

# Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## Briefing for Breckland Council elected members (16 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: Prime Minister confirms delay in easing of restrictions**

As you will have seen from national news, the Prime Minister has announced that the easing of lockdown has been delayed by four weeks. The Government had hoped to remove all legal limits on social contact from 21 June, but this has now been put back to Monday 19 July – although a review will take place in a fortnight.

This decision has been taken because of concerns over the rising number of cases of the ‘delta’ variant of the virus; the extra time will give Health services a few more weeks to vaccinate as many people as possible.

It means that the most recent restrictions remain in place, including:

- limits on the number of people who can mix indoors and outdoors
- pubs, clubs, theatres and cinemas still have to operate within capacity limits
- limits on the numbers of people allowed to attend sports events

#### **What does this mean for Breckland Council?**

Service delivery remains unaffected, with officers continuing to support the council, our businesses and our communities. As such, the vast majority of officers will continue to work flexibly: working remotely and/or out in the community and carry out inspections, depending on the needs of their customers and the nature of their work.

The Council’s committee meetings will continue to be held face to face, in line with national Covid safety guidance. This includes the upcoming Cabinet meeting which is due to take place at our refurbished Conference Centre. For larger meetings due to take place before 19 July, such as Planning and Full Council, we are reviewing options for holding these in alternative venues in the district to ensure we can comply with social distancing guidance. Wherever possible, meetings will continue to be streamed online via our corporate YouTube channel so members of the public can view these meetings taking place.

We are also progressing plans to reopen our office's Reception to Customer and Housing customers in line with the easing of lockdown restrictions, which means we will aim for this to take place from 19 July (subject to restrictions easing as currently planned).

### **What this means for our district**

Restrictions remaining in place for at least a few more weeks will naturally impact on our communities and our businesses, so we will continue to offer support wherever we can.

In particular, our Covid Officers continue to have a visible presence on our high streets, ensuring residents are clear on restrictions and are following social distancing guidance. The team will also be engaging with hospitality venues, such as pubs and restaurants, to ensure they continue to follow social distancing and capacity limit guidance to keep our communities safe.

Similarly, our Regeneration Team are supporting a range of local businesses, including seeking guidance on the impact on wedding venues which may have anticipated the imminent easing of restrictions.

### **NEW: Oral statement on easing of coronavirus restrictions**

A speech on the easing of [coronavirus restrictions](#) was made by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care in the House of Commons.

### **NEW: Sir Richard Sykes appointed chair of Vaccine Taskforce**

The UK government has appointed Sir Richard Sykes as the new chair of the [Vaccine Taskforce](#).

### **NEW: Care home residents can stay overnight as visiting restrictions ease.**

Care home residents will be able to spend more time with [family and friends](#), as visiting restrictions are eased.

### **NEW: Vaccination programme accelerated as Step 4 is paused.**

Step 4 will be delayed by up to four weeks and the vaccination programme accelerated to respond to the rapid spread of the [Delta variant](#).

### **NEW: PM statement at coronavirus press conference: 14 June 2021**

Prime Minister Boris Johnson made a statement at the coronavirus [press conference](#).

### **NEW: Exam Procedures Review Service (EPRS) in Summer 2021 – consultation**

Ofqual has today (14 June) published a [consultation on proposed changes to the Terms of Reference for EPRS](#) which will affect relevant qualifications awarded in summer 2021-only. EPRS considers whether an awarding organisation followed an appropriate process when it determined the learner's result and when it considered any review or appeal in respect of that result.

### **NEW: The Queen's Birthday Honours List 2021**

The [Queen's Birthday Honours List 2021](#) recognises the extraordinary efforts made by individuals in all four nations of the United Kingdom during the pandemic.

### **NEW: Over 70 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine administered in UK**

More than 55.4% of people in the UK vaccinated with both doses for the [fullest possible protection](#).

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

Public Health England (PHE) is releasing [weekly updates](#) on the number of confirmed new cases of variants of concern and variants under investigation identified in the UK, with [PHE figures](#) showing that cases have risen by 29,892 to 42,323. The data indicates that over 90% of new COVID-19 cases in the UK are now the Delta variant, which continues to show a significantly [higher rate of growth compared to the Alpha variant](#).

**NEW: Weekly national flu and COVID-19 surveillance reports published**

National influenza and COVID-19 report, monitoring coronavirus (COVID-19) [activity, seasonal flu and other seasonal respiratory illnesses](#).

## 2. Supporting businesses and employees

**Reminder – if you know a business that needs financial support:**

Please ask them to engage via <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/article/15960/Grant-Information> - or directly to [regeneration@breckland.gov.uk](mailto: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 £7.1m 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>
<b>Non-essential retail</b>	Retailers whose products are not necessary to the health and well-being of the public	£2,667	£4,000	£6,000
<b>Hospitality &amp; leisure</b>	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> **The application closing date for the Restart Grant is 30 June 2021.**

### **Additional Restrictions Grants – Breckland’s discretionary policy**

Based on the gaps left from the LRS (Closed) policy we continue our complimentary set of support grants 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 and are being reviewed under two periods: 5 January - 15 February and 16 February – 12 April.

