately 200 members on the scheme with an average monthly attendance at sessions of in the region of 280 which is a noticeable increase from the previous year. 88 members are actively taking part in at least 1 session per week.• Portsmouth Interaction provide activities in the community and the BH Live centres to bridge the gap between the hospitals and their scheme. This links into the referral scheme and has paved way for the St James project in which they deliver exercise on the wards. <p>Tennis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• BH Live are proud to report a growth of over 10% in the player numbers for the year 2023 with approximately 300 currently on a development course.
--	--	---

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• BH Live's partnership with Mayfield School remains strong as they utilize the tennis facilities for curricular activities 2-3 days every week. During the summer term, BH Live delivered a 10-week training program in collaboration with Corpus Christi working with all year groups. Additionally, in early October, they hosted a school's roadshow offering FREE tennis sessions to 10 local schools for 5 consecutive days.• In September 2023, with spaces at Portsmouth Tennis Centre limited they decided to expand their programme further and created a small tennis programme at Charter Community Sports Centre. This programme operates on Monday and Friday evenings. <p>Gymnastics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Record number of pre-school gymnasts accessing gymnastics classes, the Portsmouth Gymnastics Centre had nearly 400 per week prior to the 2023 summer holidays. The programme now offers 18 classes per week with the addition of gym play this year which helps boost under 5's membership.• All classes are full within the recreational programme, with alert lists and with the addition of RISE gymnastics award scheme meaning a clear and fun progression to retain members and link with British Gymnastics.• A big change within the programme happened last year with the addition of an advanced squad which bridges the gap between recreational and performance level gymnastics.• The Portsmouth Gymnastics Centre was used for 8 large events & competitions in 2023 and over 15 British Gymnastics Courses were run.• The BH Live adult gymnastics squad attended the British Adult Championships in August, the team were incredibly successful winning 21 British medals across women's, men's, trampoline, tumbling and Acrobatics gymnastics! This incredible result has inspired more adults to try gymnastics and adult classes are growing and are as popular as ever. <p>Swimming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are currently in the region of 2100 on the learn to swim programme at the Mountbatten Centre and 230 at Charter Community Sports Centre. In particular BH Live saw a 21% increase in swimmers continuing to Stage 7 and beyond. Swim Fit classes for those who wish to keep swimming but don't want to join a club have been introduced to the programme to keep young people in aquatic activity for longer.• On average 20 schools attend weekly lessons each term with an average of 930 pupils per week.
--	--	---

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BH Live have also begun supporting Charter Academy introduce swimming as a GCSE PE option for pupils.
	<p>Sports & leisure infrastructure</p>	<p>The sports and Leisure infrastructure in Portsmouth is provided by a range of organisations – PCC, UoP, MOD, schools, colleges, community centres and private providers.</p> <p>In line with the council's adopted Sports Facility Strategy officers are pursuing the development of the city's facilities on two fronts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Replacement of Eastney Swimming Pool with a new facility at Bransbury Park</u>. This project is progressing, and the next milestone will be a planning application in early 2024. The principal contractor has been appointed and they will assume design responsibility from April 2024. Construction is scheduled to start later in the year. The facility is due to open in early 2026. This will also include a new GP surgery to replace an existing nearby facility. • <u>Increasing availability of existing sports and leisure facilities</u>. Officers are in dialogue with other public sector providers in the city (ie UoP, schools, MOD). In particular two schools in central Portsmouth have large sports facilities that are not well-used by the community. Officers are supporting these schools to open up their facilities to greater community use – expected mid to late 2024. <p>The council's sports and leisure service operates its sports and leisure facilities via a contract with a non-profit organisation BH Live. Officers commissioned a review of the service by two leading leisure consultants. Their conclusion was that the service provided by BH Live was good. Officers are working with BH Live to develop some of the areas for improvement identified by the reports.</p> <p>The contract with BH Live expires in Feb 2027. Officers are engaging with consultants to develop options for the service beyond this date. The most likely outcomes will be contract extension or re-procurement, although other options are not ruled out at this stage (formation of a local trust, LATCo, in-house).</p>
<p>26.</p>	<p>Community centres contribution to health & wellbeing (Housing)</p>	<p>The housing managed community centres support the delivery of a range of activities and well-being initiatives. Recent new additions to the activity programme have included karate in Somerstown, football in Paulsgrove, a new dance session at Charles Dickens and an LDD provision at Cosham.</p> <p>We will seek to develop our offer and are actively involved in Place Shaping activity in Paulsgrove led by PCCs Public</p>

		<p>Health and Corporate Services team and continue to engage with residents to understand what they would like to see locally. This recent engagement has led to the community centre working with the library service to sell library books that are no longer issued, which is proving popular.</p> <p>We continue to work closely with partner agencies in each locality to promote to residents what is available to them in their communities.</p>
27.	Community centres contribution to health & wellbeing (Culture & Leisure)	<p>The nine community centres in Culture continue to provide broad and balanced programmes aimed at all ages and at reasonable costs.</p> <p>The centres able to do so participated in the Warm Spaces initiative last winter and this continues.</p> <p>The most recent user survey reports will be available shortly, following which the findings will be discussed with the committees of trustees. These findings, together with the outcomes of the annual SLA monitoring process, inform their future development of activities and services.</p> <p>All centres are promoting the Leisure Card, having paper application forms available for those unable to apply online.</p>
28.	Contribution of events towards access to culture, leisure & wellbeing	<p>The events team continue to organise a range of free to access annual large-scale events including the International Kite Festival, Live at the Bandstand programme of music events, Armed Forces Day and the City's Fireworks display.</p> <p>The annual events programme remains very popular with residents providing a wide range of events to suit a variety of tastes and preferences. Attendance figures continued to remain high in 2023.</p> <p>The Bandstand on Tour events worked well in 2023 and it is planned to continue with this in 2024 utilising Victoria Park and KGV playing field.</p> <p>The events team continue to encourage and support a wide range of community organised events and accommodate as many as our open spaces allow. The seafront spaces are already fully booked from June to September in 2024.</p> <p>The team fully supports national initiatives and provides opportunities for communities to come together to celebrate or commemorate. The King's Coronation was marked in 2023 with a programme of street parties and community lunch events across the city. In 2024 we will work with partners and organisations to stage a programme of events to mark the 80th anniversary of the D-Day.</p>

--	--	--

Next steps

We will continue to deliver the recommendations set out by the EDCL Scrutiny panel together with our work programmes.