

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Briefing for Breckland Council elected members (3 February 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.

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1. Recent Government advice/action

NEW: UK government secures additional 40 million doses of Valneva vaccine

The UK Government has signed a deal for a further 40 million doses of Valneva's promising vaccine candidate. The [latest deal](#) will bolster long-term vaccine production in Scotland and brings the total UK vaccine portfolio to 407 million doses over the next two years.

NEW: Janssen publishes positive safety and efficacy data for single-dose COVID-19 vaccine

Janssen has [published positive data](#) from the phase 3 studies of its single-dose COVID-19 vaccine candidate, showing it to be 66% effective overall in preventing coronavirus in participants. The data did not report any significant safety concerns relating to the vaccine, with no serious adverse events in vaccine recipients. The results are for Janssen's single-dose study.

NEW: Novavax publishes positive efficacy data for its COVID-19 vaccine

Novavax has [published phase 3 trial data](#) from UK study showing positive efficacy results for its COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccine is shown to be 89.3% effective in preventing coronavirus in participants, as well as efficacy against new UK variant.

NEW: Clinical evaluation confirms high accuracy of highly mobile LamPORE test

A [technical and clinical evaluation](#) conducted by NHS trusts and universities has confirmed the LamPORE COVID-19 test, produced by Oxford Nanopore, to be accurate and sensitive enough to detect the virus in people with and without symptoms.

NEW: Vaccine Deployment Minister and Mayor of London collaborate to share benefits of vaccine uptake

Vaccine Deployment Minister Nadhim Zahawi and the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan have [discussed the importance trustworthy sources](#) of information on the COVID-19 vaccine. The UK has now reached the sombre milestone of 100,000 (coronavirus) COVID-19 deaths. People of black African ethnicity in England are over twice as likely to die from this virus than white people, according to the ONS. The same is also true of South Asian people.

NEW: Education attendance restrictions to remain in place

The Prime Minister has confirmed that schools and colleges will not return to full face-to-face education after the February half-term and that the current attendance [restrictions will remain in place until 8 March](#) at the earliest. Children of critical workers and vulnerable children and young

people will still be able to attend schools and colleges, including special schools and alternative provision. Early years settings also remain open. All other pupils will continue to receive remote education at home.

NEW: Ofsted inspections to be done remotely

All planned [Ofsted inspection activity](#) will be carried out remotely until March 8 at the earliest.

NEW: 9 in 10 test results returned next day by NHS Test and Trace

NHS [Test and Trace](#) is now returning 93.8% of in-person test results the next day after the test was taken, compared with 84.8% the week before. Turnaround times have now reduced to similar lengths of time seen at the beginning of December, following the increase over the festive period.

NEW: Care home vaccination follow-ups

The COVID-19 vaccine has now been offered to [residents at every eligible care home](#) with older residents across England. Nurses, GPs and other NHS staff have offered the life-saving jab to people living at more than 10,000 care homes with older residents. The small remainder have had their visits deferred by local directors of public health for safety reasons during a local outbreak. Those homes will be visited and vaccinated as soon as NHS staff are allowed to do so.

NEW: Travel bans extended as United Arab Emirates, Burundi and Rwanda added to red list to prevent spread of new variant

The government has taken the urgent decision to ban travel to the UK from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Burundi and Rwanda to prevent the [spread of the new variant](#) originally identified in South Africa into the UK.

NEW: Surge testing to be deployed to monitor and suppress spread of COVID-19 variant

Additional testing is being made available in locations where the COVID-19 variant first identified in South Africa has been found. Additional surge testing and sequencing is being deployed [in a number of locations](#) where the COVID-19 variant first identified in South Africa has been found. Testing will, in combination with following the lockdown rules and remembering 'Hands. Face. Space', help to monitor and suppress the spread of the virus, while enabling a better understanding of the new variant.

NEW: The fightback against coronavirus

The [Secretary of State for Health and Social Care](#) has given a verbal statement to Parliament on the vaccine roll-out and supply, and efforts to contain the South African variant.

NEW: Almost 20,000 jobs protected by Film & TV Production Restart Scheme

Almost 20,000 jobs in film and television have already been protected by a [government-backed scheme](#) to get screen productions back up and running again, the Chancellor confirmed on 2 February.

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

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

2. Supporting businesses and employees

REMINDER: Encourage local businesses to access support

When engaging with local businesses, please encourage them to engage via [our website](#) or by emailing regeneration@breckland.gov.uk.

We use our single grant application form to match companies to every available national scheme, and our revised discretionary policy should mean that every legitimate Breckland-based business should be eligible for some direct financial support.

UPDATED: Rolling grants for businesses under the new lockdown – LRSG (Closed)

We continue to provide grants to businesses forced to close due to the national lockdown, with grants of up-to £1,500-per-14-days available. We have made payments to all known eligible businesses (c. 2,000) to cover an initial 42-day period and are ready to extend payments if guidance confirms the lockdown will last longer.

Eligibility is defined nationally, and effectively covers rate paying businesses (100% rate relief still eligible) that are legally required to close due to the lockdown. We are processing most payments automatically based on data previously acquired, but any business can apply via our website.

