

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Briefing for Breckland Council elected members (12 May 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	3
3. Community Support	5
4. Breckland service updates	7

1. Recent Government advice/action

NEW: Further easing of COVID restrictions confirmed for 17 May

The Roadmap is on track and planned [Step 3 easements will go ahead](#) on 17 May, the Prime Minister has confirmed. The data shows that the government's "four tests" for easing restrictions have been met. Infection rates are at their lowest level since September, while hospital admissions and patients in hospital continue to decrease - with levels now similar to July last year. From the 17 May, the majority of the indoor and remaining outdoor economy can reopen, and gathering limits will increase indoors and outdoors. Guidance for close contact between friends and family will be updated, with people exercising their own personal judgement in line with the risks.

NEW: COVID-19 vaccines: further evidence of success

New Public Health England (PHE) analysis shows for the first time that individuals who receive a single dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine have approximately [80% lower risk of death with COVID-19](#) compared with unvaccinated individuals. The report also shows protection against death from the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine rises from approximately 80% after one dose to 97% after 2 doses. Separate new PHE analysis also confirms the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is highly effective in reducing the risk of hospitalisation, especially in older ages.

NEW: Two-thirds of UK adults receive first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine

Two-thirds of UK adults have [received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine](#). Health services across the UK have now administered a total of 51.8 million vaccines between 8 December and 7 May, including 35 million people with their first dose (66.6%) and 16.7 million with their second (31.8%). The government met its target of vaccinating the most vulnerable by 15 April, and remains on track to offer a first dose to all adults by the end of July.

NEW: Statement on AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine following JCVI update

The government has issued a statement saying 'the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is safe, effective and has already saved thousands of lives in the UK and around the world', following updated advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-on-astrazeneca-covid-19-vaccine-following-jcvi-update>

NEW: MHRA response to JCVI advice on COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca for people aged under 40

Dr June Raine, MHRA Chief Executive, has issued a statement following the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's new advice. An [extract of the full statement](#) states: 'Our position remains that the benefits of the COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca against COVID-19, with its associated risk of hospitalisation and death, continue to outweigh the risks for the vast majority of people. The balance of benefits and risks is very favourable for older people but is more finely balanced for younger people and we advise that this evolving evidence should be taken into account when considering the use of the vaccine, as JCVI has done.'

NEW: More restrictions eased for care homes

From Monday 17 May care home residents will be able to have [more named visitors](#) and more opportunities to make visits out with no need to self-isolate when they return. Named family members or friends will be able to visit their loved ones in care homes will be increased from 2 to 5, as the visiting restrictions continue to ease. A maximum of 2 visitors will be allowed at any one time or on any given day.

NEW: All remaining university students to return to in-person teaching from 17 May

Alongside the [launch of a new employment and skills guide](#), it has been confirmed that all remaining students can return to in-person teaching from the 17 May. Some students, including those doing practical courses such as science and engineering, and who need to access specialist facilities and equipment, are already back on campus.

NEW: Government confirms traffic light list ahead of cautious return to international travel

[International travel can begin to safely reopen](#) from 17 May, allowing people to go on foreign holidays to green list countries. The 'Stay in the UK' regulation will lift on 17 May, meaning leisure travel from England will no longer be illegal. However, strict border control measures will remain in place as international travel gradually resumes. Different levels of restriction will be applied to individuals returning to England from countries based on the traffic light system set out by the Global Travel Taskforce.

NEW: More life-saving support for India on its way from UK

The world's largest cargo plane has flown from Belfast, carrying three 18-tonne oxygen generators and 1,000 ventilators as part of the [UK's latest response to India's COVID-19 crisis](#). Airport staff worked through the night to load the life-saving kit, funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), aboard the massive Antonov 124 aircraft. Each of the 3 oxygen generation units – the size of 40 foot freight containers – produces 500 litres of oxygen per minute, enough for 50 people to use at a time. They are expected to reach India on Sunday morning, where the Indian Red Cross will help transfer them to hospitals.

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 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.

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.

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>

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 1,250 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 frontage. Claims of £10,000 received to date.
- **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. Claims of £50,000 received to date.
- **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. Claims of £86,000 received to date.
- **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. Claims of £90,000 received.
- **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.

