

# Agenda

## Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board

**Thursday 25 February 2021 at 5.45pm**

**The meeting will be conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams in accordance with The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.**

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**This agenda gives notice of items to be considered in private as required by Regulations 5 (4) and (5) of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.**

### 1. Apologies

To receive any apologies for absence.

### 2. Declarations of Interest

- (a) To receive any declarations of interest from members relating to any item on the agenda, in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Conduct and/or S106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- (b) To receive any declarations of the existence and nature of any political Party Whip on any matter to be considered at the meeting.



### **3. Minutes**

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2021 as a correct record.

### **4. Additional Items of Business**

To determine whether there are any additional items of business arising which should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

#### **Public Items**

### **5. Trading Standards Update**

To consider and discuss information on Trading Standards activity over the past 12 months.

### **6. Libraries Service Update**

To consider and discuss information on the Libraries Service, including future service plans.

#### **D Stevens**

#### **Chief Executive**

Sandwell Council House  
Freeth Street  
Oldbury  
West Midlands

#### **Distribution**

Councillors Moore (Chair);

Councillor P M Hughes (Vice-Chair);

Councillors Akhter, Bawa, Bostan, Chidley, Edwards, M Gill, S Jones, Padda and Sandars.

Co-opted Member: -

Mr J Cash.

Contact: [democratic\\_services@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk)



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# Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board

## Apologies for Absence

The Board will receive any apologies for absence from the members of the Board.



## Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board

### Declarations of Interests

Members to declare:-

- (a) any interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting;
- (b) the existence and nature of any political Party Whip on any matter to be considered at the meeting.



## Minutes of Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Board

**28<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 5:45pm**  
**Online Virtual Meeting**

- Present:** Councillor Moore (Chair)  
Councillors Akhter, Bostan, Bawa, Edwards, M Gill, S Jones, Sandars
- Officers:** Alan Caddick (Director of Housing and Communities)  
Nicky Denston (Service Manager)  
Steve Greenhouse (Service Manager)

### 01/21 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor P M Hughes and Mr J Cash (Co-opted Member)

### 02/21 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interests made at the meeting.

### 03/21 Additional Item of Business

There were no additional items of business to be considered at the meeting.

### 04/21 Enquiries to the Council (relating to Board's Terms of Reference)



The Scrutiny Board received a presentation on enquiries received by the Council from members of the public, councillors and members of parliament, concerning the Board's terms of reference. Background on all enquiries was provided including the number of calls received per year (500,000), a breakdown on the topics of each call and the varied IT systems used to log and chase enquiries. The report outlined that the Council aimed to deal with enquiries at the first point of contact, only complex enquiries were passed on to the necessary service area.

A breakdown of the Council's response rates was presented to the Board. It was explained that both councillor and MP enquiries increased in 2020 by 13.7% and 16.8%, respectively. With the highest increase seen in enquiries on housing allocations, repairs and rent. Customer access points being closed and changes to services as a result of COVID-19 were cited as potential reasons for the increase.

The Board was informed that a Service Redesign Project Group had been set up to consider tenancy management enquiries, with a view to digitise the service. The group consisted of both Neighbourhoods and Contact Centre Officers. It was also explained that a working group on 'avoidable contacts' had been set up to tackle repeat enquiries or enquiries that could be dealt with online. The Board also heard that a review of enquiry handling would be taking place over the next 6-12 months as part of the Housing Ombudsman Code of Practice.

From the comments and questions raised by members of the Scrutiny Board, the following responses were made, and issues highlighted: -

- Provision for residents without online access or those who required assistance would remain in place.
- Working from home arrangements had been risk assessed to ensure that data remained GDPR compliant. It was confirmed that contact centres were expected to retain some element of remote working post-COVID.



- Performance of enquiries after the first point of contact were tracked. The information on complex enquiries and the customer journey could be provided to the Board at a future meeting.
- Information presented to the Board would be used to inform the aforementioned reviews and performance reviews. Contact centre information was also shared with Council service areas to ensure staff could be trained on the handling of topical issues.
- The MySandwell portal system was currently in testing stages for logging housing repair enquiries. There had been delays due to COVID-19. By spring 2021 additional housing services were expected to be available to residents on the MySandwell portal.
- End to end responses were not reflected in the presentation. All council enquiries were logged, further information on the tracking and closure of all enquiries could be shared at a future meeting.
- Neighbourhood offices would not operate in the same way as pre-COVID19, as more services moved online. The role of offices was in review and would consider the views of elected members and residents.

**Agreed** that the Director – Housing and Communities provide a report to a future meeting of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board on the digitisation of enquiries and the customer journey.

