

Cultural Consortium Open Meeting

Tuesday 18th January 2005

3rd Floor Arts Centre, Portsmouth Central Library, at 7pm

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss progress on Portsmouth's Cultural Strategy, and to develop and share views and ideas about taking it forward.

The Chair of the Consortium's Executive Group, John Phillipson, opened the meeting. He welcomed everyone and introduced Barbara Thompson, Strategic Director for Economy, Culture and Community Safety. Barbara expressed her strong support and commitment to culture in the city.

Mark Scarborough (Exec Group member) briefed the meeting on:

- SeaBritain 2005 and Trafalgar 200 events: there are opportunities for people to get involved in activities. Community Funds are available for organisations from Lydia Powell from the Council
lydia.powell@portsmouthcc.gov.uk tel: 0239283 4104.

- The Global Challenge Yachts return to Portsmouth on 16th July 2005 and we are looking for more organisations to be involved in the carnival. For more information contact Dot to Dot on tel: 023 9220 0317.

- The VE/VJ Day anniversary activities will be on 10th July 2005, these would include street theatre. Mark emphasised that there is council funding available for groups who wish to lay on an activity related to the events above. For further details contact Heather Todd in the Council at heather.todd@portsmouthcc.gov.uk tel: 023 9283 4184.

The meeting was attended by 29 people. The list of attendees is attached at the end of this document. Amongst these was Steve Baily, the Head of Culture, who reports to Barbara Thompson, and the Leader of the Council, Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson. It was heartening for the consortium to see such positive and strong support for the Cultural Strategy from the Council.

Peter Wainwright (Exec Group member) then asked everyone to introduce themselves and briefly state their interest in culture. During this, a number of views were expressed about the Cultural Strategy and what they wanted to see happen in the City. Everyone was then invited to put these views on post-it notes. These views will be collated and considered by the consortium executive. The list of views, in no particular order or groupings, is as follows:

1. Make Portsmouth an aspirational City where people want to come and live, and where individuals, families, communities and the City want to excel.

2. Get the six main performance venues to work together, plan together, advertise together and have a mutually reinforcing programming.
3. Make Portsmouth the 'South Coast City of Festivals'.
4. Why publish the "Hill to the Sea" document if, by Council leader own admission, Cultural representatives are not listened to?
5. Investment
6. Central advertising of all activities
7. Communication & networking
8. Creative noise
9. Positive promotion of the City
10. Put Portsmouth on the map as a City, "City of Festivals" is a great idea.
11. Have more art galleries with sales and studio space
12. More use of open space
13. Have Art classes in Guildhall Square
14. Performance and rehearsals (Theatre)
15. Music interaction
16. All to inspire
17. Have a clear vision and timeframe
18. The culture world must make the case for its contribution to a complete city - but it must be done creatively
19. Communication - know who is who (individuals and organisations) in the City in terms of cultural activity. The Consortium is a good start.
20. Implement the strategy and show its effectiveness.
21. Portsmouth needs a cultural directory, a database of people actively involved in culture
22. Studios for artists with selling facility, in a prime location at affordable rents
23. Dissemination of funding available for artists (self employed too) to work/engage with the community on arts and crafts
24. Contemporary music - rock, jazz, 'world'
25. Easier access to performance spaces for musicians
26. Greater diversity and choice of events, venues in which to enjoy oneself
27. Better capture and display of local art - celebrate local, buy local
28. Why do Portsmouth City Council's gallery, Aspex and Portsmouth Cathedral mainly exhibit artists from outside Portsmouth?
29. Why don't we investigate unused spaces as potential art / culture venues.
30. Historically the City spends less on culture than comparative cities, this has its own message.
31. The City needs to develop the projection of its image: we all agree the reality is something some people love.
32. Major employers and financial operations are key contributors to culture, what are the views and input of the Navy, IBM etc and who is seeking them?
33. The media is crucial.
34. Culture is for everyone! - rich, infinitely diverse, inclusive, people with pride in themselves and their community
35. Raise the profile of arts across the entire City through providing what the community wants whilst supporting innovation

