

# Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## Briefing for Breckland Council elected members (06 January 2021)

**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 .....	2
3. Community support .....	3
4. Breckland service updates .....	4

### 1. Recent Government advice/action

#### **NEW: Prime Minister announces national lockdown**

The Prime Minister has [announced a national lockdown](#) and instructed people to stay at home to control the virus, protect the NHS and save lives. The decision follows a rapid rise in infections, hospital admissions and case rates across the country, and our hospitals are now under more pressure than they have been at any other point throughout the pandemic.

This drastic jump in cases has been attributed to the new variant of COVID-19, which scientists have now confirmed is between 50 and 70 per cent more transmissible. On 4 January, there were 26,626 Covid patients in hospital in England, an increase of over 30% in one week, and the April 2020 hospital admissions peak has now been surpassed by 40%. The case rate in England up to 29 December was 478.5 per 100k, three times higher than on 1 December when the case rate was 151.3 per 100k.

The lockdown means you must not leave, or be outside of your home, except where necessary. You may leave the home to:

- Shop for basic necessities, for you or a vulnerable person
- Go to work, or provide voluntary or charitable services, if you cannot reasonably do so from home
- Exercise with your household (or support bubble) or one other person – this should be limited to once per day, and you should not travel outside your local area.
- Meet your [support bubble](#) or [childcare bubble](#) where necessary, but only if you are legally permitted to form one
- Seek medical assistance or avoid injury, illness or risk of harm (including domestic abuse)
- attend education or childcare - for those eligible
- Colleges, primary and secondary schools will remain open only for vulnerable children and the children of [critical workers](#). All other children will learn at home.

More information is available on the [Gov.uk website](#).

#### **NEW: £4.6 billion in new lockdown grants to support businesses and protect jobs**

Businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors are to receive a one-off grant worth up to £9,000, the [Chancellor has announced](#). The cash is provided on a per-property basis to support businesses through the latest restrictions, and is expected to benefit over 600,000 business

properties, worth £4 billion in total across all nations of the UK. Information about the new grant is being added to Breckland website.

**NEW: Confirmed cases of COVID-19 variant from South Africa identified in UK**

Cases of a new SARS-CoV-2 variant, which originated in South Africa, have been [identified in the UK](#). The first two cases were identified in the UK on 22 December 2020 and both have been in contact with someone who has travelled from South Africa. Public Health England's Health Protection Teams have followed up with both cases and contact tracing is under way. The new variant named B.1.1.7 (also referred to as 501Y.V2) was first detected in Nelson Mandela Bay, South Africa, in samples at the beginning of October. Molecular dating suggests that it could have been in circulation from the end of August.

**NEW: Second COVID-19 vaccine authorised by medicines regulator**

The second COVID-19 vaccine has been [authorised for use](#) in the UK, allowing a significant expansion of the immunisation programme with hundreds more vaccination sites opening in the coming weeks and months to protect those most at risk from the virus. The UK regulator has accepted the recommendation of the Commission on Human Medicines and authorised the Oxford University/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine. This follows months of rigorous clinical trials involving tens of thousands of people and an extensive analysis of the vaccine's safety, quality and effectiveness by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

**NEW: Over 600,000 people get first dose of Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine**

More than [600,000 people](#) in the UK have received the first dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine as part of the largest vaccination programme in British history. Between 8 December and 20 December, 616,933 people across the UK received the vaccination. Vaccines have been administered to care home residents, those aged 80 and over and health and social care staff through over 500 vaccination sites across the UK.

The latest government and Health information and advice can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

## 2. Supporting businesses and employees

**UPDATED: National support schemes now available**

There is national grant funding available for businesses affected by the pandemic, including the Local Restrictions Support Grant (for closed businesses). Details and application forms can be found at <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/article/15960/Coronavirus-Financial-Information>.

**NEW: Grants for Businesses under the Tier 4 Restrictions**

We are now operating a new scheme using Central Government money and policy to support those businesses who were forced to close due to the Tier 4 restrictions.

Under this scheme businesses can access up to £1,500 for every 14 days we are in Tier 4. Eligibility is determined based on the list of sectors shut by the Tier 4 regulations, and only applies to premises registered for Business Rates (although still eligible for those who have 100% rate relief).

Our scheme went live on 23 December (within two hours of the Tier being announced) and we had paid almost 1,000 businesses by 30 December. We are making a number of payments based on previously held data, so businesses are encouraged to check emails before applying, but new

applicants are still welcome via: <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/article/16267/Covid-19-Business-Grant>

We are reviewing an additional 'discretionary' approach to support those outside of the national criteria, but still within the spirit of the intended support. These businesses can also apply using the above link.