05/21

## Housing Repairs Update

The Scrutiny Board received a presentation on the impact of COVID-19 on the Council's housing repairs service. It was confirmed that thorough health and safety risk assessments were undertaken and regularly reviewed, taking into consideration guidance from the trade unions. 132,000 repairs were delivered since the first government lockdown in March 2020 (Usual average repair numbers in that timeframe were 170,000). The presentation explained that internal essential jobs and void repairs continued



through the first lockdown and external works had since been delivered. It was outlined that there were 1000 orders on hold, of which 850 were deemed non-urgent. The Board was informed that void repair let times had increased by 5 days during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was also explained that housing repair enquiries were dealt with within 6 days on average, with customer satisfaction rates at 94.4%.

From the comments and questions raised by members of the Scrutiny Board, the following responses were made, and issues highlighted: -

- Given the increased transmission rate of the new COVID variant, all staff were able to access LFTs. The service was working with PHE and NHS England and had categorised staff according to age and/or any pre-existing conditions. Employees who fell into these categories would be given priority vaccinations.
- All health and safety measures had been considered to fulfil emergency repairs – emergency works had continued to support most vulnerable tenants as well as tenants who had tested positive for COVID-19
- Use of temporary accommodation was at its lowest for several years – costs reduced by £800,000 in the past 10 months by making use of the Council's empty properties to provide interim housing for rough sleepers. Officers referred to the newly refurbished Applewood Grove property which had facilities to accommodate families and a 25-room capacity.
- The Housing Repair service would make contact with tenants after the government lockdown to discuss whether non-essential works remained outstanding or had been completed by tenants.

**Agreed** that a report on Applewood Grove be added to the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board's



future work programme and, if restrictions allowed, a visit to the facility also be conducted.

Meeting ended at 7:09pm

Click [here](#) to watch a recording of the meeting

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# Report To Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board

25<sup>th</sup> February 2021

<b>Subject:</b>	Trading Standards Update
<b>Director:</b>	Director - Business Strategy and Change Neil Cox
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Nicola Plant - Service Manager Regulated Services and Transformation <a href="mailto:Nicola_plant@sandwell.gov.uk">Nicola_plant@sandwell.gov.uk</a>  Liz Nembhard – Operations Manager Citizen and Consumer Protection Business and Consumer <a href="mailto:Liz_nembhard@sandwell.gov.uk">Liz_nembhard@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

## 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board receives the information presented and considers if there are any recommendations it wishes to make.

## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Board has requested an update on the activity undertaken by trading standards over the last 12 months.



- 2.2 Members will have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the information that is presented to consider any potential recommendations the Scrutiny Board may wish to make.

### 3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<b>Strong resilient communities</b> Trading standards enforces consumer protection legislation to protect consumers and businesses.
	<b>A strong and inclusive economy</b> Trading Standards deliver professional advice to businesses on regulation and guides businesses to comply with the law, which helps make Sandwell a great place to set up and run a business.

### 4. Context and Key Issues

#### Background

- 4.1 The Trading Standards team sits within Citizen Consumer Protection Business and Consumer, alongside Environmental Health in the Regulated Services service area.
- 4.2 The team are responsible for the enforcement of a wide range of consumer protection legislation covering fair trading, product safety and labelling, intellectual property crime (counterfeiting), weights and measures, and sales of age-restricted products. In addition, the remit also includes consumer fraud, and doorstep crime.
- 4.3 The team works to an intelligence-based approach and gathers information and data from a range of local and regional sources to determine local priorities. The current priorities are:-
1. Doorstep Crime / Rogue Traders
  2. Financial Abuse
  3. Age restricted products
  4. Illegal tobacco
  5. Protecting the Food Chain



6. Product Safety
7. Used Car Crime

- 4.4 Business planning is undertaken in accordance with the council's corporate business planning cycle. This has been delayed in 2020 due to the impact of Covid-19 pandemic however this work is now being progressed and the priorities for this service from 2021 will be agreed through this process to support the delivery of the Corporate Plan.

### **Impact of Covid-19 pandemic**

- 4.5 The activity of the team during 2020/21 has been impacted by Covid-19 pandemic in two key ways: -
- Government restrictions on people's movement and business openings, together with the need to ensure covid-safe models of working, reduced the team's operations across the priorities.
  - The skills and knowledge of the service were essential to support the council's Covid-19 response for business advice, compliance and enforcement of Coronavirus legislation.
- 4.6 Since March 2020, the Trading Standards team has worked alongside Environmental Health, Licensing and Environmental Protection teams to deliver the council's covid-19 response for businesses in relation to guidance, compliance and enforcement of the Coronavirus legislation.
- 4.7 The powers held by the Local Authority under The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 3) Regulations 2020 and The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) Regulations 2020 are enforced by the Regulated Services service area.
- 4.8 This re-direction of activity has been done in a managed way to ensure essential and high priority trading standards work has continued.

### **Summary of Activity 2020-21**

- 4.9 The Trading Standards team have played a key role as part of the council's response to Covid-19 pandemic, providing advice and



guidance to business on compliance with legislation, ensuring compliance and where necessary taking enforcement action.

