

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Briefing for Breckland Council elected members (30 June 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: 19 July remains our target date for ending restrictions

Speech by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care in the House of Commons on the [vaccination programme](#) and the move to step 4 of the roadmap.

NEW: COVID-19 vaccines have prevented 7.2 million infections and 27,000 deaths

New analysis suggests the vaccination programme has [prevented between 6.4 and 7.9 million infections](#) and 26,000 and 28,000 deaths in England alone.

NEW: Adult social care given over £250 million extra to continue COVID-19 protections

People in care homes or those being cared for at home will benefit from an [extra £250 million](#) to continue to protect them from COVID-19 transmission.

NEW: UK surpasses 500,000 coronavirus (COVID-19) tests genomically sequenced

More than half a million positive COVID-19 samples have been [genomically sequenced](#), cementing the UK's status as a world leader in genomics.

NEW: Government publishes Events Research Programme report

A new report has found that mitigation measures can be used to reduce and [manage risks](#) associated with holding large events.

NEW: Confirmed cases of COVID-19 variants identified in UK

PHE's weekly COVID-19 variant cases data show that numbers of the Delta (VOC-21APR-02) variant in the UK have [risen by 35,204 since last week](#) to a total of 111,157. This represents a 46% increase.

NEW: Malta added to green list and green watchlist extended

From 4am Wednesday 30 June, Malta, Madeira, the Balearic Islands, several UK overseas territories and Caribbean islands (including Barbados) will be added to the [government's green list](#), having met the necessary criteria to be reclassified.

NEW: New research shows 2 million people may have had long COVID

Findings from the REACT-2 studies show over a third of people who had coronavirus (COVID-19) reported symptoms [lasting at least 12 weeks](#).

NEW: 3 in 5 UK adults receive both doses of COVID-19 vaccine

Over 60% of UK adults have been vaccinated with a [second dose](#) of the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine, giving them the fullest possible protection.

2. Supporting businesses and employees

Reminder – if you know a business that needs support:

Please ask them to engage via <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/businesssupport> or regeneration@breckland.gov.uk

We have now issued almost £50m in financial support since the start of the pandemic, and whilst many Covid-related grant schemes are coming to a close, we still want to find support for any Breckland business in need. So please do flag any known issues to us.

UPDATED: Restart Grants

We have been able to pay businesses who meet the national eligibility for “Restart” Grants and have issued over £6.5m of grant monies, and believe all eligible businesses have now received support.

The application closing date for the Restart Grant is today (30 June 2021).

Businesses who have not previously received support will also be able to engage via our single web form, and we will match against eligibility via: <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/article/16267/Covid-19-Business-Grant>

UPDATED: Additional Restrictions Grants – Breckland’s discretionary policy.

We have now completed our allocation, ahead of the Government’s deadline for spend. Awards from Breckland total almost £4m, supporting almost 1,000 businesses.

We are anticipating a further allocation of discretionary monies in July, which will initially be used to continue our Spring Back programme (below) and are reviewing what additional support which might be delivered to support the wider recovery.

Updated: Spring Back Business Support Programme

Our “Spring Back” Programme is fully operational to support Breckland businesses who may now access a further £2m of support, our grants schemes are proving popular:

- **Shop Front Improvement Scheme** – investing in the biggest ever “Spring Clean” across the district. Any businesses based in Breckland’s primary shopping areas, or any customer facing business, will be able to get financial support for improvements and enhancements to their shop frontage – from a lick of paint through to a replacement frontage.

To date grants have been approved to 25 businesses totalling £51,000 with further applications progressing forward.

- **Covid Safe and Adaptions Grants** – helping businesses shoulder the burden of trading in a Covid-safe way and meet the challenges of serving under restrictions. Grants of up to £5k will be available to invest in safety; or change business practices. From extra PPE and screens, through to a new marquee or outdoor seating.

To date grants have been paid to 35 businesses totalling just over £106,000 with further applications progressing forward.

- **Digital Breckland** – building on the highly successful scheme – Breckland Digital High Streets enabling any Breckland-based business to get support for their digital offer, with grants towards making key digital changes from a new payment system, through to search engine optimisation.

To date grants have been paid to 99 businesses totalling just over £239,000 with further applications progressing forward.

- **Expanded enterprise and start-up scheme** – having already created 14 new businesses since Christmas, we are looking to grow the pipeline of new innovative businesses further. With finance and advice for new entrepreneurs looking to start-up locally. To date grants have been paid to 21 businesses totalling just over £109,000 with a further £113,000 allocated to applications progressing forward.

The Spring back grant program is currently unable to release awards while we await further government funding. These schemes remain open to new applications, and we continue to process them in anticipation of further funding becoming available from government.

Updated: Growth Programme

Town Delivery Plans – the ‘Future Breckland’ Project

- After a programme of engagement, the first draft of the Dereham Town Delivery Plan is due to be submitted and published for public feedback at the end of July.
- Following the success of the engagement events in Dereham, we will continue with the same approach in each of the remaining towns, with the aim to include at least 6 touch points for stakeholders, including an online survey, one-to-one engagement, online ‘meet the team’, focused workshops and online publications
- Online surveys for Watton and Swaffham are now live on dedicated web pages for each town at <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/Future-Breckland>

Further details on the project will be available on the [website](#). Any questions can be addressed to the Project Team on tdps@breckland.gov.uk

Snetterton Growth

- We are working with UKPN on their recent quotation to reach an agreed construction cost and programme.
- In conjunction with Greater South East Energy Hub (Govt. funded advisors) we are exploring the possibilities of existing businesses installing solar panels on their roofs to supplement the existing power network.

