

Lessons Learnt from Covid

What were we trying to achieve?

- Minimise the spread of Covid.
- Identify the most vulnerable people and keep them safe.
- Encourage communities to lead the hyperlocal approach, whilst SCDC support and facilitate.
- Work with communities to ensure they were helping each other and sharing best practice.
- Provide a flow of information to communities and people that was swift, accurate, confidential and understandable.
- Ensure we acted as a caring and responsible landlord to reassure and support our housing tenants.

What went well?

- Communities led the approach which meant support was as close to those who needed it as possible.
- Clear officer/member leadership structures, with operational lead identified at the start, which led to quicker decision making.
- A one-team approach was taken at the Council to ensure departments and teams worked as a collective.
- The patch/geographic area approach to supporting parishes with dedicated officer resource.
- Relationships built between patch lead and parishes/community groups.
- Collation of datasets from across the Council and sharing of sensitive data to parishes and community groups to identify and target those most in need – even though data protection issues were initially unresolved.
- Partnership working and collaboration with many other organisations (Cambridgeshire LA's, Voluntary Sector, NHS, Public Health, Police, Fire, local groups)
- Provision of food and clothing for those in most need.
- Helping people to receive furlough support.

- Discretionary funding for those most in need.
- Reassurance from housing officers to tenants.

What did we learn?

- Communities know their residents well and are keen to support in crisis.
- A community led approach is far more effective than a Council-led approach in our area and demographic.
- When needed, organisations should share data responsibly for the best outcomes of the people they are trying to help and support.
- Data sets were initially quite different, and a lot of work was involved in cleansing and processing the data before release. If SCDC had a better understanding of its data across departments, this task would be made easier in the future and add many other benefits.
- In crisis, having the right staff with a flexible attitude, is important, to deliver and adapt well to constantly evolving and changing priorities.
- The majority of volunteer and community groups disbanded as soon as the immediate crisis was over.

What didn't work well?

- Many dedicated officers and councillors taking on too much and burning out due to juggling multiple workstreams and home priorities (including home schooling) during this period.
- Initially departments stepped into action in isolation, though the Senior Responsible Officer (Chief Executive) and Communities Team lead officers quickly brought departments together to work in partnership with a shared understanding and management of work undertaken.

How do we apply the lessons learnt?

- Need a better understanding of the numerous sources of organisational data for early identification of target groups/areas.
- Data should be accurate and clean.

Appendix C

- Projects requiring cross-departmental working should include regular input from team/service leads to determine officer roles with regular meetings to pre-empt issues and take prompt action.
- Be mindful of staff burnout by being clear about expectation of the role and the additional demands placed upon an employee to ensure the right support is in place.