



Cabinet

Tuesday, 23 November 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 13 July 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 July 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 July 2021, restrictions have been further eased on 19 July (as set out in the table below). This was the final step on the Government's road map and meant the ceasing of all mandatory restrictions. There is however still guidance in place on the wearing of face masks in certain places e.g. when travelling on public transport, in shops etc.
- 4.2. The table below sets out a high level overview of the final easing of restrictions that took place in July:

Lockdown restrictions easing:	
19 July 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Government removed all legal limits on social contact.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reopened remaining premises, including nightclubs, and eased the restrictions on large events and performances including weddings and other life events. • Wearing a face mask is no longer mandatory in most places but is advised in certain settings e.g. when travelling on public transport.
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4.3. Since the last update to Cabinet in July 2021, the Borough Council has continued with work on Covid response, supporting our residents and businesses. Some of this has been delivered using the European Regional Development Fund Welcome Back Funding (£106,208) which was allocated to the Borough Council to support the safe reopening of our high streets. The activity undertaken includes:

- An enhanced events programme in West Bridgford which included (further detail in paragraph 4.8):
 - Taste of Rushcliffe – Saturday 3 July.
 - Outdoor Theatre (The Tales of Peter Rabbit and A Midsummer Night’s Dream) – Saturday 21 August.
 - Family fun day and crazy golf – Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 August.
 - Sunday Cinema – Sunday 29 August and Sunday 12 September.
 - Pumpkin carving for Halloween (Saturday 30 October).
- Appointment of a temporary high street/town centre manager to work in our town centres to support local businesses and deliver initiatives to drive up footfall.
- We ringfenced an allocation of £10,000 for each of the six larger town/parish councils. The Economic Growth Team has been working closely with them all and some have started to deliver activity using this funding and most are making plans for additional events and other initiatives including external decoration e.g. repainting benches/bollards etc.
- Rushcliffe Business Partnership has started networking in person again and the first event was on 1 October at Escabeche. This attracted around 25 local businesses.

4.4. The leisure centres are all generally operating well, and recovery continues with numbers and usage at about 80% of pre-pandemic levels. Swimming lessons are proving very popular and are back up to normal levels. Work is planned to start later in November to refurbish and convert the old indoor bowls hall to a new sports and exercise hall and we continue to work with Lex to identify programmes and classes that will attract the older generation as well as honour our commitment to bowls club members. The Council committed to support any bowls club members who wished to join a new local club and has paid around 40 membership fees for ex members of the Rushcliffe Indoor Bowls club with total costs of around £2k. Officers continue to carry 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 over the summer period and the course has received many plaudits for its current condition from the golf committee and user feedback is very positive.

- 4.5. In addition, Rushcliffe Borough Council was 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.
- 4.6. Since November 2020, the Revenues and Finance teams have made over 6,500 payments and £15m paid out. There is Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) funding remaining and proposals are being developed on how this could be allocated including the possibility of grants to support businesses.
- 4.7. 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, up to the end of September 2021 (since the start of the pandemic):
- 31 employees tested positive for COVID; and
 - 97 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).

Events Programme

- 4.8. The enhanced summer events programme, supported by the Welcome Back Funding, was very well received by local residents. Attendance for all events was good and social media engagement was high, with a total audience reach of approx. 77,000.
- 4.9. The enhanced programme started on Saturday, 21 August with two outdoor theatre performances. Then the Croquet Lawn on Central Avenue and the car park at Soothe on Melton Road were the locations for Bank Holiday weekend. There was a have a go circus skills workshop, a pop-up picnic site, sand sculpting workshops, caricaturists and Punch and Judy shows. Hundreds of visitors came along to take part in some of the activities.
- 4.10. On Saturday 4 and Sunday, 5 September Crazy Golf took place on the Croquet Lawn which was extremely well attended. The first free Sunday Cinema event took place on Sunday, 12 September and this was repeated on 26 September in Bridgford Park with four screenings over the two dates. All shows proved very popular with our residents and over a thousand people attended.
- 4.11. 18 September saw the return of one of the flagship events – Proms in the Park, originally planned for June, then postponed due to Covid 19. There was a record attendance with thousands visiting the park in West Bridgford throughout the day. The Council has received some great feedback across the period and are exceptionally pleased with the successful delivery of the programme.

- 4.12. The Christmas light switch on in West Bridgford will take place on Saturday, 27 November, subject to no new Covid 19 restrictions being implemented. The event is being planned with a revised site layout to increase circulation space on Central Avenue. Fairground rides have been removed to avoid the creation of congestion points and create capacity for other activities such as a street market, outdoor seating areas and walkabout entertainment. Fireworks used in the switch on finale will be a low noise variety, as per the Council's new policy for responsible firework usage.

Partners and Community

- 4.13. In September 2021, Cabinet approved a report to sign up to a new Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Compact which had been developed by the Local Resilience Forum and Nottinghamshire County Council for adoption by relevant public authorities to build on the successful response by the voluntary and community sector during the Covid 19 pandemic. The Compact and its principles will demonstrate the Council's ongoing commitment to the voluntary and community sector in the Borough as we progress through recovery and beyond.
- 4.14. Following approval at Cabinet in June 2021, the Council has been developing its final plans for a Covid 19 memorial garden, which will be created as a dedicated place for quiet reflection for bereaved families from across the Borough. The garden will be located in Bridgford Park, West Bridgford, and the scheme will include a monument, a small seating area and landscaping. It is hoped that the memorial will be ready for early 2022, to coincide with the first anniversary of the pandemic.

Commercial Property

- 4.15. The Property Team has worked closely with commercial tenants to support them throughout the pandemic, and this has resulted in occupation levels of council owned commercial property remaining high at around 96% year to date. Any vacancies are being proactively marketed to secure new tenants.
- 4.16. One of the ways the team supported our business tenants was by offering rent holidays to those that needed them. A total of £134,073 rent holiday has been provided to 24 tenants, of which £68,595 has been invoiced and collected. 14 tenants have cleared debts, 10 remain with payment plans in place or plans to be updated. Outstanding rent holiday is £65,478.

Track and Trace and Vaccination Centres

- 4.17. The mass vaccinations programme has been rolled out across the country and those over 50 are now being encouraged to have their Covid booster vaccinations. This is predominantly being delivered at doctors' surgeries, community pharmacies and hospitals. Gamston Community Hall had been operating as a vaccination site, but this was handed back to the Council on 18 October as it is no longer required. The Hall is not yet available for community

use as some essential works are required which will take place in November 2021, as part of our planned capital programme of works.

- 4.18. A mobile testing site continues to visit 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 16 August 2021, if you are fully vaccinated you are not required to self-isolate if you are notified you have had close contact with someone with Covid 19 or if you are aged under 18 years and six months), 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 31 March 2022, and at the time of writing 747 applications have been received, 300 payments have been made, amounting to £150,000 (from funding of £265,500) and there are 36 applications currently pending further information. All other applications have been rejected due to not meeting the necessary criteria.

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 July 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 has been reported through the Council's normal financial and performance reporting processes throughout the pandemic.

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
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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 Report to Cabinet in July 2021
List of appendices:	None