



**Cabinet**

**Tuesday, 11 May 2021**

**Covid 19: Update Report**

## **Report of the Chief Executive**

### **Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough Wide Leadership Councillor S J Robinson**

#### **1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1. Following the report of the Chief Executive to Cabinet on 9 February 2021, this report is to update the Cabinet on the work completed as part of the Council's continued response to Covid 19.
- 1.2. In addition, the report provides an outline of plans to support the recovery from Covid 19 including the proposed summer events programme and other support for local businesses and the high street.

#### **2. Recommendation**

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet notes the work of officers of the Council and partners in responding to and supporting the recovery from Covid 19.

#### **3. Reasons for recommendation**

- 3.1. This report provides an update on the current impact of Covid 19 and how this has changed since the report in February 2021. It sets out the response of the Council and partners to the pandemic.
- 3.2. The report is correct at the time of writing but as we have experienced, the situation can change quickly. It is important, therefore, that we remain flexible and responsive to these new challenges and the report reflects the need to do this.

#### **4. Supporting information**

- 4.1. Since the report in February 2021, there have been limited changes to the level of lockdown in the country (at the time of writing). At midnight on 4 January 2021, the country was placed into a national lockdown. This included a stay at home message issued by Government.
- 4.2. The Government subsequently issued a roadmap to recovery which included some key dates for the gradual easing of lockdown. This is outlined in the table below. We are currently in the early stages of the restrictions being lifted with

changes taking effect on 5 March, 29 March and 12 April 2021. We are awaiting a further update on any potential further lifting of restrictions currently expected to be 17 May 2021.

4.3. Government needs to be sure it is safe to move from one step of the roadmap to the next. The decision will be based on four tests:

- the vaccine deployment programme continues successfully;
- evidence shows vaccines are sufficiently effective in reducing hospitalisations and deaths in those vaccinated;
- infection rates do not risk a surge in hospitalisations which would put unsustainable pressure on the NHS; and
- the assessment of the risks is not fundamentally changed by new Variants of Concern.

4.4. The table below sets out a timeline of changes and an overview of the restrictions at each stage on both residents and businesses:

<b>Lockdown restrictions since February 2021</b>	
<b>Midnight on 4 January 2021</b>	<p><b>National Lockdown</b> and so in addition to the above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government issues stay at home message.</li> <li>• All schools close.</li> <li>• Hospitality venues – except for takeaway of food and non-alcoholic drinks only (alcohol can only be provided as part of a delivery).</li> </ul>
<b>8 March 2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools reopened (for some this was a phased reopening).</li> <li>• Able to meet up with one person from another household for recreation and exercise.</li> </ul>
<b>29 March 2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outdoor gatherings (including in private gardens) in groups of six or two households is permitted.</li> <li>• Outdoor sports such as golf, tennis and basketball courts can reopen, and people will be able to take part in formally organised outdoor sport.</li> <li>• Stay at home rule ends but people encouraged to continue to work from home where possible.</li> </ul>
<b>12 April 2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening of non-essential retail; personal care premises such as hairdressers and nail salons; and public buildings, including libraries and community centres.</li> <li>• Indoor leisure facilities such as gyms will also reopen.</li> <li>• most outdoor attractions and settings including zoos, theme parks, and drive-in cinemas.</li> <li>• Hospitality venues will be allowed to serve people outdoors and there will be no need for customers to order a substantial meal with alcoholic drinks and no curfew, although customers must order, eat and drink while seated ('table service').</li> <li>• Wider social contact rules will apply in all these settings to prevent indoor mixing between different households.</li> </ul>