4.10 During 2020/21 the trading standards have supported the delivery of the following Covid-19 response related activity: -

- Responding to over 1300 complaints and concerns received from the public relating to business restrictions, price gauging, safety (hand sanitiser and PPE Face Masks), goods/service cancellations, and scams.
- Supported council quality assurance process for PPE and provided guidance for corporate procurement to ensure equipment purchased was of legitimately quality tested for safety.
- Providing advice and guidance to the council, businesses, public and partners on business restrictions legislation – which has been fast pace and changing frequently.
- Maintained flow of information via social media for businesses
- Contacted 257 businesses to provide safe working advice and direct contacts to over 98 high risk' businesses as determined by Public Health.
- Supported joint enforcement activity with West Midlands Police and Public Health including 8 enforcement days.
- 4 Directions issued under Coronavirus legislation requiring businesses to either close or comply with legislation.
- 7 Prohibition notices under Coronavirus legislation requiring businesses to close in compliance with legislation
- Issued 3 fixed penalty notices to the value of £4,000 to a business for non-compliance with coronavirus legislation and breaching a prohibition notice.

4.11 Despite the requirement to focus on Covid-19 related work the Trading Standards team continued to deliver on those trading standards activities identified as high priority. For example:

- Received and responded to 328 civil advice referrals from the Citizen Advice Consumer Service.



- Continued case work on prosecution cases in relation to illicit tobacco that are in progress within the legal system.
- Successful application to Magistrates Court to grant a forfeiture order on 12,180 packets of cigarettes, seized from a storage unit that were found in a joint operation with the Police. The Police Economic Crime Unit also seized £184,000 in cash in this operation and are seeking forfeiture.
- Carried out an Allergens and Meat Species Kebab sampling project. 15 out of 34 samples tested incorrect for milk and 13 out of 21 for wrongly described meat. The 34 businesses have received written and/or telephone advice. An allergen pack has been produced which is focussed on various business types.
- Provided pre-Brexit information and guidance to businesses.
- Scams – There has been an increase in COVID-19 related scams, which include vaccines scams, PPE scams and an increase in cold call offers. The Trading Standards Team work alongside Action Fraud and Friends Against Scams and provide key messages via the Councils website, Twitter and Facebook page.

## **Planning for 2021/22**

- 4.12 While the council is managing its response to the Covid-19 pandemic the trading standards team will continue to prioritise COVID-19 related work, but maintain and respond to any essential or high-risk trading standards related business.
- 4.13 The service is monitoring areas of work that have been delayed due to the pandemic to plan for a recovery as the service is able to reduce its role in the Covid-19 response, and also national and regional developments that will impact on the work of trading standards. These areas include: -
- Illegal Tobacco/Age Restricted Sales – This work has been significantly impacted by government coronavirus restrictions. It is planned to work alongside HMRC in the coming 12 months as restrictions are eased to carry out a programme of test purchase and dog sniffer days to obtain further intelligence on premises which are breaking the law.



- The exit from European Union will have implications for the Trading Standards team in respect of Product Safety, Importers and change to CE marking. At this point, current legislation has been retained however this is anticipated to change and will be an area to be worked through to understand the implications and requirements as the position evolves.
  - As Sandwell is hosting the Aquatic centre for the 2022 Commonwealth Games, Trading Standards will be a key contributor as one of the enforcing authorities. Work with the organising committee and the host authority Birmingham on planning for enforcement is commencing.
- 4.14 The council is now commencing business planning activity for 2021 onward and the service planning will be included in this process to review and confirm priorities.

## **5 Alternative Options**

- 5.1 If the Board does not consider the update, then the opportunity to identify any recommendations will be missed.

## **6 Implications**

<b>Resources:</b>	There are no specific strategic resources implications arising from this report.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	These are no specific legal implications arising from this report.
<b>Risk:</b>	There are no specific risk implications arising from this report.
<b>Equality:</b>	There are no direct equality implications from this report.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	There are no specific health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.
<b>Social Value</b>	There are no specific Social Value implications arising from this report.



