

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Briefing for Breckland Council elected members (14 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.

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1. Recent Government advice/action

NEW: UK moves into next phase of vaccine roll-out as government target hit early

Everybody in cohorts 1 to 9 have been [offered a vaccine](#), with people aged 45 to 49 now invited to book their appointments. The UK is moving into the next phase of the COVID-19 vaccination programme as the government hits its target to offer everybody in phase 1 of the vaccination programme a jab.

NEW: COVID-19 vaccines have prevented 10,400 deaths in older adults

Public Health England (PHE) analysis indicates that the [COVID-19 vaccination programme prevented 10,400 deaths](#) in those aged 60 and older in England up to the end of March, an additional 4,300 since the previous update. From 8 December 2020 to the end of March 2021, over 15 million vaccine doses were given to adults aged 60 and over.

NEW: Findings from the latest COVID-19 REACT-1 study published

Findings from the 10th report of REACT-1, one of the country's largest studies into COVID-19 infections in England, have been published by Imperial College London and Ipsos MORI. Over 140,000 volunteers were tested in England between 11 to 30 March 2021 as part of one of the most significant COVID-19 studies in the world. The [findings show infections fell](#) by approximately 60% from the last REACT study in February, with only 1 in 500 people infected.

NEW: MHRA issues new advice on vaccine and blood clots

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency is advising the [benefits of vaccination continue to outweigh any risks](#). The MHRA is not recommending age restrictions in COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca vaccine use, but the MHRA advises careful consideration be given to people who are at higher risk of specific types of blood clots because of their medical condition.

NEW: New campaign urges public to get tested twice a week

Everyone in England can now [access free, regular, rapid COVID-19 testing](#). Alongside the roll-out of the vaccine, regular testing is an essential part of the easing of restrictions, helping identify variants and stopping individual cases from becoming outbreaks. Anyone can now access free, rapid lateral flow tests for themselves and their families to use twice a week, in line with clinical guidance.

NEW: Global Travel Taskforce sets out framework to safely reopen international travel

A [framework to chart the safe return of international travel](#) has been set out by the Transport Secretary. A [traffic light system](#), which will categorise countries based on risk alongside the restrictions required for travel, will be set up to protect the public and the vaccine rollout from international COVID-19 variants. Key factors in the assessment will include: the percentage of their population that have been vaccinated; the rate of infection; the prevalence of variants of concern; the country's access to reliable scientific data; and genomic sequencing.

NEW: £18 million announced for cycle training for children and their families

As COVID-19 restrictions lift, investment is being made in a Bikeability cycling proficiency training scheme so that more people can [feel confident cycling](#). £18 million will be available for cycle training across the country to ensure children and their families have the confidence to choose active travel, as the government encourages everyone to choose to walk or cycle where possible.

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 have been 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 5 January - 15 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 in full operation to support this. Breckland businesses are 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 awarded 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 £45,000 awarded 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 £61,000 awarded 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 £39,000 awarded.
- **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 to reflect the input over 500 individual businesses, and we are actively 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: Updated National Guidance

Now we are in "Step 2" of the national roadmap out of restrictions, the following rules have been adjusted in terms of businesses:

- **Retail** - All retail is now permitted to open. Toilets and other essential facilities within these premises (such as those for breastfeeding) should be kept open and carefully managed. Fitting rooms can also open. Door-to-door sales can take place, however, should take place outdoors (salespersons should not enter people's homes) and people should maintain social distancing at all times.

- **Hospitality** - The following hospitality venues are required to close indoor parts of their premises:

- restaurants
- pubs
- bars, including those in hotels or members' clubs
- social clubs
- cafes and canteens

These premises may open to serve customers outdoors. In venues that serve alcohol, customers must order, eat and drink while seated. In other venues, customers can order at a counter, but must eat and drink while seated. Payment should also be taken at the table or at another outdoor location.

- **Accommodation** - Self-contained holiday accommodation may open. All other holiday accommodation must remain closed.

- **Personal Care facilities and close contact services** - Permitted to open.

- **Sports and leisure** - Indoor and outdoor sports and leisure facilities can open. However, steam rooms and saunas must remain closed. You can exercise outdoors in a group of 6 or a larger group of any size from up to 2 households (including their support bubbles, if eligible). You can also take part in formally organised outdoor sports with any number of people. This must be organised by a business, charity or public body. Indoor group classes must not go ahead unless they form children's sports or are part of formal education or training. Disabled sport, both indoor and outdoor, may also take place.

This information is not exhaustive and extended details can be found [here](#)

UPDATED: Growth Programme

- **Town Delivery Plans2** - 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
- **Snetterton Power & Masterplanning** – we have recently achieved planning consent for the new substation and presently await a firm price from UKPN for the construction cost.
- **Thetford HIF** – the design stage has now concluded, and we are starting to receive Balfour Beatty's commercial offer and have commenced a detailed review.

3. Community Support

UPDATED: Asymptomatic testing coming to Swaffham

Asymptomatic testing will be offered in Swaffham from next week. The team will be providing tests from The Assembly Rooms from 19 April, through to 24 April. The team will be operating in Thetford until 17 April.

To make tests as accessible as possible, people will be able to walk-up without an appointment. Alternatively, people can choose to book an appointment slot at www.norfolk.gov.uk/rapidtesting

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.

- Thetford, The Carnegie:
14 April – 9.30am – 5.30pm
15 April – 9.30am – 5.30pm
16 April – 9.30am – 5.30pm
17 April – 8am – 4pm
- Swaffham, The Assembly Rooms
19 April – 8am - 4pm
20 April – 8am - 4pm
21 April – 8am - 4pm
22 April – 8am - 4pm
23 April – No testing
24 April – 8am - 4pm

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

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>

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](#).

NEW: Covid Support Officers support easing of restrictions

Our Covid Support Officers have been supporting the reopening of the high streets and easing of restrictions. This includes:

- Raising awareness of the council's 'spring back' campaign – support for businesses - with local traders.
- Providing covid-safe opportunities for Breckland's Cabinet to directly support high street reopening – eg. joint patrols with Police, promote covid safe scheme and present accreditation etc.
- Responding to a number of enquiries relating to easing of restrictions.

Breckland Council
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