



District Councillors Report for 6 June 2020

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

Home But Not Alone Update

As of end of Thursday 4th June, almost 2,000 'Home But Not Alone' calls have been taken by the Customer Services Team and more than 1,500 of these have resulted in referrals dealt with by the Communities Team in partnership with local community groups and volunteers. Referrals have dropped from their highest point in the week beginning 30th March of more than 200 to less than 100 per week. The main areas of need are still food, medicine and social isolation although the Team is increasingly dealing with people experiencing financial hardship and mental ill health.

Ongoing work includes calling customers whose national food delivery has failed and providing emergency support and call backs to people identified through the Norfolk and Waveney CCG as being in need of non-medical support. In the next week or so we will be trying to contact the East Suffolk residents on the shielded list who have not made contact with the Government since the pandemic started, with a particular focus on those who are most vulnerable.

In other news...the second Community Partnership Board meeting will be held via Zoom on 23 June with a focus on the recovery from Covid-19 and the role of the eight Community Partnerships in this.

Grants, funding and business matters

Discretionary Business Grants

ESC launched its Local Discretionary Grant fund for businesses on 28 May. A day later, only 25% of all local authorities had launched these schemes demonstrating the speed with which we got this vital business support scheme up and running. This fund is aimed at small businesses who were not eligible for the initial round of grant funding and are not eligible for other forms of business support with the exception of furloughing and the Self-employed Income Support Scheme. ESC has also incorporated additional discretion into our guidance to ensure we maximise the number of business who can access funding under the scheme. The first payments to around 60 businesses are due to be made on 4 June. Please



go onto the ESC website front page and select “Extra Support now available for small businesses”

Reopening High Streets Safely Fund

The Government recently announced a national £50m fund to support the safe reopening of high streets across the country. As part of this fund ESC has been allocated £222k to support the safe reopening of our towns for trading. The grants will cover the formation of local actions plans, comms and public information for town centre users and business as well as funding for temporary (up to 12 months) public realm changes which contribute to the safe reopening of high streets. ESC recently hosted a meeting of Town Clerks to discuss this guidance in greater detail, provide support and request that they each come forward with proposals for reopening their towns. It is important that the Town Councils ensure these proposals have been developed in partnership with high street businesses and other local stakeholders. We anticipate the first of these proposals to be received imminently and once all have been assessed we will allocate funding.

Restart and Recovery

Whilst the Economic Development (ED) and other teams in the Council are still dealing with the immediate response to the pandemic and its effect on our businesses and communities we are also now considering our short and longer term responses to recovery. For ED this will involve the development of a 12 month ‘restart’ plan focussing on how we can support businesses, key sectors and centres of economic activity with the return to trading in very changed circumstances. This will also involve extending our existing business engagement plans to ensure all our activities are informed by the needs of the business community.

In addition, we are working closely with partners across Suffolk and the wider Local Enterprise Partnership area to establish similar recovery plans across these geographies. ES is leading on the sector intelligence and response element of these wider plans and will be a key delivery partner as they are rolled out.

Operational updates

Main buildings – limited reopening

Monday 8 June will see a limited number of staff returning to work for part of the week from East Suffolk House in Melton and Riverside in Lowestoft. In the first phase, this will be strictly limited to those staff who are not able to work from home. This may be because of an IT issue, or because their home environment does not support effective working. Guidance for officers and members remains that the default position is still to use technology to work from home.



In order to support office-working, new protocols have been put in place, and will be shared with staff and members. Hand sanitiser and desk cleaning materials are being made available, along with face coverings for those staff who choose to wear one (although it is not mandatory). Signage will be in place to guide staff to follow social distancing rules, and certain desks will be clearly marked for use. Offices should be considered as locations to use by agreement – where a specific task needs to be carried out.

We are not at the point yet where offices are open to all – and where ‘all day working’ can be easily supported. We will be sharing the learning of this first phase, and – if necessary – reducing restrictions further if it is felt safe to do so. Like all businesses, we are learning what works and our working arrangements will evolve as government advice changes

Housing

Housing Maintenance – The team are now starting to deal with the non-emergency responsive works which were recorded during the lockdown period, if tenants are happy to allow access and we can abide by the social distancing requirements.

Housing Needs - The Team continues to support rough sleepers and we currently have a total of 33 clients that have been placed in self-contained accommodation since 26 March 2020. Much work is ongoing to create a recovery plan that will allow each to have a pathway to move on.

Each client has had in depth assessment that has allowed us to understand what their support needs are so that the right wrap-around support can be in place when an offer of accommodation is made. We are working closely with the Clinical Commissioning Groups to ensure all clients are in receipt of primary health care, tested and have access to a GP.

We are also in contact with the DWP, Police, County Council and other partners that will enable us to offer high level support to all clients during and after ‘move on’ is in place.

Working with the Government we will be providing information and an initial plan that will identify additional units of accommodation to ensure people that we have brought in do not return to rough sleeping. This plan will be reviewed weekly and will need to be submitted by 11th June 2020 so that the next steps of delivery in the coming months can be identified. We are also making plans and carrying out risks assessments to introduce the use of the ‘Safe to Stay Hub’ once again and will be working with CCG and Public Health England as they will be supporting any decisions and offering their professional advice to allow us to run the service as safely as possible ensuring the safety of clients and staff.

The Housing Needs Team carried out an outreach/mini rough sleeper count across the



District on 28th May 2020 and identified two rough sleepers in the south of the district, one of which has refused an offer of accommodation and six in the North (two refused an offer of accommodation and one will be moving into a private rented property in the next few days supported by ESC). Some of these rough sleepers are not willing to engage, however we carry out weekly outreach work and each case has been allocated to an officer in the team.

There has been some positive moves for some of our clients currently in supported housing and this will in turn free up some vacancies that can be used on a quid pro quo basis for those clients in an emergency placement and in need of supported housing. A matching exercise is well on its way and this has proven to have been successful.

In relation to Gateway to Homechoice and further to the updated government guidance which was issued on 13 May, the register will resume advertising social housing properties as of 4 June 2020. Some available properties will be advertised on the Gateway to Homechoice site while some might be directly let to applicants who meet the criteria stated within the Local Lettings Plan. Initially applicants will not be able to move across local authority boundaries, unless they have a specific connection to more than one Local Authority. This is only until each Local Authority is able to meet its own housing need within its own area and after that applicants will be informed of any changes.

Environmental Health

The Food and Safety Team have updated the 'Covid-19 health and safety guidance for businesses' web page. This will present the information in a better way to the user and include more subjects which arise from user enquiries such as queuing, facemasks, returning goods etc. Content will be updated on an ongoing basis as guidance changes as lockdown is eased. The web page will be promoted through Council social media from today. The page can be found at <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/business/covid-19-health-and-safety-guidance-for-businesses/#Menu>

CLlr Colin Hedgley

CLlr Tony Fryatt