## **7 Appendices**

N/A

## **8 Background Papers**

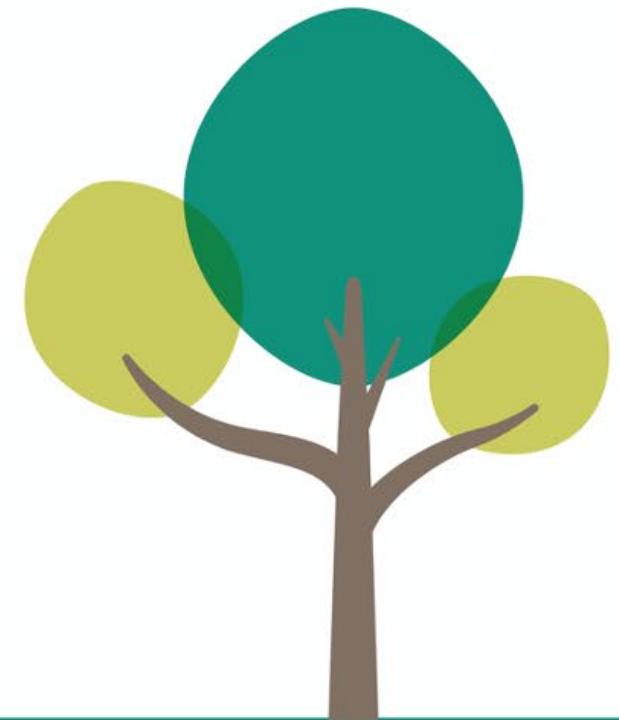
N/A



# Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board

25 February 2021

Trading Standards Update



# Citizen and Consumer Protection - Trading Standards (Regulated Services)

Responsible for the enforcement of consumer protection legislation covering:-

- fair trading,
- product safety and labelling,
- intellectual property crime (counterfeiting),
- weights and measures, and
- sales of age-restricted products.
- also includes consumer fraud and doorstep crime.



# Service Priorities

- Doorstep Crime / Rogue Traders
- Financial Abuse
- Age restricted products
- Illegal tobacco
- Protecting the Food Chain
- Product Safety
- Used Car Crime



# Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Service Activity

- Two key impacts:-
  - Government restrictions and requirement for Covid-safe working reduced teams operation across priorities.
  - Skills and knowledge of the service were needed as an essential part of the councils Covid-19 response
- Since March 2020, the trading standard team has worked alongside Environmental Health, Licensing and Environmental Protection teams to deliver the councils covid-19 response for businesses.
- The powers held by the Local Authority under Coronavirus legislation are enforced by the Regulated Services service area.
- Re-direction of activity has been managed to ensure essential and high priority trading standards work has continued.



# Activity from April 2020 – Covid-19 response

- Over 1300 complaints and concerns relating to business restrictions, price gauging, PPE, goods/service cancellations, and scams.
- Supported council quality assurance process for PPE inc. guidance for corporate procurement
- Advice and guidance to the council, businesses, public and partners on business restrictions legislation
- Issued safe working to 257 high risk businesses and direct guidance to over 98
- Supported Joint enforcement activity with Police
- 4 Directions and 7 Prohibition Notices issued
- 3 fixed penalty notices to the value of £4,000



# Activity from April 2020 – Trading Standards

- Responded to 328 civil advice referrals from the Citizen Advice Consumer Service.
- Case work on prosecution cases in progress within the legal system.
- Forfeiture order on 12,180 packets of cigarettes from one seizure.
- Allergens and Meat Species Kebab sampling project. 34 businesses received advice.
- Produced an allergen pack for businesses
- Provided pre-Brexit information and guidance to businesses.
- Scams –vaccines scams, PPE scams and an increase in cold call offers. The Trading Standards Team work alongside Action Fraud and Friends Against Scams and provide key messages via website, Twitter, Facebook



# Press and Social Media Activity



## £4k refund for delighted couple

Express & Star December 26, 2020



Sandwell Council @sandwellcouncil · Apr 30, 2020

Want to ask a question about loan sharks & support for victims of illegal money lending?

## Turkish restaurant and gym fined for breaches

Express & Star December 24, 2020

## Carpet store fined £4k for virus rule breaches

Express & Star February 11, 2021



Sandwell Council @sandwellcouncil

· Nov 19, 2020

Five non-essential Sandwell businesses that were open despite Covid-19 restrictions have been ordered to close during a day of enforcement with Sandwell Police last Friday. [sandwell.gov.uk/news/article/5...](http://sandwell.gov.uk/news/article/5...)



Sandwell Council @sandwellcouncil

· Jun 15, 2020

Non-essential shops can reopen from today.

We have advice for businesses on our website, including information on key steps to take to keep you, your staff and customers safe.



# Planning for 2021-22

The council is now commencing business planning activity for 2021 onward and service priorities will be considered in this process to support delivery of the Corporate Plan. Areas of activity to be included in this process:-

- Continue to support COVID-19 response but maintain and respond to any essential or high-risk trading standards related business.
- Continue monitoring areas of work that have been delayed due to the pandemic and plan for a recovery as the service is able to reduce its role in the Covid-19 response,
- Illegal Tobacco/Age Restricted Sales –plan to work alongside HMRC
- Respond to changes to legislation as it occurs due to the exit from European Union
- Planning for enforcement activity for 2022 Commonwealth Games working with Host Authority and Organising Committee



# Report to Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board

25<sup>th</sup> February 2021

<b>Subject:</b>	Update on Libraries and Archives Service
<b>Director:</b>	Director Housing and Communities, Alan Caddick
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Service Manager Tourism, Culture & Leisure, Jane Lillystone <a href="mailto:Jane_Lillystone@sandwell.gov.uk">Jane_Lillystone@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

## 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 To update the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board on future service provision for the Libraries and Archives Service – against the impact of COVID-19 on current/future operational delivery.