<b>Next stages on roadmap:</b>	
<b>No earlier than 17 May 2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government will look to continue easing limits on seeing friends and family wherever possible, allowing people to decide on the appropriate level of risk for their circumstances.</li> <li>• Gatherings of over 30 people will remain illegal.</li> <li>• Indoors, the Rule of six or two households will apply – it will be kept under review whether it is safe to increase this.</li> <li>• Most businesses in all but the highest risk sectors will be able to reopen.</li> <li>• Indoor adult group sports and exercise classes to reopen.</li> <li>• Indoor hospitality will reopen - customers will have to order, eat and drink while seated.</li> <li>• Other indoor entertainment venues to reopen such as cinemas and children’s play areas; the rest of the accommodation sector, including hotels, hostels and B&amp;Bs.</li> <li>• The Government will also allow some larger performances and sporting events in indoor venues with a capacity of 1,000 people or half-full (whichever is a lower number), and in outdoor venues with a capacity of 4,000 people or half-full (whichever is a lower number). In the largest outdoor seated venues, where crowds can be spread out, up to 10,000 people will be able to attend (or a quarter-full, whichever is lower).</li> <li>• Finally, the Government will complete a review of social distancing and other long-term measures that have been put in place to cut transmission. This will inform decisions on the timing and circumstances under which the rules on 1 metre plus, the wearing of face coverings and other measures may be lifted. This will also inform guidance on working from home – which should continue wherever possible until this review is complete.</li> </ul>
<b>21 June 2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government hopes to be in a position to remove all legal limits on social contact.</li> <li>• Reopen remaining premises, including nightclubs, and ease the restrictions on large events and performances including weddings and other life events.</li> </ul>

4.5. During the period between the announcement of the National lockdown (4 January 2021) to restrictions beginning to ease (29 March 2021) the focus of the Council on Covid response was:

- Payment of business rates grants.
- Patrols by High Street Ambassadors across the Borough focussed on parks and open spaces – this has remained flexible and arranged on a week by week basis in response to any emerging issues.
- Enforcement action where required by the Environmental Health Team which has included the service of three Prohibition Notices and four Fixed Penalty Notices on business failing to comply with legal requirements.

- The provision of business advice and support.
  - Continued support for businesses including the digital grant (26 applications received and 16 approved), Rushcliffe gift voucher and Rushcliffe Business Partnership networking and webinars.
  - Webinars for market traders to support them to develop their online offer/social media presence.
- 4.6. Ahead of the easing of lockdown on 29 March 2021, plans were put in place particularly focussed on Bridgfield and Bridgford Park for the Easter weekend as this fell between the ability to meet with six people or two households and the pubs reopening. There was therefore a concern that people would congregate in parks as was seen last summer. The plan included:
- Two security operatives on the gates of Bridgfield stopping anyone with an excessive amount of alcohol and also restricting numbers to 250.
  - Two security operatives patrolling Bridgfield and Bridgford Park.
  - Patrols by Wise to issue FPN's for anyone caught littering and to provide support as required.
  - Closing the gates on Bridgfield at 7.30pm (at this time of year that would usually be 9.30pm).
  - Increased and earlier litter picking and cleansing by Streetwise staff.
  - Large banners and posters warning residents not to litter.
  - Additional large yellow events litter bins.
  - Additional security covering other areas of the Borough including Rushcliffe Country Park, East Leake skate park, Bingham marketplace and Radcliffe on Trent Skate Park.
- 4.7. In preparation for outdoor hospitality and non-essential retail reopening on 12 April 2021, the Communications Team produced a short promotional video featuring local businesses to encourage people back out onto the high street to 'Shop Local Shop Safe'.
- 4.8. To support the reopening of outdoor hospitality the Economic Growth Team visited each town centre to identify any venues that they felt could extend their outside space. These premises were contacted directly, and a press release was also issued along with an email to local businesses to encourage them to contact the Council if new or additional outside space was of interest. In addition, a guide for premises to make them aware of all the things they need to think about to support this was produced, this included information about licensing and planning requirements.
- 4.9. Proactive patrols were planned for week commencing 12 April 2021, by the High Street Ambassadors to provide a visible presence in our town and village centres to provide assurance to local residents. This covered both the non-essential retail but also into the evening too to support the reopening of outdoor hospitality. This was complemented by visits from our Economic Growth and Environmental Health Teams. We have issued posters for all hospitality business to display and press releases advising the public of their responsibilities and behaviours in public areas and parks.

