**Councillor’s Weekly bulletin – 15th January 2021**

*(Please circulate electronically and post to your websites. Print only if necessary.)*

There are signs that the new lockdown is beginning to take effecr. This revived weekly bulletin will incorporate information from different service areas and how they are addressing impacts of the virus. It will also incorporate specific covid-related information as well as facts and figures which you may find useful.

**Kind Regards**

**Cllr Maurice Cook**

Latest national information on coronavirus: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

NHS advice: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Local, East Suffolk-specific information: <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/covid-19>

**Latest countywide figures and information**
As of 20 January there have been 23,158 total lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Suffolk. In total there have been 3041.7 cases of COVID-19 per 100,000 people. This is the second lowest overall COVID-19 case rate in the East of England.

District case rate as of 20 January 2021:



A new national lockdown in England began on Wednesday 6th January for an indeterminate period. The national COVID-19 alert tiers are suspended while the national lockdown is in place.

 In the week to the 20th January there were 2,859 new lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Suffolk. This number has fallen compared to the previous week.

The underlying rate of new weekly cases in Suffolk has decreased and is now at 400.3 cases per 100,000 people. This rate remains below the rates for the East of England region
(528.3 / 100,000) and for England as a whole (497.3/ 100,000).

In total, up to 8th January, there have been 879 deaths in Suffolk where COVID-19 was recorded on the death certificate. There have been 67 COVID-19 related deaths in the last 7 days up to 8th January.

**Vaccinations**
A reminder that the Suffolk and North East Essex NHS Trust have launched a new website with a range of useful detail about the vaccination process. Although this trust does not include Waveney, information for ALL Suffolk residents has been incorporated. <http://www.sneevaccine.org.uk/>

**Communities and supporting residents**
There have been a further 17 referrals through the Home But Not Alone Service this week. The Communities Team has contacted just over 200 Clinically Extremely Vulnerable people by phone over the last two weeks and letters went out on Wednesday to all those on the priority list who we had been unable to contact due to missing or wrong phone numbers or who had not answered 3 or more calls with some key information and contact numbers.

The Home But Not Alone Team (Communities and Customers Services Teams) took over the ‘Keep In Touch’ calls to those who are self-isolating from Monday 18th with the Communities Team helping to meet any needs identified and ensure that people complete their isolation period. The Customer Services Team have also worked on behalf of James Paget University Hospital to reschedule second vaccination appointments.

 A key issue is access to vaccination appointments where people do not have family or friends to help them. The community transport providers are taking bookings for these journeys – and excess Adult Social Care transport can hopefully be used to deal with any journeys that the Community Transport providers cannot fulfil but we have the option of arranging a taxi for individuals who genuinely cannot afford to pay the fare to get to their vaccination appointment.

Some information and guidance about requests for funding for school laptops was included in an email about Enabling Communities Budgets circulated by the Funding Team earlier this week. The Covid-19 Community Fund, Voluntary Sector Bounce Back Fund and Hidden Needs (social isolation and loneliness) Programmes are all still open for applications.

The Communities Team, with some willing volunteers including Cllr Mallinder, will be working (Covid securely in the ground floor of the Annex at ESH) to pack the first 1,000 of our East (Everyone Active, Supported, Together) Bags next week for distribution from the following week to older people living alone or caring for someone else who is likely to be struggling due to isolation and loneliness – if you want to nominate recipients in your ward, please email communities@eastsuffolk.gov.uk or contact your Communities Officer.

**Environmental Services – food and safety**
**Engagement with supermarkets**
The new variant of the Coronavirus is spreading with increased rapidity and Suffolk Public Health has become increasingly concerned at the number of outbreaks in larger workplace settings locally. This includes a high number of Covid-19 cases linked to supermarkets. With the challenges the new variant brings and from the rise in cases more focus needs to be put on measures being taken. This rise may be because of relaxation in measures in some stores or behaviour of customers and staff. We have seen larger chains taking a stronger line on requiring customers to wear face coverings.

During the past week the Food and Safety Team worked with the other Suffolk local authorities on a letter to all supermarkets, asking them to review procedures and ensure measures are adhered to. The letter provided advice on cleaning and sanitising stations, face coverings, monitoring numbers of customers, social distancing, and staff self-isolation. The letter went to over 400 supermarkets and other retailers in East Suffolk.
**Enforcement action Fixed Penalty Notice - Spice of Balti, Bungay**
Following concerns raised by the public, officers from Suffolk Police visited Spice of Balti restaurant in Bungay and found customers sitting around a table eating takeaway food and at the bar drinking. Under the current national restrictions, restaurants must be closed for consumption of food on the premises but can sell food and non-alcoholic drinks on a takeaway and/or delivery basis.
As a result of breaching these regulations, the Food and Safety Team served Shams Uddin, owner of Spice of Balti, with a £1,000 Fixed Penalty Notice. ITV local television news reported on the enforcement taken, Cllr Mary Rudd, cabinet member for Community Health spoke about the case in an interview to BBC Radio Suffolk and local newspapers also reported on the case. Media coverage of enforcement action helps raise awareness of the consequences of not following rules and supports work to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