## 2 Background

- 2.1 Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, the Transforming Local Services (TLS) programme was working towards an agreed new service model proposal – with the intention of operating a first pilot project in Rowley – from Blackheath Library. This new community hub was scheduled to open from May 2020 – operating a cross directorate approach with teams available to support residents from Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Public Health and Neighbourhoods (Libraries/Local Service).
- 2.2 The Transforming Local Services and Workplace Vision programmes aligned corporately with other strategies and policies – including the



corporate plan, asset/commercial strategies and Smart Working guidance. At the heart of this innovative programme are core principles – in support of Vision 2030 – that include:

- Improving customer service and satisfaction
- Making better use of built assets
- Improving visitor numbers to community spaces
- Co-ordinated, holistic service and linking with the Voluntary Sector
- Aligning key strategies to ensure services transformation.

- 2.3 Following the outbreak of COVID-19, the Library and Local Service ceased activity in line with national lock down requirements and the opening of the pilot programme at Blackheath Library was stalled. Set against the backdrop of these challenging times – the Council is still responding and operating its services within COVID-19 mitigation measures – and it has become clear that the delivery model being piloted at Blackheath Library should be progressed to realise the benefit to residents in each town. Therefore, work re-started on the completion of the refurbishment programme from October 2020 – towards a potential launch/re-opening during 2021.
- 2.4 During the COVID-19 pandemic customers have been unable to access face to face services – and subsequently, the provision of digital and telephone services has seen a marked increase in usage. Customer behaviours have been nudged into utilising these transactional methods and the feedback has been positive. Services and employees have adapted quickly and efficiently in identifying and implementing the delivery of services using digital and telephone across front-line delivery.
- 2.5 It has become clear that there is a need to accelerate the provision of digital services across key areas – however, there will still be a requirement – post COVID-19 – for face to face customer contact and this is at the heart of delivering library services going forward.

**3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan? (select relevant category and inc narrative how deliver)**



	<p><b>Best start in life for children and young people</b> <i>Offering enhanced facilities for families, children and young people to access learning/IT resources and benefit from health/mental wellbeing opportunities/engagement within an inclusive environment. Access to books – from a young age – increases life chances</i></p>
	<p><b>People live well and age well</b> <i>Libraries offer spaces where people can meet and connect safely – thereby reducing loneliness and isolation and improving mental health/wellbeing</i></p>
	<p><b>Strong resilient communities</b> <i>Libraries are the original community hubs supporting the needs of local people</i></p>
	<p><b>Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods</b></p>
	<p><b>A strong and inclusive economy</b> <i>Libraries support residents to access job support, benefits and help with small business start-up – by enhancing these services – through the development of ‘community hubs’ – more residents will be encouraged to use library services that might not have previously visited/or taken-up membership of a Library</i></p>
	<p><b>A connected and accessible Sandwell</b></p>

## 4 Context and Key Issues

### 4.1 The Current Position

4.1.1 Libraries and Archives closed completely on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020. Following agreement at the Reset and Recovery Board on 3<sup>rd</sup> September, Central Library began offering limited services on a non-contact basis (order and collect for books by appointment only and essential computer use by appointment). Later in 2020, Wednesbury Library began offering the same services with reduced hours – followed by Smethwick Library and Glebefields Library in Tipton. Library staff are working a percentage of their hours on a rota basis. In addition, the Home Library Service is operating and delivering books to vulnerable residents.

4.1.2 The recent restrictions have meant that no further libraries can begin delivering services – although libraries nationally are recognised as essential, statutory services and current government guidance allows for



the delivery of limited services (as detailed above). It is planned to restart services in a gradual manner once restrictions allow.

4.1.3 While libraries were closed completely (during the first lockdown period), there was a significant increase in the number of e-books available/being downloaded – and this was reflected in new Library memberships. In addition, more residents engaged with/logged-on to social media pages – as events and activities were delivered remotely. This is not viewed as a replacement for a full ‘comprehensive and efficient’ library service – particularly as many residents in Sandwell are digitally excluded and/or unable to travel to the limited libraries offering services – but it does align to the increase in digital activity across other front-line delivery services within the Council and a change in digital awareness.

## 4.2 Re-focus – Post COVID-19

4.2.1 Once restrictions are lifted it is planned for a phased return of the outlying 13 libraries followed by a review of provision e.g. opening hours/potential to share spaces and deliver community hubs. The restarting of the Mobile Library – including supporting smaller libraries that may not be back to full opening – is also planned.

4.2.2 There will also be a renewed focus on the delivery of the TLS programme (aligned to the corporate plan and other Council strategies/policies) – which will involve several main town libraries over a period of time (i.e. Central, Oldbury, Blackheath, Smethwick, Glebefields, and Wednesbury).

4.2.3 In response to proposals being explored within the Town Investment Plans – a Towns Fund bid has been submitted (aligned to wider regeneration plans for West Bromwich) to create a cultural/Town Hall quarter through the merger of Central Library and the Town Hall – creating a ‘cultural/community hub’, incorporating the shared service delivery principles of the TLS programme and including the potential for a renewed cultural/engagement focus within this area of the town.



