

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Briefing for Breckland Council elected members (7 April 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	4
4. Breckland service updates	5

1. Recent Government advice/action

NEW: Further easing of Covid restrictions confirmed for 12 April

Outdoor hospitality will be among those [reopening in England next week](#) after the Prime Minister confirmed the [roadmap](#) is on track and planned easements can go ahead. Significant parts of the indoor economy and further outdoor settings will reopen from 12 April, after data confirmed the government's "four tests" for easing Covid restrictions had been met.

NEW: Twice weekly rapid testing to be available to everyone in England

Everyone in England will be able to access free, regular, rapid coronavirus testing from 9 April, the government has announced. In a significant step forward, which paves the way for businesses and society reopening, [anyone will be able to access free, rapid lateral flow tests](#) (LFDs) for themselves and their families to use twice a week, in line with clinical guidance.

NEW: 5 million people in the UK receive second dose of COVID-19 vaccine

More than [5 million people in the UK](#) have received their second dose of a coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine. Health services across the UK have now administered over 36.6 million vaccines between 8 December and 02 April, including over 31.4 million people with their first dose and over 5.2 million with their second. The milestone means nearly 1 in 10 of all UK adults have received both vaccines, ensuring maximum protection from the virus over the coming months.

NEW: Fresh wave of grant funding launched

Hard-pressed businesses across the economy will receive fresh support from the new £5 billion [Restart Grants scheme](#). Businesses in England in the non-essential retail sector will be eligible for [one-off grants of up to £6,000](#), while businesses in the hospitality, accommodation, leisure, personal care and gym sectors, which are reopening later, will be eligible for one-off grants of up to £18,000. The £5 billion of government funding available through the Restart Grants scheme will be delivered by local authorities. This is coupled with £425 million of top-up funding for the ongoing Additional Restrictions Grant scheme for councils to distribute to businesses in particularly urgent need of additional support – which could also be businesses who don't necessarily pay business rates like tour operators, B&Bs, caterers, freelancers and wedding service providers.

NEW: Recovery Loan Scheme launches

A new [government-backed loan scheme](#) has launched to provide additional finance to those businesses that need it. The Recovery Loan Scheme will ensure businesses continue to benefit from Government-guaranteed finance throughout 2021.

NEW: Countries added to red list to protect UK against variants of concern

Philippines, Pakistan, Kenya and Bangladesh have been added to [England's red list](#) to protect the country against new variants of coronavirus (COVID-19), at a critical time for the vaccine programme. The [additional restrictions](#) will help to reduce the risk of new variants – such as those first identified in South Africa (SA) and Brazil – entering England.

NEW: Bespoke testing regime unveiled for exempt international arrivals

The UK government has set out new details of a bespoke testing regime for [international arrivals](#) who will be exempt from quarantine for work purposes, including for hauliers arriving from outside the Common Travel Area into England.

NEW: WHO-convened COVID-19 origins study: joint statement

The governments of a number of countries, including United Kingdom, have issued a statement on the [origins of coronavirus](#).

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

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

2. Supporting businesses and employees

REMINDER: Business support remains available

If you know a business that needs financial support please ask them to engage via our [website](#) or by emailing us: 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.

We have now issued almost £50m in financial support since the start of the pandemic and want to make sure every business in Breckland that needs help, gets help – so please do flag any known issues to us.

UPDATED: Restart Grants

We are now able to pay businesses who meet the national eligibility for 'Restart' Grants and have issued almost £6.5m of grant monies. As with recent grant schemes, we are making payments automatically based on previously held data wherever possible, so most companies do not need to apply.

The amount of money a business can receive is based on nationally set criteria, which looks at both the type of business they run, and the rateable value of their premises (only businesses in rateable premises are eligible under this scheme, although this does include those in receipt of 100% rate relief):

Category	Eligible businesses include	Grants Available (based on RV)		
		<£15k	£15–51k	51k>
Non-essential retail	Retailers whose products are not necessary to the health and well-being of the public	£2,667	£4,000	£6,000
Hospitality & leisure	Hospitality, accommodation, leisure, personal care and gym business	£8,000	£12,000	£18,000

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.

Based on the gaps left from the LRS (Closed) policy we continue our complimentary set of support using Breckland’s discretionary resource. Under this approach, any business can apply if they are ineligible for LRS (Closed) and struggling.

We have reviewed our available funding against current applications and have extended this support to provide additional monies to all recipients to cover businesses through to restrictions lifting in the current roadmap. Eligibility and awards are grouped into four categories for the period 5th January - 15th February (with newly applied top ups shown in brackets):

- Businesses with high fixed property costs, who are forced to close (i.e. B&Bs) - £1,334 (topped up with £2,664)
- Businesses with high fixed property costs, who can still open but are struggling (i.e. supply chain, manufacturers) £1,000 (topped up with £2,001)
- Businesses with low / no fixed property costs, who are forced to close (i.e. regular market traders, hairdressers renting space) - £1,000 (topped up with £2,001)
- Businesses with low / no fixed property costs, who can still open but are struggling – (i.e. self-employed, open market traders) £667 (topped up with £1,335)

Any business can apply via: <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/article/16267/Covid-19-Business-Grant>

Current awards from Breckland now over £2.5m, supporting over 1,000 businesses.