The Breckland implementation of this scheme went live on 23rd December, and we have supported almost 1,000 businesses with £2,012,639

UPDATED: One-off top up payments for Closed Businesses

In addition to the rolling payments outlined above, we are also able to make further one-off payments to all businesses required to close that are registered for business rates (100% rate relief is still applicable). The size of the one-off award is based on rateable value of the business premise:

- £15,000 or under = £4000
- £15,001 to £50,999 = £6000
- £51,000 or over = £9000

Under this scheme we have already issued over £4m additional support to almost 1,000 businesses. As with the rolling payments, we are processing the majority via automatic pay runs using existing data. However, any business can apply, and we will match wherever we can to the national criteria.

UPDATED: Additional Restrictions Grants – Breckland’s discretionary policy

Based on the gaps left from the LRSG (Closed) policy we have launched a complimentary set of grants using Breckland’s discretionary resource. Under this approach, any business can apply if they are ineligible for LRSG (Closed) and struggling. Awards are grouped into four categories:

- Businesses with high fixed property costs, who are forced to close (i.e. B&Bs) - £1,334 per 28 days
- Businesses with high fixed property costs, who can still open but are struggling (i.e. supply chain, manufacturers) £1,000 per 28 days
- Businesses with low / no fixed property costs, who are forced to close (i.e. regular market traders, hairdressers renting space) - £1,000 per 28 days
- Businesses with low / no fixed property costs, who can still open but are struggling – (i.e. self-employed, open market traders) £667 per 28 days

We hope this support will reach around 750 extra businesses by February. Any business can apply via [our website](#).

REMINDER: “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 – (£38,000 paid to date)
- 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 (£366,485 paid to date)
- November National Restrictions – Grants of up to £3,000 for every for businesses which were significantly impacted by the specific November enhanced restrictions (£1,377,882 paid to date)

Any business can [apply via our website](#).

National Support

- The **Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme** has been extended until the end of April 2021. The government will cover the cost of 80 per cent of the wages of furloughed employees for hours not worked.
- The **Self-Employed Income Support Scheme** is extended until April 2021. The government is now providing a third SEISS grant, covering 80 per cent of average trading profits between November and January 2021, capped at £7,500 in total
- For the **Bounce Back Loan Scheme**, Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme the application deadline has been extended until the end of March.

UPDATED: Start-up Scheme

Our scheme to support new enterprises in the wake of the pandemic continues to grow and provide support of between £2,500 and £10,000 to bridge the costs of starting a new enterprise.

Currently have 20 Live grants on the Business Start Up ,9 Confirmation of award letters have been sent. Grants offered to date is £44,250

Support for High Streets

We continue to push for safe and vibrant numbers of shoppers 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) We have made 11 grant awards so far
- **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
- **E-directory of local businesses** - which is being supported via social media, and will continue to grow. You can find the [directory on our website](#)

3. Community Support

UPDATED: Enhanced Track & Trace

Our Covid Support Officers have been prioritising the enhanced track and trace service, which has been introduced to support the welfare needs of the contacts of residents who have tested positive for COVID-19 to encourage compliance of self-isolation.

Between 25 and 31 January, 266 enhanced test and trace visits were completed. During the period, officers also supported in delivering food parcels and the collection of a prescription for residents.

Our officers have reported a resident who was not self-isolating and this has been escalated for further investigation.

The team have visited a number of take-aways in the district and we're pleased to report that they all seem to be complying.

All contact tracing referrals are issued by Public Health England. Breckland Community Hub then manages and records all contact tracing activity undertaken by the Covid Support Officers. Contact tracing is undertaken 7 days-a-week and during week commencing 18 January 2021, the following activity took place:

- 23 Standard contact tracing visits made
- 245 Enhanced contact tracing visits made
- 0 welfare requirements identified from contact tracing visits

NEW: New fund to support people to self-isolate

Breckland Council is to receive £250,000, which will be distributed to residents in the form of discretionary payments in order to enable eligible people to self-isolate.

To be eligible, Breckland residents must:

- Have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace or the NHS Covid-19 app
- Be employed or self-employed
- Cannot do their work from home and will lose money as a result
- Have household gross earnings of less than The Minimum Income Standards earnings level (as per the [Joseph Rowntree Trust report](#)): £37,400 for a family; £26,000 for a couple with no children; £19,200 for a single person
- Have household capital of less than £3,000

This is in addition to the existing self-isolation payments being administered by ARP and the [application method](#) is the same.

REMINDER: Support for vulnerable residents

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

NAS can help with food, paying bills and money for everyday essentials. The scheme can also help if people can't meet their everyday needs and are struggling for reasons other than coronavirus.

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. Further information can be found [on our website](#).

4. Breckland service updates

UPDATED: Frontline services

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

Our bin collection crews are fully operational, with all Christmas and garden waste catch up activity completed and no ongoing service impacts following the festive period.

Critical services, such as Housing, 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 an overview of our [service updates on our website](#).

Leader, Breckland Council
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