4.2.4 In addition, a review is being undertaken of the Archives Service. A Feasibility Study (funded by The National Archives) has recently been commissioned to explore potential options for a new centre.

#### **4.3 Blackheath Library**

As the first pilot, Blackheath Library will reopen during 2021 (in-line with the easing of COVID-19 restrictions) as a community hub – offering a wider range of Council services (including library services) and in partnership with the Voluntary Sector. Blackheath Library has been undergoing a refurbishment programme in preparation for bringing these services together from October 2020. These are now complete and colleagues from NHS Sandwell School Nurses service will be moving in once restrictions are lifted – alongside colleagues from Housing services. A confirmed re-opening date is not fixed due to current restrictions – although it is hoped to deliver limited library services from there as soon as permitted.

#### **4.4 Oldbury Library**

4.4.1 In-line with the TLS programme – there are plans to relocate Oldbury Library from Jack Judge House to Oldbury Council House – as part of the One Stop Shop. This will enable residents to access more services under one roof – whilst ensuring that Jack Judge House is able to provide more accommodation to other essential key services looking for a location in Oldbury.

4.4.2 Library management has been working closely with colleagues in property services and contractors to create a design that works for the space. Consultation with staff teams and union colleagues – including sharing a plan with a video of a virtual walk-through – is ongoing.

#### **4.5 Future Provision**

Future library provision will be reviewed post COVID-19 to ensure that the best possible service within potential budget constraints can be



delivered for the residents of Sandwell – and aligned to the TLS/Workplace Vision programmes. Any potential changes will be subject to full consultation with all stakeholders.

## 5 Alternative Options

5.1 N/A

## 6 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	Financial, staffing, land/building implications <i>These will be considered as part of the TLS/Workplace Vision programmes</i>
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	Legal implications including regulations/law under which proposals are required/permited and constitutional provisions <i>These will be considered as part of the TLS/Workplace Vision programmes and aligned to the Council's Asset Strategy</i>
<b>Risk:</b>	Risk implications, including any mitigating measures planned/taken, health and safety, insurance implications <i>These have all been considered as part of the TLS programme and project delivery. Any mitigation measures – in response to the COVID-19 pandemic – have been considered within Risk Assessments and in consultation with Public Health/Health &amp; Safety and the Unions. All subject to approvals at the Reset and Recovery Board processes and aligned to current Government guidelines</i>
<b>Equality:</b>	Implications for equality (all aspects and characteristics) including how meeting Equality Duty, equality impact assessments <i>An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken as part of the project planning for the Blackheath Library pilot scheme. All proposals will be subject to equality impact assessments and incorporated within the programmes</i>
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	Implications of the proposals on health and wellbeing of our communities <i>These are positive implications and will benefit residents throughout the Borough</i>
<b>Social Value</b>	Implications for social value and how the proposals are meeting this (for e.g. employment of local traders, young people)



*As above – these are positive implications and will benefit residents throughout the Borough – delivering enhanced opportunities for access to learning/health and mental/wellbeing provision*

