



Cabinet

Tuesday, 13 July 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

Following the report of the Chief Executive to Cabinet on 11 May 2021, this report is to update the Cabinet on the work completed as part of the Council's continued response to Covid 19.

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 last report in May 2021. It sets out the response of the Council, and its 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 May 2021, restrictions have been further eased on 17 May (as set out in the table below). The next step on the roadmap was planned to be 21 June and, whilst there will be some further easing of restrictions, step 4 of the road map has been delayed until 19 July 2021.
- 4.2. The reason for the delay is that the the Delta variant is now spreading faster than the third wave predicted in the February roadmap. Cases are growing by about 64 per cent per week, and in the worst affected areas, it's doubling every week. The average number of people being admitted to hospital in England has increased by 50 per cent week on week, numbers in intensive care are also rising. This should be put in the context of growth from a low base for the

hospitalisation numbers which shows that the vaccine is breaking the link between infection and hospitalisation or death.

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

Lockdown restrictions easing:	
17 May 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoor hospitality and indoor entertainment resumed, including cinemas, museums, and children’s play areas. • Up to six people or two households able to meet indoors and up to 30 people outdoors. • All remaining outdoor entertainment reopened, such as outdoor cinemas and performances. • The public can make informed, personal decisions on close contact, such as hugging, with their friends and family. Covid-secure rules remain for the workplace and businesses, such as in shops and hospitality. • International travel reopened allowing people to go on foreign holidays to ‘green’ list countries. • Face coverings will no longer be needed in classrooms or for students in communal areas in secondary schools and colleges. Twice weekly home testing will remain to control infection rates. • All remaining university students will be eligible to return to in-person teaching and learning. • Up to 30 people able to attend weddings, receptions, and commemorative events. These can take place outdoors or at any indoor Covid secure venue that is permitted to open. • 30 people will be able to attend a support group or parent and child group. The limit will not apply to children under five. • Organised adult sport and exercise classes can resume indoors and saunas and steam rooms may reopen.
21 June 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weddings and wakes can now go ahead with more than 30 guests provided social distancing remains in place. • Continue to pilot events such as Euro2020 and some theatrical performances.
19 July 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government hopes to be in a position to remove all legal limits on social contact. • Reopen remaining premises, including nightclubs, and ease the restrictions on large events and performances including weddings and other life events.

4.4. By Monday, 19 July the Government aims to have given:

- Two vaccinations to around two thirds of the adult population including everyone over 50, all the vulnerable, all the frontline health and care workers and everyone over 40 who received their first dose by mid-May.
- Every adult in this country a first dose; that is including young people over the age of 18, who are now being invited for their vaccination.

- 4.5. Since the last update to Cabinet in May 2021, the Borough Council has continued with work on Covid response, supporting our residents and businesses. This includes:
- Payment of business rates grants.
 - Patrols by High Street Ambassadors across the Borough focussed on town centres, parks and open spaces– this has remained flexible and arranged on a week by week basis in response to any emerging issues.
 - Environmental Health have seen an increase in non-compliance with Covid 19 Business Restrictions Regulations. These are largely being dealt with effectively before further action is required. Since the last report however, there have been six Fixed Penalty Notices issued on three businesses and currently two further investigations are ongoing. There have also been two prohibition notices served on two businesses.
 - Continued support for businesses, including the digital grant (31 applications received and 23 approved) and Rushcliffe Business Partnership networking and webinars.
- 4.6. Rushcliffe has been allocated £106,208 Welcome Back funding which is an extension of the Reopening High Streets Safely funding. The funding has to be spent by March 2022, plans for the funding include:
- An enhanced events programme in West Bridgford (covered further later in the report).
 - Ongoing communications.
 - Ringfenced allocation of £10,000 for each of the six larger town/parish councils.
 - Extension to Covid 19 Information Officer role (currently delivered by the Intern).
 - Support for the establishment of retail forums.
 - Town centre reviews/surveys to make recommendations for future action.
- 4.7. The further re-opening of leisure centres has gone well since 17 May, with group exercise proving popular and the return of sports such as badminton, squash and swimming. Officers have carried out checks as part of their contract management duties to ensure the areas are clean and Covid compliant, and user feedback has in the main been very positive with many happy to be back exercising. Golf usage has been very good although a wetter May saw numbers decrease but the course has received many plaudits for its current condition and user feedback is very positive. The delay in step 4 of the Government's roadmap, put back four weeks from 21 June, means that all current social distancing, hygiene and ventilation controls will need to stay in place.
- 4.8. 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. As previously reported, 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. 6,081 individuals received assistance with either a hot meal or food parcel being provided.