36. What quantifies Culture? And how is it prioritised in council budgets?
37. We need - more venues where makers of short films can show them.
38. More live music.
39. More spontaneous / surprise encounters with art - it should not just be in somewhere you have to make the effort to go to, i.e. a gallery.
40. Need to explore ways in which we can disseminate information about what is going on in Portsmouth - joint marketing? Web-sites? Lots of stuff already happening in the City, but people don't know about it.
41. For the people of Portsmouth to feel culturally involved and able to practically use their creativity through engaging with arts professionals in the area, stimulating imagination, confidence, and creative use of spare time.
42. Concert hall
43. Literature Festival
44. Portsmouth Cathedral needs to be a venue that is living, breathing and alive. It must not exist simply because it is old but because it serves a purpose. It is the people's space, it needs to be accessible to all. We can do this by opening it up for Dance, Drama, Music, and Art exhibitions. We can be challenging, provocative and thought provoking.
45. Art Space to locate all artists on one site at Brougham Road and seek re-generation and European funding to develop it as an artists studio resource and for community benefit.
46. Better pulling together of Cultural activities taking place in the City
47. Small things have huge impact, lighting, music, cleanliness and safety.
48. Venues for theatre companies such as Groundlings, where they can meet, rehearse and hold workshops, are in short supply. Theatre companies are always short of money and many halls charge around £100 per hour for use. At the moment Groundlings are having to use the hall in Friendship House, Elm Grove, where there is a sound meter making sure we do not make too much noise. Obviously we do not want to be worrying about how much noise we make, but at the moment Friendship House is the cheapest Portsmouth-based venue, so we have to accept it. There are decent venues around, but they should charge less.
49. Portsmouth has everything needed - Cultural Consortium needs to look harder for it eg: more accessible, communicative photographic images within publications would help!
50. Target specific groups / centres etc
51. The voice of ... unemployed, housewives, OAP's, business people etc. ideas / involvement how do we get them all?
52. North South divide within the City - how to engage all communities.
53. Take cultural arts into schools and clubs to enable education and experience of the different cultures that the City holds.
54. Better support for artists ie. Advice on studios / marketing / displaying / working within communities
55. Encourage diversity
56. Centre for music excellence
57. Exhibitions
58. Concerts - schools and professional
59. Debates and discussion

- 60. Place of peace
- 61. Health Promotion Strategy
 - Multi-cultural participation
 - Inclusion not exclusion
 - Colour up and clean up the city, make it green and healthy.
 - Maximise the Cities potential with celebration of its diversity and it's differences.
- 62. Regular culture slot in the free paper/The News or other papers.
- 63. University of Portsmouth - Film festival almost of the ground but needs more active support
- 64. Hold a Chamber Music Series
- 65. Link University skills and expertise with community events / organisations eg, space exploration exhibition and cosmology dept.
- 66. Celebrate local heroes (honorary degrees, public lectures etc)
- 67. An attractive City helps attract students
- 68. Use the Youth Council as a voice for Youth culture
- 69. How to link up all the opportunities and activities that take place over the year throughout the City?
- 70. Make light of the dark

Group work

Next, attendees were organised into five groups, each of which was asked to develop ideas and responses under one of the five objectives in the Cultural Strategy. Each group fed back a two minute summary of their discussions to the meeting in plenary. Here are the results.

Objective One

'Radically to transform and invigorate Portsmouth's Cultural Infrastructure'

Ideas

1. Funding for Culture. Identify potential funding streams for all organisations and ensure everybody knows how to access them. Write bids to the Heritage Fund and Big Lottery Fund for funding for key events.
2. What have other cities got? Can it be replicated?
3. Big employers - what do they think?
- what can they offer?
4. Media - opportunities of wealth creation by celebrating the rich variety of cultural activities we have going on all the time. At present it is hit and miss if people find out about some of the lower key events. Who should lead on this? This has yet to be decided. Consider a regular page in The News (they already provide The Guide on Fridays), online information for all events including local community event, and do spotlight features on these regularly.