## 7. Appendices

N/A

## 8. Background Papers

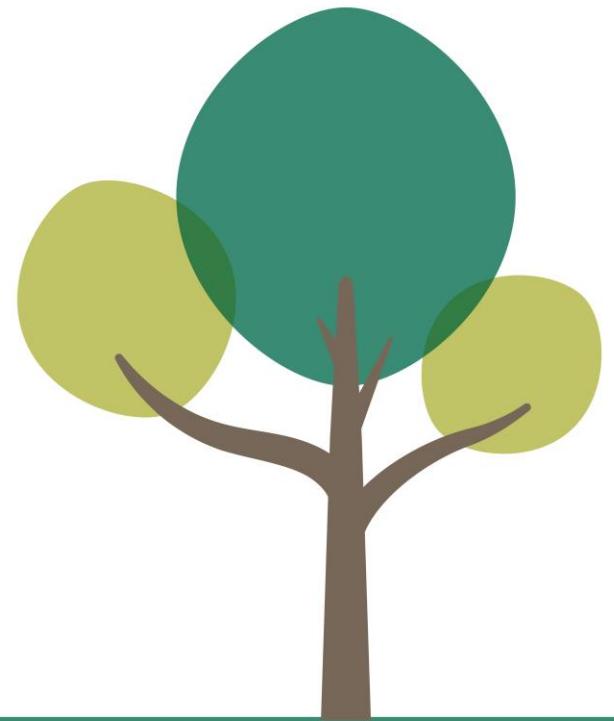
Presentation Slides



# **Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities**

## **Scrutiny Board - 25 February 2021**

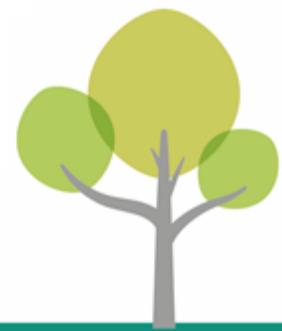
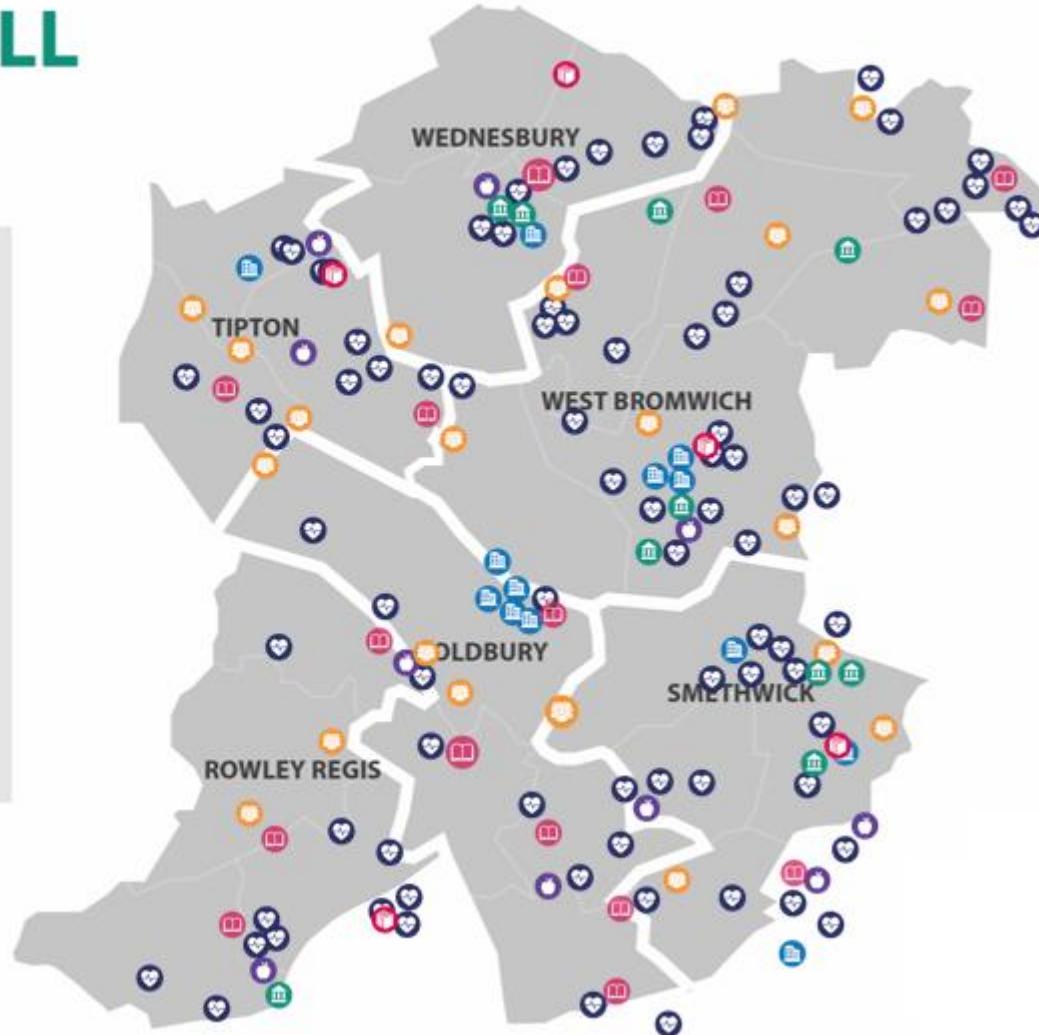
### Libraries and Archives – future plans



# THE SANDWELL MAP 2020

## KEY

- Local Libraries
- Town Libraries
- Museums/Town Halls
- Community Centres/Youth Clubs
- Leisure Centres
- Medical Centres
- Sandwell MBC Offices

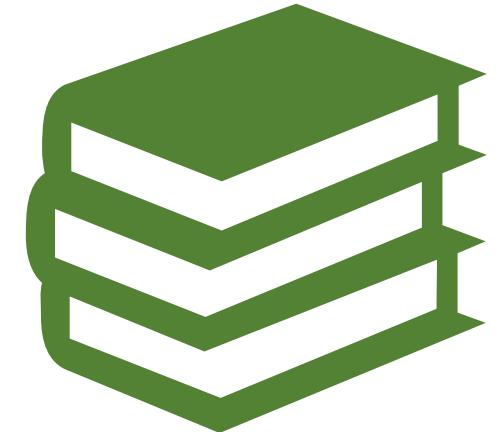


# Services – and COVID-19

## What we've learned ....

### Libraries & Archives:

- ❑ Increase in digital library membership and borrowing, and engagement via social media
- ❑ Libraries recognised nationally as key statutory service and permitted to remain open
- ❑ Significant challenges going forward on providing ‘pre-COVID-19’ library functions
- ❑ Digital-exclusion across communities in Sandwell
- ❑ Only 10% of library services currently being delivered
- ❑ Low morale and motivation amongst staff teams not being on front-line