Housing Development

- **Thetford HIF** - We have received Balfour Beatty's commercial offer for the new primary substation and are undertaking a detailed review which will take several weeks to conclude.
- **Rural Exception sites** - Currently enabling 6 rural exception sites and work started on focussed project on targeting parishes for a scheme.
- **Extra Care** - Working with Norfolk County Council to enable the delivery of extra care scheme in Thetford and Dereham (affordable rent and shared ownership).
- **Retrofitting** - Working with Registered Providers we have requested £520k from Energy Hub to retrofit homes for Flagship, Broadland, Orbit and Clarion. Allocated pot of £447k.
- **Community led housing** – holding initial talks with community groups interested in developing own and local housing solutions

3. Community Support

REMINDER: Symptom-free testing remains available

People who do not have any covid symptoms are being encouraged to access a test to make sure they don't have the virus and are spreading it without knowing.

As lockdown eases, and we get to meet with family and friends again, it is vital that residents can be assured they are not carrying Covid-19 and spreading Covid-19 to family, friends or within the workplace.

The rapid Covid-19 testing bus will be at Attleborough Town Hall, Queen's Square until Saturday, 3 July (8am - 8pm), as part of the roving programme regularly moving around the district and county.

People without Covid-19 symptoms can simply drop into the centre and receive their lateral flow test as part of the asymptomatic programme. Alternatively, slots can be [pre-booked online](#).

Anybody who does have symptoms - a high temperature, a new, continuous cough, or a loss or change to sense of smell or taste - should instead book a test via the NHS or by calling 119.

NEW: Drop-in vaccination clinic now in Swaffham

People living in or near Swaffham who are 18+ and awaiting their first covid vaccination are able to make use of a temporary drop-in clinic. The team will be at Universal Pharmacy, Unit 21, Turbine Way, Swaffham PE37 7XD on Thursday, 1 July.

NEW: Get involved in 'Thank You Day' this weekend

'Thank You Day' is a national celebration which has been organised to thank everyone who's worked so hard to fight Covid-19 over the past fifteen months. It will take place on Sunday, 5 July.

It was the idea of thirteen individuals who've all been involved in fighting the pandemic – as healthcare professionals, as teachers, as community organisers and volunteers. The idea has grown into a national event supported by the NHS, the Royal Voluntary Service, local councils and schools, businesses and community groups.

Breckland Council will also be supporting Thank You Day on Sunday. As well as thanking our staff using our internal channels, we will be issuing thank you messages publicly via our social media on Sunday to thank the district's residents for following the rules to keep themselves and their neighbours safe, businesses for taking steps to protect staff and customers, as well as the local health and care workers, teachers, volunteers and others for the role they've played throughout the pandemic.

If you want to join in too, you can download graphics at www.thankyouday.org.uk/resources to post on social media, or you can post your own message or video using the hashtag #ThankYouDay this Sunday.

You can find out more at www.thankyouday.org.uk. Below is a ThankYouDay suggested agenda of activities, which you can read more about online. Please ensure you continue to follow social distancing at all times:

- 0900: Join in an hour's exercise across our country's green spaces, followed by a NCT picnic brunch to say thank you to our families, friends and volunteers.
- 1100: Take part in the UK's Power Hour litter pick with Keep Britain Tidy to say thank you to your local environment for keeping us sane during lockdown.
- 1300: Street party or picnic? You decide! Share friendship, food and fun to say thank you with your neighbours and community with a Big Lunch.
- 1500: Thank you for the Music! Dust off your instruments and warm up those vocal chords. Play or sing-a-long in a UK wide performance with your friends, local community or music group!
- 1700: Cheers for volunteers! Join us to raise a glass or a mug to everyone who has helped us through the past year by giving their time.
- 1900: BB-Thank-Q! The nation's biggest ever Cook Out led by Levi Roots. Share a BBQ with your neighbours and friends.

4. Breckland service updates

Enforcement

- There are currently 18 live investigations underway
- 2 requisition notices have been issued to the landowners either side of Safari Way to try and establish ownership/responsibility of the area. Response is due by 8 July

Environmental Services

- Hire of litter pick equipment has been further delayed in line with the revised Covid guidelines to July 19. The Team is continuing to support community groups with organised litter picks by providing bags and collecting waste after the event.
- Sandy Lane play area in Dereham remains closed while safety of play equipment is reviewed.

Environmental Health and Licensing

- Police have raised an objection to a premises licence application for premises in Thetford (Booze Plus). A Licensing hearing is to take place on 7 July.
- We now have two electric licensed vehicles in Breckland.
- Council teams are seeing an increase in Covid safety enquiries in light of remaining in Step 3
- Teams are doing a lot of resource-intensive work in respect of events, looking at event safety plans and engaging with event organisers as part of Safety Advisory group and multi-agency working with police, etc.

- The Covid Support Team has been supporting the vaccination buses in Thetford, working in partnership with the CCG.
- Leaflet drops in respect of DATS , Self-Isolation and Vaccination has taken place
- The Animal Licensing Officer has carried out several successful interventions
- We've seen an increased number of noise and disorder complaints from licensed premises, due to more customers being outdoors.
- The Covid Support team has also been carrying out some out-of-hrs support and monitoring work such as 2-wheel Tuesday, Old Buckenham.
- A number of Covid safety visits have been undertaken. Some issues have been identified re: lack of mask-wearing in barbers and close contact services, as well as some takeaways. This may have been exacerbated by hot weather.
- In line with recently published government guidance, physical inspections of high-risk food premises are currently under way. This will help to ensure there is no risk of outbreak and our communities are kept safe.

Breckland Council
30.06.21