5. Venues:
 - they should support each other and not compete.
 - establish working partnerships.
 - address the North/South divide within the City, wherein much of the cultural infrastructure seems to be biased towards the South. Find out what people's needs are.
 - address the availability of parking in key venues for cultural activity.
 - use unusual venues, such as the Forts, Portsmouth Football Club; have art open to the public in people's gardens/houses (similar to the way some people make their garden open to the public).
6. Set up an automated and integrated box office for selling tickets. This could be council-run and maybe include a central location for tickets, plus making purchase available on a website.
7. Hold a dedicated arts week opening up different buildings etc.
8. Have the voice of young people represented on all decision-making bodies, including the consortium and its executive, so they can have their say at an early stage. There was discussion of the Youth Parliament that exists within Portsmouth, and the "Every Child Matters" government initiative.

Objective Two

'To make Portsmouth's Urban Environment a beautiful, vibrant place based on the principles of sustainability, accessibility and inclusiveness'

Ideas

1. Have an artist in residence within urban planning.
2. Make and display sculptures (eg sea sculptures) around the city.
3. Show temporary/ephemeral public art on hoardings and in the local environment (ie not just in galleries).
4. Take art to different locations and venues within the city.
5. Open the Aspex Gallery at Gunwharf Quays.
6. Make Gunwharf Quays more accessible and attractive to a wider range of people.
7. Have better transport links between cultural locations.
8. Residents should have more involvement in, a greater ownership of, Cultural Activities.
9. Projects need to be continued and sustained over a long time.

Objective Three

'To safeguard, extend, enhance and encourage the sustainable use of Portsmouth's Natural Environment'

Ideas

1. The organisation called Dot To Dot has carried out a project that maps where open spaces are and their use in the City. Make use of this information, and hence more use of spaces that are currently under-used (eg the open/green spaces in Hilsea Lines).
2. We need ways of eliminating traffic - for environmental and accessibility issues
3. Engage with the environment in a creative way through design etc
4. University of Portsmouth – consider the use of Ravelin Park, both its natural land and buildings.
5. Southsea Common
 - Seaside provision.
 - Provide covered spaces for winter use.
6. National Science Week occurs every March. Link into this national event with activities such as:
 - Hold day/weekend activities that involved people in exploring the aquatic life (eg in the many ponds within the city).
 - Songs and storytelling eg “Mr Beetle” – this is an activity in which children are encouraged to find out about and respect insect life.
7. Encompass art and nature in traffic features (eg on roundabouts, or more wild flowers at the side of the road), and in traffic queues where there is a captive audience – provide information and entertainment in plasma screens and hoardings for vehicle occupants to see while they wait in the queues.

The last point (item 7) about traffic arose from the experiences of the group members in getting to the consortium meeting on the night (18 Jan). All had horror stories of how they got to the venue and tried to find parking. It seemed that stories told of going to other cultural events were dominated by the problems of car traffic and parking. The discussion evolved into the fact that there is more to Portsmouth than the frustrating experience of moving around by car.

An overall comment from the discussions on Objective Three was that natural spaces are underused (see item 1 above), and we should use methods, such as Mr Beetle (see item 6 above) to play up the natural possibilities of Portsmouth.

Objective Four

'To fully recognise and exploit the cultural and informal learning resources and opportunities available to Portsmouth's people and institutions'

Ideas

1. Have people from different cultures going into schools and on the street.
2. Encourage others to get involved in the consortium.
3. Have a web / network of all resources:
 - venues
 - skills
 - experience
4. Have more networking events.
5. Make a list of cultural resources available.
6. Have more cultural events on the streets.
7. Help groups to market themselves.
8. Put a strap-line on all programme flyers advertising the event database.
9. Advertise events in the Journal.
10. Have a 'wants and offers' facility through the Consortium Website.
11. Include people and share - have more festivals.
12. Promote new facilities on the PCC website.
13. Work on matched funding ideas.
14. Involve businesses in developing culture.
15. Lobby the Chamber of Commerce for sponsorship – an idea was for cultural groups to present their case and ask for funding/involvement at Chamber of Commerce meetings. This was seen as an efficient way to reach out to many businesses at once.
16. Portsmouth needs a comprehensive cultural guide into which arts and cultural groups can input their events, and which the public can rely on as the prime source of information.