UPDATED: Growth Programme

- **Town Delivery Plans – the ‘Future Breckland’ Project** - The Project is now live following appointment of a lead delivery partner. For it to more easily resonate with different audiences, the project will now be working under a new title ‘Future Breckland: Thriving People & Places’. 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 made on the project [website](#). Any questions can be addressed to the Project Team on tdps@breckland.gov.uk. The Dereham Project is now fully live and well into engagement and information gathering. The Dereham survey open to all now [live on our web pages](#). Since launching the survey there have been 55 responses to date, 90% of which from residents. Dereham 1:1 engagement sessions have now commenced and meet the Team event delivered, 10 May, with 49 people in attendance.
- **Snetterton Power & Masterplanning** – 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.
- **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.

3. Community Support

NEW: Breckland supports Mental health Awareness Week

Breckland Council is encouraging people to get out and about in the district, enjoying nature, and taking advantage of the many health benefits that being outside and close to nature brings, as part of Mental Health Awareness Week 2021.

The council is also reminding people of the support available through its Inspiring Communities programme, a £1 million investment supporting projects that assist residents with mental health concerns, as well as tackling domestic violence, social isolation, or the impact of County Lines people and drug trafficking.

To find out more about Breckland Council's Inspiring Communities programme and how its partners are helping residents, visit [Inspiring Communities](#)

UPDATED: Converted testing bus coming to Thetford

People in Breckland who do not have coronavirus symptoms continue to be encouraged to access a free test, to make sure they don’t have the virus without knowing it and are inadvertently spreading it to loved ones.

The asymptomatic testing programme has been moving to sites across our district for a number of weeks now and our area is among the first in the county to now offer tests via a fleet of specially converted mobile clinical buses.

Each bus has the capacity to undertake up to 100 observed rapid tests a day. Observed tests are where people swab themselves under the guidance of a trained operator who then processes the test, reads the result and records it.

People may want to get an observed test because: it is more likely to get an accurate result as a trained operator is present; they're simple and supervised to help get it right; people just need to turn up or book at a site; the team register the test onto the national NHS Test and Trace system.

One of the testing buses will be in Thetford soon. Testing will be available either via a static venue or mobile bus at:

Dereham:

Dereham Baptist Church, Norwich Street, NR19 1BX

- Weekdays to Friday 14 May

Watton:

Tesco supermarket car park, Thetford Road, Watton, IP25 6BQ

- Wednesday, 12 May
- Thursday, 13 May
- Friday, 14 May
- Saturday, 15 May

Thetford:

Sainsburys car park, Forest Retail Park, London Rd, Thetford, IP24 3QL

- Tuesday, 18 May- Saturday, 22 May
- Tuesday, 25 May – Saturday, 29 May

To make tests as accessible as possible, people will be able to walk-up without an appointment. Alternatively, people can check open times and book an appointment slot at www.norfolk.gov.uk/rapidtesting. Note last admission will be 30 minutes before closing. Latest opening times are available at the above link.

REMINDER: Self isolation Support available

People required to self-isolate can access practical, social, or emotional support to do so from Breckland Council or its partners.

The new Self isolation Support operating model 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.

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

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](#).

This includes physical food hygiene inspections, which have seen 124 premises assessed so far this year. Team members are dealing with several premises where major hygiene improvements have been noted, and reinspection of the establishments are necessary.

In addition, the Planning Team have considered and responded to 92 consultations since the beginning of April with a further eight still being reviewed.

NEW: Crackdown on flytipping continues

Breckland Council's ongoing crackdown on flytipping continues, despite the pandemic. In the latest case, two individuals have each been issued a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) of £300, with a second FPN for £300 issued to another individual for Duty of Care.

It comes after the council's Communications Team received a message from a member of the public on 26 April from a resident at Lovell Gardens in Watton regarding a fly-tip which had taken place. As part of the investigation, the council's Enforcement Officer found evidence linking the flytip to a nearby address and this led to the FPNs being issued within a fortnight of the incident.

Residents continue to be encouraged to report [flytipping issues via our website](#).

NEW: Covid officers supporting safe easing of restrictions

Our Covid Support Officers are helping to keep people safe by patrolling our towns and responding to a number of queries around developing guidance and legislation. The team is also investigating any alleged breaches of covid legislation within the community.

The Covid Safe Scheme is continuing, and officers are seeking expressions of interest from business owners around the district.

The whole team were involved in checking and assisting at the polling stations on election day, providing advice and support where needed. They managed to visit most of the polling stations and check in with the polling staff. They also provided a presence at the Count on Friday, marshalling and patrolling outside.

Breckland Council
12.05.21