



District Councillors report to Parish Councils

10th July 2020

Cllr Colin Hedgley

Cllr Tony Fryatt

Supporting our market towns

The Coronavirus pandemic has had a devastating effect on communities regionally, nationally and globally. In East Suffolk we have been more fortunate than other parts of the country in relation to the number of people who have directly suffered with the virus. However, there is no doubt whatsoever that the pain of the economic downturn caused by COVID-19 has been felt just as fiercely here as elsewhere.

Businesses are struggling and high streets throughout the district are desperate to return to some kind of normality. We are proud of the effort of our dedicated teams, and councillors, who have worked round the clock to support our local businesses - and we have provided a wide range of financial support to help them through this horrendous period.

However, we know that there is more that we can do to inject life in to our high streets where it is most needed. One of the ways we can do this is to make it much easier for our market towns to set up community events, with stalls, fairs and market traders, quickly and safely.

Some towns in our District are subject to street trading regulations. However, we will be taking the view that these community events, in market towns, do not need a street trading consent, and fall outside of the policy which we have. We want to encourage these outdoor events, during the summer months, and we want to make sure that they can be organised with a 'light touch' approach.

For a Community Event, all we need is for the organiser to complete a simple application form for a Single Event Street Trading Licence (which can be used on multiple days), provide food safety information on what each stall will be selling and Public Liability insurance for the event. We do not need to consult with third parties, and there will be no fee. Our Licensing team are committed to turning around such applications within 24 hours.

This would be on top of the decisions we have already taken to support local businesses including waiving Pavement Licence fees (of up to £100) for premises to put stalls, tables and chairs on the highway adjacent to their premises; and not requiring a minor variation of Premises Licences (£89 fee) which indicates the land that premises have designated for the consumption of off-sales.

As a Council, the last thing we want to do is make it harder for events to take place to boost our high streets. Hopefully, this will now give the green light to a range of activities over the summer which will help breathe life back in to our fantastic market towns.



Communities and supporting residents

Many of our 25 Grandpads are now with their recipients and very happy they look with them too! The Communities Team have either been delivering themselves and getting the users set up or working with local community groups who have agreed to provide some support. We have also secured some funding from Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG to purchase 50 additional Grandpads for the south of the District and are trying hard to secure similar funding for the north of the District. We know that we will have no problem finding people who would benefit from the digital connectivity and access to services that Grandpads can provide.

Home but not Alone

The number of referrals through Home But Not Alone dropped again last week to 36, with 27 of these in the Lowestoft and Northern parishes area. We are working with partners to agree what elements of the service should be retained when the Government support for the shielded group ends on 31st July and trying to ensure that people have a way of accessing food and medication after that date.

The extensive network of community groups across the District continue to support people and many are looking at continuing in one form or another which is great news. We can't reiterate again what a partnership effort the response in East Suffolk has been and the Communities Team is currently contacting all of the groups that they are working with to capture their data so that we can present the full picture in a lessons learned report.

The Community Partnerships start meeting again (virtually) next week, kicked off by Beccles, Bungay and Halesworth CP on Monday and Lowestoft and Northern Parishes CP on Wednesday.

Grants, funding and business matters

Reopening High Streets Safer Fund

The ED team have continued to work with Environmental Health and the Funding team to deliver the towns resources requests. Due to the complexities of the fund (ERDF) it has not been a straightforward process. After going through all the requirements of the fund regarding eligibility and procurement the following items have been delivered to the town councils.

- Social distance pavement stickers
- Pavement signage stencils and paint
- Hazard Tape
- Barriers for queuing management

The following items are on order

- Skipper cone unit for queuing management (delivery has been delayed due to a national shortage of supplies and now expected in a week or so).
- Hand sanitiser stations and refills (delivery expected in just over a week).

Safety PR campaign messages and design work are currently in the commissioning process.



Smart Towns

The Smart Towns project was approved and a budget ringfenced by cabinet this week. The project team is now working closely with Procurement to get the frameworks ready for various elements of the project. Firstly, the framework for the Town Tech rollout (the infrastructure) which will work as a component procurement structure so we can draw down elements to suit each town. Secondly to launch a Digital First Aid package (ideally by September). This will comprise of two elements – a 3-month pilot of a Digital Advice Service which will be combined with a small business grants scheme. The service and grants will be aimed at the hospitality and retail (small business) sector, and it aims to support businesses making steps to digitally adapt to the current Covid-19 climate. In addition, further project housekeeping has occurred to start considering the most appropriate procurement framework for the Springboard, and to start mapping the project's marketing requirements. In addition, work has started on town information packs.

Business Association Development Fund (BADF)

A total of £5,140 has now been allocated to business associations across East Suffolk under the Business Association Development Fund (BADF). The funding has been spent on a range of projects including a number of covid-19 related response activities.

This has included zoom licences for all Felixstowe Chamber members to enable them to continue meeting/networking, the enhancement of the 'Welcome to Bungay' message for new businesses to the town as well as improve how local retailers and market traders were promoted. Also additional signs and hand sanitiser stations around Framlingham market as well as updates on the www.framlingham.com website and targeted promotion of the #staylocalchoosewoodbridge campaign by Choose Woodridge.

Environmental Health

Last weekend saw the easing of restrictions, allowing pubs, restaurants and cafes to open. New government guidance on Covid secure requirements in these settings was published and the Environmental Health and Licensing Team sent letters to over 1,000 businesses in the hospitality sector advising them of the new requirements and some spot check calls were carried out to ensure businesses had understood and implemented the advice.

Officers from the Food & Safety and Environmental Protection teams were on standby on the weekend and the Noise Control Service was also active on the Friday and Saturday evenings. No complaints were received specifically about noise over the weekend but observations carried out in response to a complaint about lack of social distancing at a pub in Lowestoft did identify a noise problem and the police were called to the area to deal with a public order issue.

Our local approach to Test & Trace continues to be refined and desktop exercises are to be organised to test our plans. A public facing dashboard with data on local Covid cases went live this week and can be found on the Healthy Suffolk website page .