**UPDATED: Access to 'legacy' grant schemes**

We are still supporting and paying any eligible business we can under the support schemes relevant to previous Tiers and Restrictions. These include:

- **Winter Support Payments / Grants for Wet Led Pubs** – A one-off payment of £1,000 for pubs which derive majority of their income through drinks sales (deadline to apply 31 January)
- **Tier 2 Restrictions Grants** – Grants of up to £1,050 for every 14 days in Tier 2, for businesses which were significantly impacted by the specific Tier 2 restrictions
- **November National Restrictions** – Grants of up to £3,000 for every for businesses which were significantly impacted by the specific November enhanced restrictions

Through these schemes we have supported almost 1,500 businesses with almost £2m. We will check any applicants to the Tier 4 scheme to see if they could retrospectively be paid under a legacy scheme. New applicants can still apply via forms on our website

<https://www.breckland.gov.uk/article/15960/Coronavirus-Financial-Information> or if in doubt a business can email our grants team on [covid.grants@breckland.gov.uk](mailto:covid.grants@breckland.gov.uk)

**UPDATED: Start Up Scheme**

We have made a number of awards to new start-ups using our support and grant scheme, and we are processing a large number of applications. Any interested entrepreneurs are advised to apply soon before we fully commit this scheme via: <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/article/15787/Start>

**UPDATED: Support for High Streets**

We continue to support High Streets and High Street businesses during these additional restrictions via:

- **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) – more information and applications via <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/digital-high-street>
- **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. These generated significant public engagement before Christmas. Non-Christmas versions of the films will be released when it is appropriate to do so, to continue promoting local businesses
- **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>

### 3. Community support

**NEW: Community support activity to CEVs during 2021 lockdown**

There are currently 5,785 residents in Breckland classed as '[clinically extremely vulnerable](#)' (CEV). The National Shielding Service System (NSSS) reopened on 26 December for CEVs to register themselves for supermarket priority delivery slots and additional support needs, if applicable.

Between 26 December 2020 and 4 January 2021 there have been 113 Breckland CEVs register themselves on NSSS and all are contacted by Norfolk County Council on behalf of the local authority partnership.

They can directly assist with low to medium priority food needs, including delivery of fresh food from Morrisons supermarket, via Norfolk Assistance Scheme. This scheme also provides financial support via the Winter Support Offer.

The single point of contact for general information and enquiries, including financial support from **Norfolk Assistance Scheme is 0344 800 8020.**

If their need falls outside of this offer, the call is triaged to our local Community Hub. The Hub has the following provisions in place to support residents:

- Emergency food parcels for a one-off need, supplies 7 days of food
- Able to provide foodbank vouchers to residents in financial hardship
- Able to register vulnerable people for an online priority delivery slot with Tesco and Iceland via DEFRA service
- c£50k remaining of our hardship grant to provide financial support to Breckland residents in hardship
- Access to community groups and volunteers to collect shopping, medication and provide assistance such as dog walking

Residents are encouraged to access the Norfolk Assistance Scheme in the first instance so demand can be effectively triaged. However, for direct referrals to our Community Hub, please email [communitysupport@breckland.gov.uk](mailto:communitysupport@breckland.gov.uk). Further information can be found [on our website](#).

#### 4. Breckland service updates

##### **NEW: Flooding recovery**

Clean-up of areas affected by the flooding around Christmas was carried out week of 28 December. Some extra bin collections were arranged along with collection of bulky/white goods to assist those whose properties were flooded. Some areas will need further attention once the areas have dried out. Further to this, extra waste was collected from Shipdham to help support those households affected by the power outage.

##### **UPDATED: Covid Support Officer activity**

Covid Support Officers were active throughout the Christmas and New Year period, providing support and patrolling the high streets. A joint patrol with the police on New Year's Eve, focused on take-away premises, found that towns were quiet and compliance was good.

##### **UPDATED: Frontline services**

While we are reviewing the implications of lockdown on our day-to-day work, we expect the vast majority of services to continue without interruption, subject to the appropriate risk assessments being completed, and government guidance being followed.

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](#).

While this work review is under way, we are advising any staff whose role includes making site visits to only go into properties if there is an urgent or legal requirement to do so. External site visits are currently unaffected.

Our office at Elizabeth House in Dereham remains closed to the vast majority of staff and customers, but we are nevertheless reviewing our safety procedures to make sure it remains as safe to use as possible for the few officers who do need access through lockdown.

***Leader Breckland Council***  
***06.01.2021***