



District Councillors Report to Swilland and Witnesham Parish Council

Jan 20th 2021

From
CLlr Colin Hedgley

(CLlr Tony Fryatt is back at home and is improving all the time)

Vaccinations

The Suffolk Communications Cell, which includes representation from East Suffolk, has led on the delivery of a web resource which aims to provide clear, up to date information for stakeholders and residents: www.suffolk.gov.uk/covidvaccinations

This week the Suffolk and North East Essex NHS Trust have themselves developed a new website with a range of useful detail about the vaccination process. You will be aware that this trust does not include Waveney, however, information for ALL Suffolk residents has been incorporated. <http://www.sneevaccine.org.uk/>

Communities and supporting residents

The Home But Not Alone phone line continues to be active and has been re-promoted this week via a press release, a video by the Director of Public Health and a leaflet. 37 referrals now received since the third lockdown started on Boxing Day – a much lower number than previous lockdowns but there appears to be greater complexity to the requests for help.

Calls have been completed this week to all those who needed support during lockdown 2 – either referred to Home But Not Alone or Suffolk Advice and Support Service, lonely or isolated, helped to register with the National Shielding Support Service or other needs identified – this is just over 200 people. Where we have not been able to speak directly to individuals, these are being followed up with contact made by other means.



Various issues this week including numerous contacts about vaccination centre locations, some pharmacies reaching capacity in terms of prescription home delivery, concerns about volunteers delivering food and medication to homes where one or more person has tested positive or is self-isolating and dwindling numbers of volunteers in some community groups.

From Monday 18th January, Keep In Touch support for those who are self-isolating will move to sit under Home But Not Alone (led by the Customer Services and Communities Teams) – this involves calling people to ensure that they have all the support they need in place to enable them to complete their isolation period and offering support with accessing food if necessary.

Just over £35,000 remains in the Bounce Back Fund – this has provide a huge success with the local voluntary and community sector – helping organisation plan for re-opening their group or building safely.

Environmental Services – food and safety

Engagement with supermarkets

This week officers have visited the main supermarkets in our district to assess their latest measures to help keep customers and staff safe from the risk of spread of Covid-19. This is part of our active programme of engagement with food retailers during this pandemic. Key issues considered were the numbers of customers allowed in the shop, face coverings, signage, one-way systems, and customer behaviours.

As has been reported in the media some of the larger chains are now starting to take a stronger line on requiring customers to wear face coverings in line with the law which is easier to do when they have door supervision. Staff in customer facing areas were generally wearing face coverings unless they were behind a screen and some were wearing a face covering when they were behind a screen eg at the check outs.

The good practice of one-way systems has been dropped because customer feed-back was that they didn't like it. Store managers suggested that customer behaviours were the biggest problem eg people are no longer shopping on their own and Covid-19 management was easier during the first lockdown.



Enforcement action for flagrant disregard to restrictions

Acting on information from the Police, enforcement action is being taken against a restaurant in Bungay that permitted customers to sit in the premises and consume alcohol.

Workplace infections

Recent high levels of infection in the community are causing higher numbers of staff absences in many workplaces. We are working closely with Suffolk Public Health and several businesses to help ensure arrangements are in place to control the workplace spread of Covid-19. Following recent liaison with the Port of Felixstowe on the number of staff off, a multi-agency Incident Management Team meeting was convened this week to help identify if further controls are needed. Work is now being undertaken by Suffolk's Knowledge and Intelligence Team with the aim of identifying likely pinch points and activities where there is a higher risk of transmission. A further meeting will take place next week when this information will be available to provide support in identifying if further public health controls are needed.

Reporting concerns

The Council's online form for reporting health and safety concerns

https://my.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/service/COVID_19_Health_and_Safety Enquiries can also be made to environment@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

Grants, funding and business matters

Covid Business Grants

ESC has now launched the Closed Business Lockdown Payment (CBLP) which provides a one-off, up to £9k grant for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses forced to closed due to the current national lockdown. This will be in addition to existing Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSRG) and the discretionary Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG).

In order to simplify the process for businesses there is now a single application form on ESC's Covid business support webpage [COVID-19: business grant funding » East Suffolk Council](#). Once this has been completed ESC will determine which grant businesses are eligible for and make the appropriate payment. In a further bid to simplify and make the process more efficient businesses who have successfully applied for previous Covid grants will receive automatic payments from the current grant schemes.



ESC has so far allocated the following business grants in relation to the pre-Christmas tier restrictions and current national lockdown:

	Applications	Paid	Total £
Local Restriction Support Grants	2262	1962	£3m
Additional Restrictions Grant	310	160	£153k
Tier 2 Payments			£1.2m

A further huge tranche of funding c £14m will be issued to businesses next week.

Business Support

ESC has been awarded £7.1m of ARG funding to cover the current and next fiscal year. Part of this is intended to cover longer-term business support measures. The Economic Development team have developed draft business support proposals that are in line with our current economic growth priorities and build on the District's economic strengths. The areas of support cover:

- Digital
- Town Centre Recovery
- Business Start-up
- Tourism marketing

Subject to Cabinet approval these business support programmes will be implemented in the Spring.

Finance & Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP)

As at 10th January 2021, £48,000 has been paid out in Test and Trace Support Payments to provide £500 payments to people on low incomes required to self-isolate as part of the Test and Trace arrangements. These provide important financial assistance to people, helping to ensure that they self-isolate and suppress transmission of the virus. The eligibility criteria for the discretionary part of the scheme has recently been extended to ensure that more people on low incomes are supported in this way. The Government also announced this week that this scheme has now been extended until 31st March 2021, and the Council will receive an additional £32,000 in respect of the discretionary scheme.

As at 31st December 2020, £1.413m in Council Tax Hardship Fund reliefs has been applied to the council tax accounts of working-age households in receipt of Local Council Tax Support. These reliefs mean that these customers do not have to pay anything in respect of their council tax bill for 2020/21, up to a maximum of £150.



The Government has provided East Suffolk Council with £370,000 to support councils in respect of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on council tax income next year. The grant to East Suffolk Council includes £110,000 in respect of the effect on town and parish councils, and this is being directly passed on in grants to Town and Parish councils to support them when setting their precepts and council taxes for next year. This grant is being allocated in proportion to the reductions in town and parish tax bases due to increased council tax reliefs and reduced collection, directing support to those town and parish councils that have been most affected.

The Council's Finance Team continue to monitor and report on the financial impact of the pandemic at local, county, and national level, including monthly reporting to Government and membership of the Suffolk Finance Recovery Sub-Group. Finance also continue to ensure that the Council accesses and claims all available support funding in respect of the pandemic, including the Government's Lost Income Scheme in respect of sales, fees, and charges, which has increased in importance with the new lockdown and which has also been extended until June 2021.

Port Health - Felixstowe

Port Health continues to adapt to the changes brought about by end of transition. This has placed additional demand on the service and required the development of new working practices to deal with the Transit issues. Port Health are working with other regulatory authorities, the Port of Felixstowe and Ferry operators to minimise supply chain impacts – however there has been some limited delays to certain consignments as the trade adapts to the new requirements.

Port Health continues to engage with National bodies and colleagues in other Port Health authorities to ensure the continuing biosecurity and safety of the food chain now and developing the systems for the future as the UK adjusts to life outside of the EU.