

# District Councillors Report to Parish Councils.

June 29<sup>th</sup> 2020

## Communities and supporting residents

We have now had 1703 referrals through 'Home But Not Alone' service. Referrals have dropped by 75% since the first month of the pandemic. We are now focussing on helping repeat customers to find a sustainable source of support. Meanwhile, 68 groups have now been supported through the Hardship Fund with just over £25,000 in funding remaining. Below is a case study which brings to life some of the challenges faced by East Suffolk residents – and the help that has been provided by the Council working in partnership with key local organisations:

'AD was a HBNA referral for food after being told to shield for 12 weeks. When we spoke to him about his need for food, various other concerns came out - he was made redundant in February from a 20-year job, hadn't claimed any benefits and his redundancy money had run out. We worked with the Connect for Health social prescribing team in his area (Shaw Trust) to get him his benefits and to set up regular contact around emotional support. The local church knew of him, but weren't aware of his situation, when they agreed to make regular befriending calls.

We have just found out that he is starting a new job from mid-July and is no longer reliant on food parcels from the Teapot Project. Shaw Trust will continue to support him for the first few weeks of his new job to make sure it is going ok but he is well on his way to independence again!'

## Grants, funding and business matters

### Response

ESC is continuing to operate the discretionary grant fund aimed at those businesses who did not meet the criteria for earlier rounds of grant funding. To date we have received over 300 applications for this scheme and a third of these have now been paid. We also continue to take a permissive approach to ensure as many businesses as possible in East Suffolk can take advantage of this funding. This is demonstrated with only 6 out of over 300 applications being rejected.

The ED and EH teams also continue to deliver the Reopening High Street Safely Fund in partnership with Town Councils covering our 12 principal towns. This funding covers

measures to assist with social distancing, temporary public realm changes and communications to support the safe reopening of high streets. The fund is still causing frustrations due to its restrictive nature and what can be covered but we are working closely with Town Councils and SCC's highways team to overcome these and ensure the appropriate measures are in place to support trade in our towns.

### Recovery

Along with the ongoing response work we are also developing longer term plans to support the local economy. This includes adapting the current Economic Development programme to the current economic situation with a revised plan being in place at the end of the summer. In addition, we are working closely with colleagues across the county and the region to adapt and develop recovery plans for these areas too. East Suffolk, as one of the key economic drivers of both the county and region, has a critical role to play in these wider recovery plans.

The development of the Lowestoft Town Investment Plan continues apace and the investment associated with this initiative will be crucial in supporting the recovery in Lowestoft and also building on the current unprecedented levels of public and private investment which are going into the town.

The plan, which seeks to draw down at least £25m of external funding will be submitted to government at the end of October and negotiations on a Town Deal will, commence shortly after.

### Environmental Health

Test & Trace Update – Work to support the local Test & Trace arrangements in Suffolk are proceeding at pace. The latest draft of the Suffolk COVID-19 Outbreak Control Plan was agreed at the second meeting of the Suffolk C-19 Health Protection Board this week and will be presented to the Local Outbreak Engagement Board, comprising Chief Executives and Leaders from the Suffolk Local Authorities, for their approval today. The Plan will be published on 1 July and the Director of Public Health will lead on communication with the media.

The purpose of the plan is to protect the health of the people of Suffolk by; preventing spread of COVID-19, containing and suppressing outbreaks of COVID-19, early identification and proactive management of outbreaks and co-ordination of capabilities across agencies and stakeholders to deliver this. The Plan builds on existing and well established health protection infrastructure which includes at a regional level Public Health England (PHE) and at a local level the Public Health Team at SCC and Environmental Health Teams in the districts and borough which already respond to different types of outbreak where needed.

The Suffolk C-19 Control Centre was also stood up from Thursday of this week to deal with enquiries and coordinate the response to any local outbreaks notified by PHE. This was a

soft launch to enable systems and processes to bed in before the public launch of the Plan and the management arrangements in Suffolk on 1 July.

## **Operational updates**

### **Leisure Facilities**

The government announced this week that outdoor leisure spaces can reopen, but not gyms or pools at this stage. We are anticipating that this may be eased in coming weeks, but means that we will need to continue to work with our leisure centre operators to plan how we can safely reopen, and to understand the financial implications of remaining closed. We are also working with providers to get a clearer picture of the costs of adaptations that may need to be made to ensure that facilities can open.

### **Bungay Pool and Gym refurb**

In the meantime, we continue to make good progress with the refurbishment of Bungay Pool and Gym (to be renamed Waveney Valley Leisure Centre on opening). Tiling of the pool is currently taking place, and the gym area features an entirely new mezzanine deck and spin studio. Behind the scenes, the plant room, heating system, air handling units and filtration system have all been upgraded. The facility will open towards the end of the year and will be one of the region's premier gyms – including those operated by private firms.

### **Play areas**

Government has announced that play areas will open on the 4th July. East Suffolk grounds teams are working to ensure that all of them are ready to open – with grass cut, inspections completed, and cleaned. Signage will be in place reminding parents that it is their responsibility to ensure that children's hands are cleaned before and after using the facilities.

### **Southwold Caravan Site**

Another announcement from government was that caravan and camp sites can reopen from the 4th July. We are working with the government guidance to understand how the Southwold Caravan Site can safely reopen – which is a challenge, as all of the facilities on the site are shared. We are working to install additional toilets and showers, with a view to at least a partial reopening in July.

## **Housing**

East Suffolk Council's first Shared Ownership properties are on the way to completion and to be occupied in October 2020. The site in Brampton is just 5 miles outside of the market town of Beccles and hosts 6x 2 Bedroom Houses, all with private gardens and parking. The properties are being built by Wellington Construction.

The Housing Needs Team has worked with CCG and PHE alongside the MHCLG and partner agencies (Access Community Trust (ACT)) to enable the reopening of the 'Safe to Stay' Hub

from Avenue Mansions in Lowestoft. The former Retired Living scheme was initially brought back into use to house rough sleepers and clients that were in the original Hub building at Commercial Road as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the governments instruction to bring 'everyone in'.

As clients start to move on from Avenue Mansions we have been able to free up some flats and this is now being used to offer self-contained accommodation to rough sleepers with low support needs. The assessment criteria will remain the same and ACT will provide support 24/7 alongside an officer within the Housing Needs team to allow these clients to find settled accommodation. The average stay is likely to be 14 days but in some cases this will be longer depending on needs and housing availability.

The Housing Team and Cllr Kerry have been participating in a number of webinars this week for Digital Housing Week including topics such as ways to fund retrofit energy efficiency measures, the economics of the pandemic and in conversation with Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP – Housing Minister.

[Cllr Colin Hedgley](#)

[Cllr Tony Fryatt](#)