



District Councillors Report

25 July 2020

CLlr Colin Hedgley

CLlr Tony Fryatt

Communities and supporting residents

- Only 22 referrals through the Home But Not Alone line last week – 1 each in Kesgrave/Martlesham and Melton/Woodbridge Community Partnership areas, 5 in Felixstowe and 15 in Lowestoft.
- The running total of East Suffolk referrals is now 1,814 – around a third of these were from people who are shielding.
- The government's shielding service is pausing on 31st July and as a result, Suffolk's HBNA service is currently being reviewed. We will of course continue to provide support to people in need after this date, however this may be provided in a different way.
- Almost all of our Grandpads have now been distributed to people across the District without access to WiFi and a PC/tablet/laptop – we have heard lots of touching stories about what a difference they have made.
- There is now less than £15,000 left in the Hardship Fund – a full report on the groups supported will be available in the next couple of weeks.

Grants, funding and business matters

Applications for Covid 19 related business grants have slowed down considerably. As of 17 July we had issued grants to over 5,500 local businesses and totalling over £63.1m. Funds within the discretionary scheme are anticipated to be fully allocated shortly and therefore we will be issuing comms setting out how successful the scheme has been in supporting local businesses but also urging those organisations who believe they are eligible but have not yet applied to do so as soon as possible. The Council has taken a highly discretionary and permissive approach as well as focussing on those businesses in the greatest need to ensure as many local organisations benefit as possible.

The team continue to deliver products and support to our town centres through the Reopening High Streets Safely Fund, however the majority of interventions associated with this fund have now been delivered. A number of towns agreed road closures with ourselves and SCC to support safe reopening and work continues with two more towns to look at highways/ pavement changes to continue to support safe reopening. One further strand of work being considered is the temporary employment of business information officers that



can provide ongoing safety advice for our town centre businesses. The demand and feasibility to deliver this will be determined shortly.

Recovery

The LEP launched the Norfolk and Suffolk Visitor Economy Recovery Plan this week. East Suffolk Council have been a key partner in the development of this plan and will continue to be so during its delivery. The importance of the East Suffolk visitor economy cannot be underestimated both locally but also regionally and therefore this plan has a significant programme of initiatives designed to revitalise our sector.

The Lowestoft Town Centre Masterplan has now been completed and this sets out an ambitious vision for the future of this struggling high street. This plan recognises the need for fundamental change so that the high street remains relevant to its local community, businesses, residents and visitors alike and as such it promotes a much wider range of uses to enhance footfall and dwell time such as increased residential, leisure, community, educational and commercial uses alongside a more compact and refreshed retail offer. The masterplan forms a key part of the wider Lowestoft Town Investment Plan, which sets out a long-term delivery plan for regeneration and development across the town and this will be finalised in the Autumn. Together these documents provide a strong blueprint to support the recovery of the town.

Work begins next month on a new iconic café/ community venue in Felixstowe's Martello Park area. The new facility is due to be completed for next year's summer season and will be a fantastic addition to the towns already very strong tourism offer and in particular will enhance the south seafront area. This, along with other initiatives such as the proposed Business Improvement District, ongoing plans for the North Felixstowe Garden Neighbourhood should provide confidence that despite the Covid impact investment in the town's infrastructure remains strong.

Environmental Health

Test & Trace

The government has introduced new legislation, The Public Health (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No3) Regulations 2020, vesting powers with the Director of Public Health to close or place restrictions in premises, on events and in public outdoor places where there is a serious and imminent risk to public health. The powers can be used to prevent, protect, control or respond to infection and must be proportionate to the risk identified. These new powers go some way to address the concerns raised by the Council about the limitations of existing powers.



Operational updates

Refuse collection

We are continuing to work with Norse to look at how we can return to 'normal' crew working: that is, three in a cab instead of two, and ending Saturday green bin collections. We are liaising with Norse to see how we can do this in a way that is in accordance with government guidance, and are targeting a date of the end of August for this.

Leisure Centres

We are working with our leisure providers to ensure that leisure centres can open as soon as possible. At the moment, this is looking like an early August opening. Details are being finalised around how operators will be able to open facilities safely. There will be some impacts on customers in terms of the facilities that are available to use – at least in the short term.

Jubilee North public conveniences

We completed – ahead of schedule – a refurbishment of the toilet facilities at Jubilee North PCs, on Lowestoft Seafront. The toilets have been upgraded to include materials that are both easy to clean, and that offer protection from viral transmission. Where possible, all sinks and taps are 'touch free' in their operation. The project was delivered on budget and points the way to the specification that we will need to adhere to in the future.

Full Council Meeting

On Wednesday 22nd July we held the first Full Council Meeting since lockdown. It was of course held electronically and tested both the systems, procedures and councillors to the limit. There were a few gremlins at work but on the whole it was satisfactory. The new funding for Lowestoft was discussed and a presentation of the plans to regenerate Lowestoft town centre were well received. All council meetings can be witnessed live by the public on Youtube. Recordings of past meetings are also available. Just enter Youtube on your browser, then enter East Suffolk Council and then select the meeting of your choice. The whole of the full council meeting of last Wednesday (three hours) is there if you have the time!

Colin Hedgley

Tony Fryatt