Details of which businesses must be closed during the current national Covid-19 restrictions can be found at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close/closing-certain-businesses-and-venues-in-england](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close/closing-certain-businesses-and-venues-in-england) Grants are available to businesses that have been required to close in line with national restrictions. Full details can be found at [www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/business/covid-19-business-grant-funding/](http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/business/covid-19-business-grant-funding/)

**Workplace infections**
High levels of infection continue to cause high numbers of staff absences in many workplace settings. This week officers attended Incident Management Team meetings relating to HMP Hollesley and the Port of Felixstowe. Where significant outbreaks occur we are recommending the offer made by Suffolk Growth Partnership to access free of charge consultancy advice to help manage outbreaks of Covid 19.

**Reporting concerns**
The Council’s online form for reporting Covid-19 concerns is <https://my.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/service/COVID_19_Health_and_Safety>
Enquiries can also be made to environment@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

**Collaboration between local government and the fishing industry**
The Fishmongers’ Company are working on a project based on developing collaboration between local government and the fishing industry across England.

As part of this, via the economic development team, they made a request to showcase areas where local government and the fishing fleet have successfully worked together, creating beneficial outcomes for the fishing industry, local authority and the local area as a whole for an event they are hosting in February <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/building-local-seafood-partnerships-tickets-131028416521> The food and safety team responded by arranging with LG Roberts, a local Lowestoft based fishing and fish products business, to spend a day filming Steve Rock, Environmental Health Officer working with the business under Covid-19 secure conditions.

**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 (LRSG) 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](https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/business/covid-19-business-grant-funding/). 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 made 9,173 payments equating to £18.5m from the latest round of grants covering the December tier restrictions and subsequent national lockdown. During this current week ESC made a record weekly payment of over £14m to businesses severely affected by the latest lockdown.

**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-tern business support measures. The ED 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 programmes will be implemented in the Spring.

**Operations**
To ensure that household waste and recycling collections are prioritised, East Suffolk Council and East Suffolk Norse have taken the decision to temporarily suspend the bulky waste collection service.

Due to temporary staffing pressures, the service will be suspended from today. No new orders will be taken, however any existing orders will be fulfilled. The suspension of the bulky waste service - which offers the collection and disposal of large items such as fridges, washing machines and sofas - will ensure that more vehicles and crews are being used to collect household waste and recycling during the current restrictions.

**Finance & Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP)**
Test and Trace Support Payments – As at 17th January 2021, £63,000 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 scheme has now been extended until 31st March 2021, and the Council has received an additional £32,000 in respect of the discretionary scheme. ARP are training 2 more assessors to assist with processing claims as there has been a steep rise in the volumes of claims received since Christmas. Further changes are also being made to the claim form and process to try and speed up payments.

**Housing**
**Tenant Services & Building Maintenance**
For the Council’s housing stock we are restricting home visiting to only essential visits. This means only urgent repairs will be completed in tenants’ homes, voids works will continue as normal although we have to restrict the number of operatives in a property, so there is a potential impact on void turnaround times. We will still be allowing home moves in line with government guidelines and but will conduct viewings and sign-ups socially distanced and complete as much as possible by telephone ahead of appointments to reduce the time spent in a property by our officers.

We have closed our retired living schemes, and visits are only allowed to deliver food, medicines or essential care, scheme managers are conducting the daily wellbeing checks via telephone but are still visiting the schemes regularly to conduct their Health & Safety checks.

**Private Sector Housing**
We have received a grant of Covid Winter Support monies from Central Government via Suffolk Public Health, to support residents who are struggling due to the pressures of the pandemic. The grant is for £50,000 and must be spent by end of March. The work the team does brings us into contact with a range of vulnerable households and this money will go towards high heating costs through staying at home, food and other bills, winter warmth packs, heating repairs, insulation and draughtproofing and a range of other measures. The funding is targeted at those households who do not have children but is available to all tenures. Referrals for assistance can be emailed to ps.housing@eastsuffolk.gov.uk.

**Port Health - Felixstowe**
Port Health colleagues are continuing business as usual again whilst dealing with significant impacts from new trade that has come out of leaving the EU.

All Port Health staff have now been offered regular Lateral Flow Testing at Ipswich to assist with the attempt to ensure critical national infrastructure here at Felixstowe continues to operate.