

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Briefing for Breckland Council elected members (17 December 2020)

Purpose of the note: To ensure members are aware of the plans that are being put in place to ensure that Breckland is prepared, as far as possible, to respond to the impact of Coronavirus.

Contents

1. Recent Government advice/action	1
2. Supporting businesses and employees.....	1
3. Community support	4
4. Breckland service updates	4

1. Recent Government advice/action

NEW: Isolation period reduced - The guidance on the self-isolation period has been reduced from 14 days to 10 days with effect from 14th December. The [UK Chief Medical Officers statement](#) provides further details.

NEW: People with long-term health conditions urged to get flu vaccine before Christmas – Health chiefs urge those with [long-term health conditions to get their flu jab](#), as PHE analysis shows 6 in 10 flu deaths are people with underlying conditions.

NEW: Covid strain – Public Health England is investigating a novel strain of COVID-19. A new variant of the virus that causes [COVID-19 \(SARS-CoV-2\)](#) has been identified across the South East of England.

NEW: Tier change – London, South Essex, and South Hertfordshire to [move to Tier 3 restrictions](#)

NEW: Test and Trace update – Business as usual for NHS Test and Trace over Christmas. The NHS [Test and Trace service](#) will be open every day over Christmas and the New Year.

2. Supporting businesses and employees

NEW: Cranswick – No further positive tests have been received at Cranswick. Assuming this position is maintained this week, and in line with PHE advice the outbreak is due to be closed on Thursday 17 Dec. The IMT (Incident Management Team) has been stood down and the outbreak is due to be closed this week following 28 days since the last case.

UPDATED: Public house inspections – Since the end of recent restrictions on 3 December, Public Protection Officers have been carrying out visits to licensed premises to check compliance with current requirements. During the first weekend (4/5 December) visits were carried out to licensed premises in Attleborough, Thetford, Dereham and Swanton Morley. Issues were identified in two premises during this weekend and advice was given.

Issues of a similar nature were found across Norfolk and, as a result, an evening of co-ordinated visits with our Police colleagues was planned across the county. This took place on Friday 11 December. Problem premises in Dereham were targeted. The two premises that we had concerns with the previous weekend had both taken heed of previous advice. Concerns were identified at two

further premises in Dereham; advice was given and both premises have been scheduled for a re-visit this coming weekend. Visits this coming weekend will also target Swaffham and Watton licensed premises and any other licensed premises where we have intelligence that Covid restrictions are not being followed. Visits will continue to be carried out over the festive period.

The Communications Team are sharing messaging via social media re: family group/bubbles at licensed premises and promoting advice around the definition of a 'substantial meal' and consumption of alcohol as there still appears to be some confusion.

NEW: Covid Support Officers – Officers are now in post and patrolling all towns, providing visible presence, engaging with businesses and residents, and reporting back any compliance issues. They will be introducing themselves to all Town Councils this week and providing contact details. Look out for social media promoting the work of the Covid support officers.

UPDATED: National support schemes now available – Details and application forms can be found at [Coronavirus Financial Information](#). Members are encouraged to encourage eligible local businesses to apply.

UPDATED: Grants for Businesses under Tier 2 Restrictions (from 2 December onwards)

Our scheme for businesses significantly impacted by Tier 2, but still allowed to remain open, went live on 2 December. This provides small cash grants to businesses which have been significantly impacted by the Tier 2 restrictions but are still open.

We will be doing an automatic pay run to those we know are eligible shortly, and all other businesses can apply directly via a short web-form: [Local Restrictions Support Grant - Tier 2](#) This scheme provides funding (of between £667 and £1,500) on a 14-day basis and should Tier 2 be extended in Breckland on the 16th we will make new payments to all those who are eligible.

NEW: Grants for Pubs under the Tier 2 Restrictions (from 2 December onwards)

Working with the funding provided from the Government we are supporting Breckland pubs via:

- A £1,000 one-off grant to all "wet led" pubs (this is using the BEIS definition of a wet-led pub deriving less than 50% of its turnover from food sales in a normal trading year)
- PLUS provide a cash grant every 14 days for pubs on basis of.

*If they are forced to be shut - up to £1,500 (depending on the pub's rateable value)

*If they are still able to open – up to up to £1,050 (depending on the pub's rateable value)

We have written to every pub in Breckland asking them to confirm their status, and teams across Regeneration and Licencing are working together closely to ensure the right support goes to the right business, and that pubs are safely following guidelines.

Any pub owner can request this support via a short form:

<https://www.breckland.gov.uk/article/16225/Grants-for-Breckland-Pubs>

UPDATED: Business Grants for businesses impacted by the National Restrictions (to 2 Dec)

Although the national restrictions have ended, we will continue to provide grants under the previous scheme to any businesses who are eligible and have not yet come forward. So far, we have paid out almost £1.4m to around 1000 businesses, reaching over 85% of those identified as eligible.

