



Councillor's weekly bulletin - June 19th 2020

This is my latest weekly bulletin, bringing you up to speed with developments around the District and relating to the COVID-19 epidemic.

Fewer virtual meetings this week but a number of internal meetings mainly dealing with budgetary matters and getting the new discretionary business grants processed and paid.

As usual this bulletin contains a wealth of information from across the District as well as links to useful websites. Everything you need should be here. If you have any questions, ideas or comments, please do let me know.

Please distribute this information electronically as widely as possible via your websites and Social media.

Kind Regards
Cllr Maurice Cook
Framlingham Ward
Cabinet Member - Resources

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>

Communities and supporting residents

1,650 referrals have now been actioned through Home But Not Alone. In the lead up to the announcement of the decision about the shielded group (whose initial shielding period ends 30th June) we are working with everyone who comes through the service to think about more sustainable sources of support. We have almost 7,000 people who are shielding in East Suffolk.

The 25 Grandpads aimed at older people or those with special educational needs who don't have digital access should be delivered by early next week and will start going out to our first recipients by the end of next week. The pilot has targeted those who have been identified by a community group or Communities Officer as being isolated or lonely.



The first meeting on the Community Partnership Board since lockdown began is being held next Tuesday with a focus on the potential impacts of Covid-19 in East Suffolk and what the CPB partners can do to anticipate and mitigate these. The individual Community Partnership Chairs are also looking at when to hold their next, virtual meetings.

A survey assessing the Covid-19 response at a community and District/County level has been launched this week (ESC have worked with CAS and other Districts to develop this). Please complete the survey if you would like your views to be captured: survey. There are also two on-line 60-minute discussion groups on this topic on Thursday 25 June at 14:00 and Monday 29 June at 18:00. To book onto one of these sessions please email jade.read@eastsoffolk.gov.uk.

Grants, funding and business matters

Discretionary grant scheme

We have now received 296 applications and paid out 66, resulting in £545k being allocated. The Council continues to take a permissive approach to ensure as many businesses as possible can access these much-needed funds which is demonstrated by only three applications being declined (two of these were businesses based outside of East Suffolk). At the national level of the 284 Councils who have launched a discretionary grants scheme 80 have started making payments - ESC made its first payment two weeks ago suggesting we are in the early group of Councils to start allocating these funds. Following a modelling exercise on the likely take up of this scheme we have now increased the upper limit of the grant from £10k to £25k for those larger businesses who demonstrate a significant loss due to the lockdown.

Reopening High Streets Safely Fund

We have now received proposals from 10 of our 12 towns and working as quickly as we can, within the restrictions of ERDF funding to ensure the towns have the highways changes and equipment in place so they can operate safely within social distancing rules. Three proposed highways changes have been supported by ESC (Beccles - implemented, Felixstowe and Woodbridge) and forwarded to SCC for determination as the highways authority and progressing the procurement of social distancing signage etc on behalf of all towns. The strict regulations around the use of ERDF funds continue to be frustrating and are slowing down the procurement of the products the towns are requesting.

Recovery



East Suffolk have worked closely with the LEP and other partners across Suffolk and Norfolk to complete the draft economic Restart Plan which focuses in how best we can support the local economy in the first 12 months of the recovery. The plan focusses on place and sectors with East Suffolk being well represented due to its world leading sectors and key growth areas.

The plan will be considered by the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders group on 23 June ahead of its launch on 30 June. This plan will be followed up by a longer term Rebuild Plan which will be launched in the autumn.

At the East Suffolk level the ED&R are reviewing their economic growth programmes and adapting them to take account of the economic impact of the CV19 lockdown to ensure the interventions are still appropriate for a post Covid economy. We are also acutely aware that the cultural and arts sector have been particularly badly hit during the lockdown and will continue to be so whilst social distancing remains in place, as a result a forum of such organisations is being established so that we can work collaboratively with the sector to ensure their sustainability.

Environmental Health

Test & Trace

Work on the Test & Trace arrangements across Suffolk proceeds at pace. The first meeting of the Suffolk Covid-19 Health Protection Board was held on Monday and Chaired by Stuart Keeble, Director of Public Health, with specialist representatives from across the relevant agencies including East Suffolk Council.

The Board considered the Suffolk Covid-19 Outbreak Control Plan which is on its 10th iteration and due for completion and sign-off by the end of this month. Eight workstreams have been established to support Test & Trace across the county and East Suffolk Council is leading on the complex workplaces and enforcement workstreams.

A Suffolk Covid-19 Coordination Centre is due to stand up on Monday 22 June and this will operate 7 days a week and receive and coordinate enquiries and case notifications which require further local investigation as potential hotspots / outbreaks. This will involve contact tracing and the investigation of any settings which may have been the focus of an outbreak such as a school, care home, workplace, prison etc.



A software system to capture all of this information and support the Test & Trace work has been developed within Suffolk over the last week.

Operational updates

Grounds

We have written to Town and Parish Councils updating on our grounds maintenance and grass cutting programme post-Coronavirus. Whilst crews have returned to verge cutting, and will be working through a rota of grass cutting over the next six weeks, we have identified 40 areas where we will be managing grass differently, and allowing wildflowers and grasses to grow until the end of the season. We have provided signs which explain what we are doing, and why, and we are also producing maps for town and parish councils to show where these conservation areas are. We have also invited communities to identify other areas where we could take a more conservative approach to grounds maintenance.

First Light - online activities

This weekend was intended to be the second First Light festival in Lowestoft, funded by the Arts Council and East Suffolk Council. Due to the coronavirus restrictions, this will not be going ahead, however a range of online activities will be available via First Light which celebrates the fact that Lowestoft is the first place in the UK to see the sun on the longest day of the year, promoting the town's place at the leading edge of the country.

Beach activity.

RNLI lifeguarding will be resuming in Southwold and Lowestoft in late June/ early July. This was impacted by coronavirus - with the charity struggling to carry out normal recruitment processes. These have not been resolved. In Lowestoft, lifeguarding is going to be supported by the provision of volunteer beach wardens, offering safety advice and promoting the need for social distancing.

Caravan sites

A note that caravan sites - in particular, Southwold Caravan site, owned by East Suffolk Council, remain closed on government advice. Managers are working up plans for potential reopening, when national policy changes, in a way that is safe for all customers. This is likely to include investment in new toilet and shower facilities. More updates will be available when policy changes.