DESCRIPTION/BUSINESS CATEGORY	AWARDS (5 JAN – 15 FEB)	AWARDS (16 FEB – 12 APR)
Businesses with high fixed property costs, who are forced to close (i.e., B&Bs)	£2,001	£2,668
Businesses with high fixed property costs, who can still open but are struggling (i.e., supply chain, manufacturers)	£1,500	£2,001
Businesses with low / no fixed property costs, who are forced to close (i.e., regular market traders, hairdressers renting space)	£1,500	£2,001
Businesses with low / no fixed property costs, who can still open but are struggling – (i.e., self-employed, open market traders)	£1,001	£1,334

Business can apply direct on our [website](#). Current awards from Breckland now over £2.3m, supporting over 1,250 businesses.

### **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 21 businesses totalling £46,000 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 33 businesses totalling just over £86,000 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 76 businesses totalling just over £180,000 with further applications progressing forward.

- **Expanded enterprise and start-up scheme** – having already created 18 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 businesses totalling just over £92,000 with a further £113,000 allocated to applications progressing forward.

## **Growth Programme**

### Town Delivery Plans – the ‘Future Breckland’ Project

The Project is now live following appointment of a lead delivery partner. For it to resonate with different audiences more easily, the project will now be working under a new title ‘Future Breckland: Thriving People & Places.

The Dereham Project is now fully live and well into engagement and information gathering. To date we have held extensive 1:1s and group engagements with key stakeholders, as well as several public forum events helping define the current strengths, opportunities, and weaknesses in Dereham. Engagement is ongoing, and the Dereham online survey - open to all - can be found [here](#)

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](mailto: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 Southeast 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).
- **Affordable Housing** - Projecting 141 new affordable homes 21/22.
- **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

#### **NEW: Breckland Mental Health Community Partnership (BMHCP)**

Our communities are the eyes and ears of the district. A network of potential wellbeing champions providing places and spaces for people to belong, connect, and find purpose in.

The BMHCP recognises the role of these groups and organisations, and we want to help them to feel more confident to help others and engage in meaningful conversations that can and will lead to the right ongoing support. By providing the right training and encouraging conversations about Mental Health, we hope to break down barriers and reduce the stigma.

#### **Aim**

To provide Community-based Mental Health Awareness training to community organisations, grass roots groups and small businesses so that they are more confident and skilled in having meaningful conversations with people needing support to improve their Mental Health.

To provide opportunities for vulnerable residents to reconnect with their communities as a means of reducing the isolation, loneliness and disconnection that comes with Mental Health issues and to be signposted effectively and at the earliest opportunity to the relevant local Mental Health support services.

#### **Outcomes**

To create a network of:

- 100 BMHCP Champions active in small local businesses (Under 10 employees\*).
- 100 BMHCP Champions active in local community groups and organisations.
- 50 BMHCP First Aiders active in rural industries

#### **Partners**

- **Breckland Council** will coordinate and promote the BMHCP network.
- **Norfolk and Waveney MIND** will be commissioned to lead on education, training, and retention on champions from the Small Business community.
- **NSFT Wellbeing Service** will lead on education, training, and retention of champions from community organisations.
- **YANA** will lead on the education, training, and retention of champions from Rural Industry.

For more information and to be notified of upcoming courses, please email [community@breckland.gov.uk](mailto:community@breckland.gov.uk)

## 4. Breckland service updates

### Environmental Enforcement

- Nine FPN's (fixed penalty notices) were issued w/c 7.6.21 to seven households/individuals - the most we have issued in one week. They mainly relate to fly-tipping including seven in Thetford. One FPN was in relation to duty of care (Elizabeth House), with a driver and passenger discarding domestic waste into our commercial waste bins, ignoring all posters and signage. Two FPNs were also issued for Duty of Care to two individuals in Lovell Gardens, Watton

### Environmental Health, Licensing and Covid Support

- Private water supply sampling is recommencing this week.
- Increased number of Temporary Event Notices are being received.
- General discussions and planning underway with County Social Distancing Group, police and licensed premises regarding the UEFA European Championship and further easing of restrictions.
  - We now have 2 fully electric vehicles licensed with us.
  - The team has received six new premises licence applications in the last month.
  - The Covid Safe Scheme is continuing, and officers are seeking expressions of interest from business owners around the district. To date over 100 premises have attained accreditation. We will soon be doing a press release regarding our '100<sup>th</sup> business'
- Over 63 Health & Safety spot checks have been carried out in accordance with the Health & Safety Executive guidance

### Emergency Planning/Covid Response

- DAT testing this week - w/c 14.6.21, there is testing on the Abbey Estate in Thetford and at Morrisons car park in Dereham. Testing will remain in Dereham at Morrisons car park w/c 21.6.21.
  - A Vaccination Bus is coming to Thetford: 18 June, Ladies Estate; 25 June, Abbey Estate; and 26 June, Pine Close Estate.

### Leisure

Dereham and Thetford leisure centres remain open to the public with Covid controls and social distancing measures in place. This has reduced the available capacity at the sites and the leisure operator continues to review the programme of activities and available sessions to maximise usage.

Swimming lessons have proven popular at both sites with additional sessions being programmed to accommodate demand. Both sites have seen old members re-join and new members take out memberships. Booking of activities is available online or by phone to manage and monitor numbers.

Overall usage dropped slightly in the last month; this is likely to be in part due to the school holidays (seasonal trend) and in part due to the warm weather encouraging more outdoor activity.

**Breckland Council**  
**16.06.21**