We will continue to make awards to all eligible businesses, who can register at:

<https://www.breckland.gov.uk/local-restrictions-support-grant>

We are also continuing to make provision for those businesses ineligible under the Government's criteria, as part of our "additional restrictions grant (ARG)" programme. Specific to Breckland, this scheme also supports home-based business, non-business rate-paying businesses, and businesses who are direct suppliers to those closed by the national restrictions.

To date we are supporting over 100 businesses via the scheme, and anyone interested can apply via:

<https://www.breckland.gov.uk/breckland-additional-restrictions-grant>

UPDATED: Support for High Streets

We continue to push for safe and vibrant numbers of shoppers via:

- **Reopening, Christmas, and Shop Local campaigns through #EnjoyDiscoverExplore programme**, which include video testimonials based in each town, and new banner arms and column wraps in all market towns
- **Liaison Officers** – who will provide visible presence on the High Street, working closely with the new Covid support officers and Environmental Health Teams
- **E-directory of local businesses** - which is being supported via social media, and will continue to grow <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/shopping-in-breckland>
- **Digital High Streets Programme** – a Breckland Council initiative enabling High Street businesses to gain access to free training and workshops on making the most of digital, as well as grants to help invest in new digital capabilities (e.g., a brand-new website, or social media marketing)
- **Continuing to provide confidence to shoppers and businesses** – with hand sanitiser stations and social distancing signage; and businesses able to access free training and support packs including posters and floor stickers

We are constantly reviewing opportunities and needs of businesses to shape the current solutions. Should Members have any suggestion or comments please contact the [Regeneration Team](#).

UPDATED: Support for start-ups

To help manage issues of Covid redundancy and to diversify the local economy, Breckland Council is running a new start-up support programme for potential Breckland entrepreneurs. This includes:

Start-up grants scheme, funding available of up to £10k. Particularly aimed at those who have lost their jobs or cannot access new employment due to the pandemic. The team have engaged with 21 businesses with support so far on this scheme.

Details and applications are [available online](#). We are grateful for any support Members can provide in encouraging interested people to apply.

UPDATED: Economic support for individuals

To support the Council's vulnerability agenda, and help mitigate the economic impacts of Covid for individuals, we have established a significant Covid-talent programme which includes:

- **1:1 advice and guidance** – to help individuals navigate the jobs market, find opportunity, and cope with the shock of redundancy. Since October this has supported 150 individuals.
- **Group Skills & Support Sessions** – to help adults and young people with tools they need to competitively access jobs market

Members are asked to support the initiative by encouraging residents to access details and [details and appointment bookings](#).

3. Community support

Self-Isolation Payments

If residents have been told by the NHS to self-isolate, either because they have tested positive for coronavirus COVID-19 or have been in contact with someone who has tested positive, they may be entitled to some financial support during their self-isolation period.

People who are eligible will receive:

- A fixed amount of £500
- Payment is subject to income tax but not National Insurance. Local Authorities are required to notify HMRC.

Who is eligible?

People who live in the Breckland district who have received a notification from NHS Test and Trace to self-isolate will be entitled to a Self-Isolation Payment providing they satisfy all the following requirements:

- They have been asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace either because they've tested positive for coronavirus or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive.
- They comply with the notification from NHS Test and Trace to self-isolate.
- They are employed or self-employed.
- They are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result; and are in receipt of one of the following benefits:
 - *Universal Credit*
 - *Working Tax Credit*
 - *Income-related Employment and Support Allowance*
 - *Housing Benefit*
 - *Income Support*
 - *Income based Job Seeker's Allowance*
 - *Pension Credit*

People can claim for more than one test, should they test positive/be told to self-isolate again in the future. Find out more [on our website](#).

Breckland Council Match Funding

The Council has now allocated all its grant funding budget for 2020/21 and as such this scheme is now closed. All applications that have been received prior to the scheme closing will be assessed and those successful will be notified. There may be other grant funding available at [Norfolk Community Foundation](#).

4. Breckland service updates

NEW: Christmas – Breckland Council will be operating with minimum staff over the Christmas period (23 Dec – 4 Jan) to ensure everyone can take a well-earned break, so Members are asked to use the 'report it' function on our website if they have an issue that needs addressing, or for a genuine

emergency, to contact the Emergency out of hours team. A number will be provided to all members shortly before the Christmas break.

NEW: Leisure centres – Our Leisure centres have reopened and our taking bookings for classes and public swim sessions. The reopening news has been shared in local press and via our social media channels.

NEW: Commercial Waste – Collection and promotion for this new service is provisionally planned to start on January 4 2021. Collecting commercial waste is part of the new Serco contract which will offer Breckland a new income stream in 2021 and ensure Breckland offers a complete waste collection service to residents and businesses within our district. A new Commercial Waste Officer, Robert Bunting, has been appointed to lead this new project.

Frontline services – The vast majority of the services that we provide will continue where the service is essential, subject to risk assessments and latest guidance issued to staff.

Critical services, such as Housing, Waste, Customer Services and Public Protection, all continue to operate, albeit in some cases, this is being managed in a more flexible way. You can see the latest [service updates on our website](#).

Leader Breckland Council
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