# Current position

## How are we delivering

### Libraries and Archives:

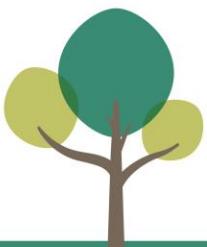
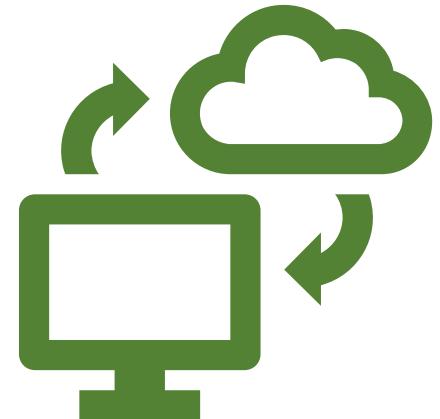
- ❑ 4 main Town Libraries (Central – West Bromwich, Wednesbury, Smethwick, Glebefields – Tipton) operating ‘order and collect’ service, ‘grab and go’ and access to computers for essential use
- ❑ Reduced opening hours with staff working on a rota basis
- ❑ Plan to restart services at further libraries once restrictions ease
- ❑ Home Library Service operating a contactless service to vulnerable users – increased take up from Mobile Library users
- ❑ Ongoing digital offer – storytimes, craft activities, entertainers during school holidays



# Refocus – post COVID-19

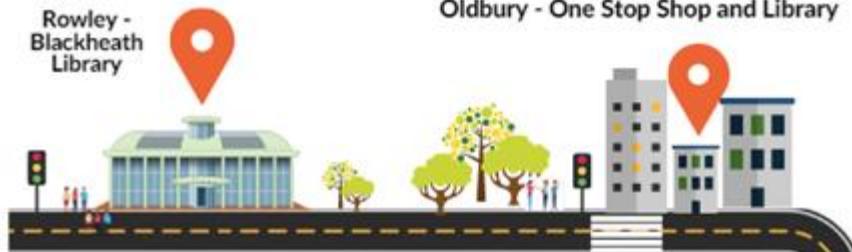
## How will we deliver them?

- Phased return of the outlying 13 libraries followed by review of provision e.g. opening hours, potential to share spaces
- Restart of the Mobile Library including supporting smaller libraries that may not be back to full opening
- Renewed focus on the TLS programme: Blackheath reopening/relocation of Oldbury Library from JJH to Oldbury Council House
- Towns Fund bid and West Bromwich regeneration activity to create service delivery hub utilising the Central Library and Town Hall assets
- Review digital access strategy
- Explore feasibility for new Archive Centre

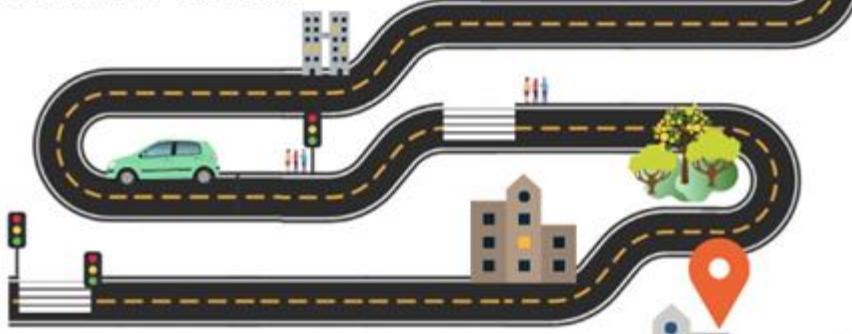


# Restarting services

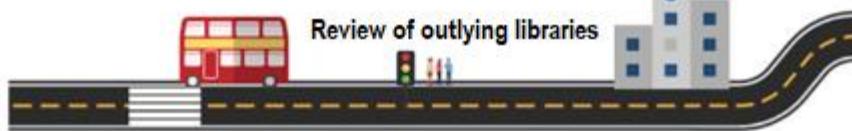
Short Term - Spring 2021



Medium Term - 2022-2023



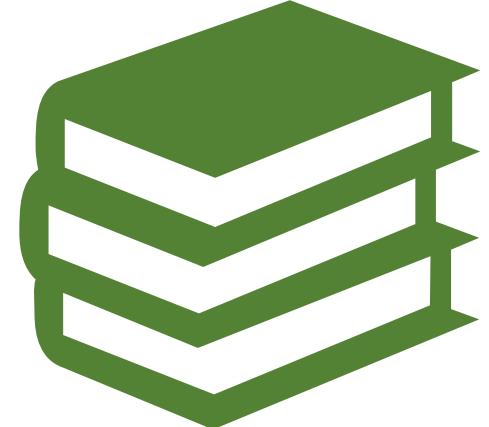
Review of outlying libraries



Long Term



# Next steps



- Restart services gradually once restrictions allow
- Open Blackheath with other Council Services
- Open Oldbury in One Stop Shop
- Continue with digital offer – storytimes, craft activities, entertainers during school holidays

