

Stronger Communities and Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Board

CPH Stronger & Safer Communities – Priorities

What we are currently seeing

Safer:

- Covid advice, support and enforcement, dependent on tiers and lockdown
- More complex community based ASB; increase in neighbour disputes, particularly noise
- Reduction in licensing income
- Ongoing uncertainty over Brexit, including product safety

Stronger:

- Increase in community action and volunteering
- Growing numbers of young people and adults requiring support for food, fuel, finance, mental health, DA
- VCS organisations providing essential support for vulnerable households
- Strong and effective working relationships with VCS
- VCS undergoing increasing financial stress from lost income (incl. from traditional grant funding sources)
- Enthusiasm for Commonwealth Games and the opportunities associated with it

Customer Services:

- Shift of customer behaviour triggered by Covid (reduced face-to-face)
- Poorly used library service and assets for community benefit; but significant growth in online services
- Above average levels of activity at cemeteries/crematoria
- Negligible ceremony activity and reduced death registrations

What we might see in the future

Safer:

- Post Brexit increase in work at port and product safety
- Increase in complex ASB and demand from vulnerable individuals.
- Return to more normal licensing conditions
- Difficulty appointing qualified staff

Stronger:

- Continuation of community volunteering, but a drop-off due to issues of people's time?

- Issues with young people in terms of personal, social and emotional development?
- Above average closure of charities and not for profit organisations?
- Increasing demands, as a result of rising unemployment and business failure
- Optimism and enthusiasm for post-COVID normality (e.g. Commonwealth Games)
- Post-COVID development of the VCS food network
- Supporting children and young people in the community
- Strategic co-ordination of VCS funding and investment in the borough

Customer Services:

- Changing trends in contact patterns; potential for automation
- Continued decline in demand for library services?
- Capacity issues at crematoria/cemeteries (especially for burials)
- Restoration of activity levels at Register Office, including short-term pressure due to rearranged/delayed ceremonies

What we need to do to respond

Safer:

- Appoint ASB co-ordinator and develop better partnership approaches to ASB
- Focus food hygiene work on the most risky and support new businesses
- Develop in-house professional development programme

Stronger:

- Maximise volunteering and community action opportunities
- Work with VCS to develop of a more comprehensive youth offer
- Deploy assets/funding to promote VCS sustainability as part of prevention and early intervention
- Stronger alignment between community development team and Health, Education, Police and VCS
- Ensure resources are distributed across the Borough
- Maximise opportunities of the Commonwealth Games

Customer Services:

- Review face-to-face offer; consider how technology can help customers/reduce demand
- Review how library buildings are used; develop digital offer
- Exploratory work to identify options for future 'death management' provision

Potential areas of Scrutiny interest for 2021/22

Customer Services:

- Comparative library performance
- Provision of burial space
- Response to the Competition and Markets Authority (re: low cost funerals)

Safer:

- Providing enforcement and business support to address Covid through to July 2021. Following this period to ensure that the service transitions to a more business as usual state, particularly in Licensing and food inspections.
- Development of the relationship with SCH to better address anti-social behaviour and noise nuisance issues across Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council.

Stronger

- Developing a post-COVID volunteering strategy, including the opportunities by the Commonwealth Games.