A core theme that emerged during the discussions on Objective Four was the need for a cultural database of resources, activities and events. The PCC website already has a what's on page, and has a guide to running events, and it seemed that this could be more widely publicised, and further developed into such a database where people can input events, and find out information. This was seen to be relatively low cost to implement, would have huge benefits in spreading the word about what is on offer.

Objective Five

'To increase cultural vitality and synergy by connecting activities in and through Portsmouth'

Ideas

1. Open a cultural centre in Portsmouth. Maybe one venue or specific area that is widely known as such a centre. Investigate the feasibility of this.
2. Establish a network of communication between various activities and bodies involved in culture.
3. Identify cultural activities. Identify the needs of the different groups of people who want to participate in activities, and then encourage cultural activity within those groups. Put simply, connect the activities on offer with those who want to access or participate in activities.
4. Encourage individuals to have a voice and be heard within the Consortium.
5. Investigate how other cities promote art and culture. Learn from them, their practices and the way they go about it.
6. Set up an “umbrella” festival and use this as a catalyst to encourage others to participate. Use this “umbrella” to coordinate the many activities across the City. Explore the concept of other festivals within this larger “umbrella” festival.
7. Connect activities occurring in Portsmouth to others happening outside. Avoid a Portsmouth-only approach.

A core theme from the discussions on Objective Five was to establish mechanisms and practical ways of setting up networks and communications between different cultural groups and activities, and linking these to the needs of the people of our city. The idea of a nexus (the hub of a network) was discussed whereby people could go to, or access, a central source of information or a venue to find out what was going on in the City.

Close

The meeting closed at 9pm. The Chair stated that the many ideas that were offered in the meeting will be considered by the Exec Group, and there will be further feedback to the consortium members in due course.

List of attendees

Name	E-mail Address	Representing
Joanne Bushnell	Jo@aspex.org.uk	Aspex Visual Arts Trust
Fiona Lewis	Fiona@aspex.org.uk	Aspex Visual Arts Trust
Michael Gunton	Michael.gunton@portsmouthcc.gov.uk	PCC – Museums
Maricar Jagger	Maricar.jagger@port.ac.uk	University of Portsmouth
Pam Newick	Pamnewick@hotmail.com	
Robert Shaw	Robertoborn@hotmail.com	
Faye Bradley	Faye.bradley@portsmouthcc.gov.uk	PCC – Arts Service
Freya Perry	Essential.colour@virgin.net	Artist – Essential Colour
Leigh-Beth	Leigh-	PCC – Events

Campbell	beth.campbell@portsmouthcc.gov.uk	
Kathryn Denham	k.denham@pgs.org.uk	Portsmouth Festivities
Judy Walker	Marketing@portsmouthcathedral.org.uk	Portsmouth Cathedral
Laura Wilson	Dottodotarts@hotmail.com	Dot to Dot
Tim Hands	Timothy.hands@ntlworld.com	Portsmouth Grammar School – Headmaster
Alastair Norgate	Alastairnorgate@yahoo.co.uk	Groundlings Theatre Company
Martin Chalk		CC Executive
Adrian Mills	Adrian-mills@tiscalli.co.uk	Drumwave
Steve Baily	Stephen.baily@portsmouthcc.gov.uk	PCC – Head of Culture
Barbara Thompson	Barbara.thompson@portsmouthcc.gov.uk	PCC – Director for Economy, Culture and Community Safety
John Phillipson		CC Executive
Nick Bain		CC Executive
Mark Scarborough		CC Executive
Peter Wainwright		CC Executive
Jonathan Fost		CC Executive
Sharon Watling		CC Executive
Gerald Vernon-Jackson		PCC – Leader of Portsmouth City Council
Mark Courtice		CC Executive
Marcia Allen		Artspace
Diana		NTR
Brandon Prince		