- 4.10. The Government has recently announced an extension to the Reopening High Streets Safely (RHSS) Funding, now called the Welcome Back funding. Rushcliffe has been awarded a further £106,208 to be spent by March 2022. Activities supported by the Welcome Back funding could include:
- Boost the look and feel of the high streets by investing in street planting, parks, green spaces and seating areas to make high streets as beautiful and welcoming as possible.
  - Run publicity campaigns and prepare to hold events like street markets and festivals to support local businesses.
  - Install signage and floor markings to encourage social distancing and safety.
  - Improve high streets and town centres by planting flowers or removing graffiti.
- 4.11. Plans are being developed for options for spending the Welcome Back Fund. In addition, passporting funding to Parish and Town Councils is being encouraged by Government. A note has been circulated to Parish Clerks in Cotgrave, East Leake, Bingham, Keyworth, Radcliffe on Trent and Ruddington to gauge their interest in accessing some of the funding which could be ringfenced for them.
- 4.12. Officers from the Council worked with Parkwood to prepare for reopening on 29 March 2021 (golf) and 12 April 2021 (leisure centres). Many of the plans are already in place from previous reopening but these were revisited and amended as required. Site visits will take place during the first week of opening to ensure Covid secure compliance and user feedback. The first stage of re-opening is limited to gym usage and lane and children's lessons in the pool with group exercise not allowed until at least 17 May 2021.
- 4.13. The National Leisure Recovery Fund seeks to support eligible public sector leisure centres to reopen to the public, giving the sport and physical activity sector the best chance of recovery to a position of sustainable operation over the medium term. The £100 million worth of funding is being managed and administered on behalf of DCMS by Sport England. An application was submitted on 8 January 2021, and the Council was successful in securing funding of £224,000 which will go in some way to help fund the financial support being given to Lex Leisure as our leisure centre service providers.
- 4.14. In addition, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) provided funding to Nottinghamshire County Council to assist vulnerable families with children and other vulnerable households, particularly affected by the pandemic. 80% of funding has been allocated to households with children and administered via schools, early years and further education setting.
- 4.15. The remaining 20% (£450k) was intended for households with no children and vulnerable individuals/couples who have been identified as being in urgent need. The Nottinghamshire allocation has been apportioned to each district.

- 4.16. Rushcliffe received £23,800 on 18 December 2020, which was passported out to established community groups and organisations who were able to assist with food parcels and other essentials supplies over the winter months.
- 4.17. In February 2021, the DWP confirmed that the funding could now also include families with children and a demand was identified in Keyworth. This brought the final allocation for the COVID winter grant scheme as follows:

<b>Community Group</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Amount</b>
The Friary	West Bridgford	£5000
Meet, Greet & Eat	West Bridgford	£5500
Cotgrave Community Kitchen	Cotgrave	£5500
Bingham Helping Hands	Bingham	£3800
Keyworth Community Project	Keyworth	£2500
Project administration	Rushcliffe Borough Council	£1500
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£23,800</b>

- 4.18. The Council's revenues and finance teams continue to be very busy processing and paying grants for businesses. Since November 2020, over 6,000 payments have been made with £19.1m of government grant received and £12.9m paid out. Current workload is focusing upon the Restart and Discretionary business grants which apply from April 2021, with £5.4m from Government and £2.1m currently paid out. The Council's focus has been to passport grants to businesses as quickly as possible and in terms of the discretionary scheme has been successful in doing this (based on national data along with other Nottinghamshire authorities, amongst the most efficient in the country), at the same time balancing proper due diligence.
- 4.19. The Council continues to maintain a high level of service delivery since the start of the pandemic, shifting resources where required. To date, the direct impact of Covid 19 on the Council in terms of staff sickness or those self-isolating has been, of the approximately 260 employees:
- 21 staff have tested positive for Covid; and
  - 78 staff have self-isolated to date (this includes those that isolated and continued to work and those who did not work as their role did not enable them to work from home).

This is an increase since the report in February 2021, of six staff who have tested positive and four staff who have had to self-isolate.

### **Proposed events programme**

- 4.20. Following the Government's publication of a Covid 19 recovery roadmap on 22 February 2021, there is now greater clarity as to the parameters that the Council's events will be operating under during summer 2021. Events are envisaged to resume free of Covid 19 legal restrictions from Monday 21 June 2021. All the Council's events are scheduled to fall after this date which means

that Covid 19 control measures are not expected to be required. However, the Council still needs to prepare contingency plans to mitigate for possible roadmap delays, variations and any new mitigations that the Government could introduce such as requirements for pre-entry LFT testing or Covid 19 vaccination status checks (guidance for which is expected on mid -April 2021).

4.21. The most vulnerable part of the events programme is the first two events of the summer – Proms in the Park and Taste of Rushcliffe – as they fall within a fortnight of national social contact restrictions being removed. These events can still be delivered under Stage 3 of the roadmap, but they would have to be delivered with additional public safety controls such as reduced capacity (<50%) and social contact rules which may make them financially or operationally unviable to deliver in their normal format.