- 4.9. In addition, Rushcliffe Borough Council has now been allocated £37,290.82 from Nottinghamshire County Council (Department for Education funding) to deliver the Summer Holiday Activities and Food Programme 2021, aimed at providing healthy food and enriching activities to children aged 5-16, who are eligible for free school meals. Children only have to be eligible and it is self-certified. The Community Development Team are currently speaking to partners to look at what activities can be delivered and also have requested data on which schools have the highest uptake of free school meals to identify geographical priority areas.
- 4.10. The Council's revenues and finance teams continue to be very busy processing and paying grants for businesses. Since November 2020, over 6,500 payments have been made with £19.1m of government grant received and £15m paid out. Current workload is focusing upon the Restart and Discretionary business grants which apply from April 2021, with £4.6m from Government and £4m 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. We are also allocating a Special Hospitality Grant from the remaining discretionary funds to support businesses that have been affected by end date of restrictions being extended, with payments of up to £6,000 per eligible business, with around £0.4m being made available.
- 4.11. 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.
 - 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 no change since the report in May 2021.

Events Programme

- 4.12. Changes have been made to the Council's summer events programme following the Government's delay to the releasing of Covid restrictions which was planned from Monday 21 June.
- 4.13. Proms in the Park, planned as a celebration of Armed Forces Day on Saturday 26 June, has been postponed until September. The Taste of Rushcliffe Food Festival will continue as planned on Saturday 3 July; however, will be wholly a

food and drink market, with removal of the demonstration kitchen and cookery engagement activities.

- 4.14. The Council's summer programme will be as follows (some of which will be funded by the Welcome Back Funding):
- Taste of Rushcliffe – Saturday 3 July.
 - Outdoor Theatre (The Tales of Peter Rabbit and A Midsummer Night's Dream) – Saturday 21 August.
 - Sunday Cinema – Sunday 29 August and Sunday 12 September.
- 4.15. Additional events are being developed including a picnic on the Croquet Lawn, crazy golf, street theatre and a festive trail. This will be utilising the allocated Welcome Back Funding to deliver, and dates will be dependent on the easing of restrictions and availability of providers.
- 4.16. It is hoped that these events will increase footfall in the area and encourage people to stay for longer benefitting the local businesses. The Borough Council delivers this activity in West Bridgford as it acts as the town council for this area. The plans are being shared with the town and parish councils to encourage them to replicate this type of activity in their areas and support from officers of the Council is being provided. In addition, as set out above there is a ringfenced allocation from the Welcome Back Fund of £10,000 each for Bingham, Radcliffe on Trent, Cotgrave, Keyworth, Ruddington and East Leake Parish/Town Councils to utilise.

Track and Trace and Vaccination Centres

- 4.17. The mass vaccinations programme has been rolled out across the country and now those aged 18 and over can receive their first vaccination. 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. Well over 50,000 vaccinations have now been carried out at Gamston, and the numbers will continue to increase in line with central government guidance to shorten the gap between first and second vaccines and gradually reduce the age range for those able to attend.
- 4.18. The testing site located at Rushcliffe Arena has now been removed. The site was not testing many people and the car parking space was required to support the reopening of the leisure centre and the return to work of more Borough Council staff. A mobile testing site now visits Cotgrave each Wednesday and Saturday and Bingham every Tuesday and Friday.
- 4.19. 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 (the Department of Health and Social Care are currently waiting for ministers to make a further decision regarding ending or extending the scheme), and at the time of writing 348 applications have been received, 122 payments have been made, amounting to £61,000 (from funding of £134,500) and there are 11 applications currently pending further information. All other applications have been rejected.

Performance

- 4.20. 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 May 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 in July 2021.

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 the Transformation Programme will continue to be updated as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy as a vehicle to deliver 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.

For more information contact:	Katherine Marriott Chief Executive 0115 914 8291 kmarriott@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	Report to Cabinet May 2020 Report to Cabinet November 2020 Report to Cabinet December 2020 Report to Cabinet February 2021 Report to Cabinet May 2021
List of appendices:	None