UPDATED: Support for High Streets & Business Support through the reopening period.

The Prime Minister has confirmed the national roadmap out of restrictions is on track, and our “Spring Back” Programme is fully operation to support. Breckland businesses now able to access a further £2m of support which includes:

- **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 frontages.
- **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.
- **Covid Safe Scheme** – helping customers easily see the efforts businesses are making to ensure Covid safety, with a simple accreditation scheme delivered by Breckland Public Protection
- **Continued Investment in Shopper Safety** – with new and replacement hand sanitiser stations in all busy shopping areas, and friendly Covid Support Officers helping assure safety 6 days a week

- **Expanded Enjoy Discover Explore Campaign** – promoting and highlighting the local shopping and leisure offer across Breckland, with branding now bespoke to each Market Town
- **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.
- **Expanded enterprise and start-up scheme** – having already created 10 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.
- **Support grants for businesses outside of national schemes** – As part of commitment that no business in need goes unsupported, Breckland’s discretionary scheme extends grants to any Breckland-based-business ineligible under national schemes – including self-employed, market traders and mobile traders.

Information and applications can be found at - <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/businesssupport>

This programme was designed based on over 500 individual businesses input, and we are activity reviewing plans and programmes all the time. Should Members identify any issues they think we could be supporting, please let us know at regeneration@breckland.gov.uk

UPDATED: Town Delivery Plans

The Project is now live following appointment of a lead delivery partner. The next stage of activity is information gathering and planning, with the first major piece of work due to focus on Dereham. Further details will be provided ahead of this work shortly. Any questions can be addressed to the Project Team on tdps@breckland.gov.uk

3. Community Support

NEW: New Self isolation Support Operating model launches

Breckland Council and our partners are now offering a new support package for individuals who are required to self-isolate and need practical, social, or emotional support to do so.

The new Self isolation Support Operating model went live on 1 April and focuses on:

- Financial support for people on low incomes who are unable to work from home and will lose income through self-isolating.
- Practical, social, and emotional support for those who need it, organised by councils and community groups.
- Targeted enforcement of breaches of the legal requirement to self-isolate, as well as council enforcement against employers who pressure their employees to break self-isolation when they are required to do so.
- Communications to improve awareness of when people need to self-isolate, how long for, what this involves, its importance in stopping the spread of the virus, the support available and the consequences of breaking the rules.

With support from our Covid Support Officers, we will be making contact with residents required to self-isolate either by phone or by doorstep visit and are able to offer support to encourage adherence to self-isolation. Support available to residents self-isolating includes:

- Food and essential supplies
- Prescription collection
- Dog walking

- Helping if the resident has caring responsibilities
- Mental Health support (inc loneliness)
- Financial Support where they meet qualifying criteria

Members can still make direct referrals for residents in need of support by emailing communitysupport@breckland.gov.uk

REMINDER: Inspiring Communities support

Our £1m Inspiring Communities support is available for vulnerable people across the district. The programme focuses on helping people impacted by county lines drug and people trafficking, poor mental health, loneliness and isolation, and domestic abuse.

For more information on the services available, please visit our website <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/community-wellbeing>

NEW: Asymptomatic testing programme continues

Asymptomatic testing is continuing in the district and, to make tests as accessible as possible, the testing team is now accepting walk ups.

The team will be in Thetford, at The Carnegie:

6 April – 10am – 6pm	12 April – 9.30am – 5.30pm
7 April – 10am – 6pm	13 April – CLOSED
8 April – CLOSED	14 April – 9.30am – 5.30pm
9 April – 10am – 6pm	15 April – 9.30am – 5.30pm
10 April – 8am – 4pm	16 April – 9.30am – 5.30pm
11 April – CLOSED	17 April – 8am – 4pm

Around 1 in 3 people have coronavirus without displaying any symptoms so asymptomatic testing will help identify more positive cases and ensure those infected people isolate and stop spreading the virus.

The team is accepting walk-ups, though people can choose to book an appointment at www.norfolk.gov.uk/rapidtesting

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. You can see an overview of our [service updates on our website](#).

REMINDER: Businesses invited to apply for a Covid Safe Scheme assessment

Businesses are being encouraged to put themselves forward for an assessment under our new Covid Safe Scheme. The accreditation scheme is to recognise businesses which have taken significant steps to be covid compliant. We will be assessing for covid high standards and giving successful businesses a window sticker to demonstrate to shoppers that they can shop with confidence and with safety in mind. The scheme is rolling out in line with easing of restrictions on high street trading and will be publicised over the coming weeks. [Apply online](#).