4.22. The Council's event programme will be as follows:

- Proms in the Park, Saturday 26 June 2021 – reduced capacity, admission with ticket only (free).
- Taste of Rushcliffe, Saturday 3 July 2021 – reduced number of stalls and attractions, no ticketing possible due to open nature of site.
- Lark in the Park, Wednesday 4 August 2021 – cancelled due to large scale nature with 5000+ expected attendance.
- Sunday Cinema, Sunday 22 and 29 August 2021 – reduced capacity, admission with ticket only (charged).

#### **Track and trace and vaccination centres**

4.23. Since the last report in February 2021, the mass vaccinations programme has begun across the country. This is predominantly being delivered at doctors' surgeries and hospitals. There are, however, some mass vaccination sites (none located in Rushcliffe) and some smaller community-based sites. One of those is Gamston Community Hall, which is now a local vaccination centre. Whilst the NHS runs the facility, the Council was involved in the initial set up. Over 50,000 vaccinations have now been carried out at Gamston (as at 12 April 2021).

4.24. In addition, as well as the testing sites (one is sited at Rushcliffe Arena) work was carried out with partners to identify possible lateral flow testing sites. A mobile testing site now visits Cotgrave each Wednesday and Saturday.

4.25. The Council continues to help support individuals who are self-isolating (from 8 March 2021, the scheme has been extended to include parents/guardians of children who have been told to self-isolate by their education or care setting), who are on low incomes and cannot work from home, with £500 payments from government funding. The scheme and funding has now been extended until 30 June 2021, and at the time of writing 322 applications have been received, 117 payments have been made, amounting to £58,500 (from funding of £134,500) and there are two applications currently pending further information. All other applications have been rejected.

## **Performance**

- 4.26 The Council is well aware of the impact on service performance from Covid. The Corporate Overview Group continue to monitor performance and a suite of indicators have been produced which show the impact of Covid on Council performance. Importantly the Council has continued to provide essential services in what has been an extremely challenging environment for everyone.

## **5. Alternative options considered and reasons for rejection**

This is an update report on the work done since February 2021, in response to the Covid 19 pandemic. For the different areas of work, officers and Councillors considered different options as required. The response and recovery will continue to be flexible to be able to respond to changes in regulations.

## **6. Risks and uncertainties**

Covid 19, in itself, creates much risk for the Council both in its ability to deliver its Corporate Priorities and the impact on the Council's budget.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1. Financial Implications**

The financial impact of Covid is being reported through the Council's normal financial and performance reporting processes with a further update due to both Cabinet and Corporate Overview Group and Cabinet in June and July 2021, respectively.

### **7.2. Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications associated with this report; decisions have been taken in accordance with the Constitution.

### **7.3. Equalities Implications**

The pandemic has had a disproportionate economic impact on some people including young people. This impact is being considered in the recovery work, with activity being targeted across Rushcliffe, Nottinghamshire and the wider D2N2 area as required.

### **7.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications**

While the pandemic has had an impact on crime and disorder, most notably an increase in reports of domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour in some parks/open spaces, there are no crime and disorder implications associated with the contents of this report.



## 8. Link to Corporate Priorities

Quality of Life	The response and recovery from Covid 19 is in place to ensure we maintain the quality of life for our residents.
Efficient Services	<p>In response to Covid 19, staff have had to be redeployed to ensure essential services for our residents could be maintained.</p> <p>The pandemic has had a significant impact on Council budgets and, therefore, a review will be required of service delivery across the whole Council to support further efficiencies.</p>
Sustainable Growth	<p>The pandemic has had a significant impact on our businesses and, therefore, a package of support (from national and local government) has been put in place to support those businesses who have been impacted the most.</p> <p>We will continue to work with our partners to support our businesses to survive the pandemic and grow as the economy recovers.</p>
The Environment	The focus of recovery is supporting a green economic recovery. This includes for the Council adapting the way it works, e.g. continued working from home, but also supporting our businesses to change the way they work too.

## 9. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet notes the work of officers of the Council and partners in responding to and supporting the recovery from Covid 19.

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<b>Background papers available for Inspection:</b>	Report to Cabinet May 2020 Report to Cabinet November 2020 Report to Cabinet December 2020 Report to Cabinet in February 2021
<b>List of appendices:</b>	