

FULL COUNCIL

2 FEBRUARY 2021

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER FOR STRONGER AND SAFER COMMUNITIES

1. COUNCIL UPDATE REGARDING STRONGER AND SAFER COMMUNITIES

1.1 Purpose of Report

To advise Members that a decision making session was held on 8 December 2020 and 21 January 2021, covering CPH Stronger and Safer Communities.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 This report highlights some of those decisions which have been made, but not all. Members wishing to view all decisions made can find these at <http://eservices.solihull.gov.uk/mgInternet/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1>

1.2.2 Attached to this report is a list of decisions made.

1.3 Decisions

1.3.1 8 December 2020

1.3.2 Review of Solihull's Cemeteries and Crematoriums Policy

1.3.3 As Cabinet Member, I agreed to the exclusion of the use of grave frames in Solihull's cemeteries and approved the revised policy and agreed to the additional wording to paragraph 7, page 16 of said policy as follows: 'Wooden, *metal, plastic or other types* of grave surrounds are not permitted at any of our cemeteries and will be removed.'

1.3.4 21 January 2021

1.3.5 Removal of Library Fines & Reservation Charges

1.3.6 I agreed to the cessation of library fees from the 1 April 2021 and charging residents reservation fees for items in stock and on order at the libraries, together with retaining charges for lost and damaged items.

1.3.7 Once the COVID restrictions are lifted, I approved that the Council will seek to recover all outstanding loans and replacement fees but will not levy fines that would have arisen since the beginning of the Coronavirus situation.

1.3.8 Council Plan and Priorities

1.3.9 Work is on-going to support the Council Plan priority - Creating the Conditions for Communities to thrive. We continue to work with all partners, including the Voluntary and Community Sector, to develop an integrated community based approach to enable people to start and live well.

1.4 Good News and Issues of Interest

1.4.1 Regulatory Services

1.4.2 Business compliance with COVID-19 restrictions has been very good throughout the borough. It has only been necessary to threaten enforcement action in a handful of cases. The majority of regulatory engagement with businesses has been providing advice and support on maintaining COVID secure processes and procedures. This has been in areas such as social distancing in offices, shops and warehouses.

1.4.3 Register Office / Customer Services

1.4.4 I would like to say a big thank you and acknowledge the staff's commitment in both these areas who have managed to continue their training / development virtually over the last few months, including apprenticeships and a range of qualifications at various levels, whilst maintaining vital services for customers.

1.4.5 Community Development

1.4.6 Our Community Development Team continue to support the development of groups in the Borough. I have included a couple of recent examples below.

1.4.7 Firstly, a parent in Knowle who reached out to her local Councillor in March 2020, wanting to know where she could go for advice and support to start up a local group for new parents who may need some extra support. She had a passion to support parents who may be experiencing post-natal depression and felt that emotional support to mums with babies and young children is important. The Team worked with her, offering practical advice, signposting and support and over the past 10 months, and now she has:

- Formed a constituted group;
- Received training such as Mental Health Awareness and Volunteer recruitment;
- Connected with the Parenting Team for additional advice, built up relationships with the team and are now included on their community newsletter;
- In December the group were awarded £2,000 from the Heart of England Community Fund to continue their work into 2021.

1.4.8 Another example was a woman in Knowle who wanted to collect Christmas toy donations for children that may not be receiving a present. We connected her with Renewal about how the donations would work with the other food bank networks. The community got involved and they were able to create gift packages for 100's of Solihull young people in care, leaving care and young people who are vulnerable, bags of toiletries to a women's refuge and 100s of toys to the Solihull food banks.

1.4.9 Two Lyndon residents appealed, in November 2020, to their local community for Christmas donations to go to families less fortunate. We were happy to connect them to local community groups to help donations go out into the local community. They were not prepared for the sheer volume of donations that were being brought to them from residents in the Borough and soon their living rooms, bedrooms and garage were full with donations. By connecting them to North Solihull Mutual Aid, Incredible Surplus and Around Again, they were then able to take donations and distribute to their contacts. The two residents are so community focused that they have decided to continue collecting and rehoming toys, clothes and anything else that is donated to them. They are a real credit to our community and have helped out so many families in need.

1.4.10 **Chelmsley Wood Mutual Aid**

1.4.11 We have been working closely with CW Mutual Aid since April 2020, supporting them where required, as they supported those in need during the lockdowns with food shopping/medicine supplies, emergency food parcels, and befriending. Most recently, they decided to branch out to offer further support with linking donations of items such as toys, clothing and furniture to those with ill health, on low incomes or fleeing domestic violence. They had started to accept donations into their homes, and due to a great response from the community, were beginning to struggle with space, so approached us for support in finding a venue, which we did. In addition we connected the group to local food bank who had spare storage boxes they were able to donate to assist with transportation and storage.

1.4.12 **Food Bank Network**

1.4.13 We worked with Helping Hands, SCH and Solihull Faiths Forum to arrange Christmas hampers to be received by every individual and family housed in temporary accommodation and this resulted in the provision of hampers to around 190 households.

1.5 **Future Decisions**

1.5.1 At my future decision making session on the 23 February 2021, I will be considering a report on Widney Manor Cemetery Drainage.