



Rutland
County Council

Briefing

RUTLAND COUNTY COUNCIL WEEKLY ROUNDUP

26 February 2021

Good afternoon,

The roadmap for easing lockdown measures, announced by Government earlier this week, has certainly been welcomed.

For Rutland County Council, the roadmap now means we can start planning to support each stage of the easing, which enables us to organise our resources and understand the pressures in advance.

On Wednesday we all celebrated the ten thousandth resident receiving the vaccine at the vaccination centre located at Catmose House. This is a remarkable achievement - in just a few short months we have now vaccinated over a quarter of our population.

This week also saw the opening of our Lateral Flow Testing Centre, which is located at Oakham Enterprise Park. This too is a key milestone for our residents and a significant achievement for all involved. Many of the staff have been redeployed from their usual roles to run the Centre and the team has worked tirelessly to ensure it was in place to be able to support our community.

I saw in the week's Rutland Times that the landlords of the White Lion in Whissendine have had a diseased holly tree turned into a bench in honour of NHS and wider key workers. I am sure you will agree this is a great tribute and I know this will be well received by our keyworkers and health colleagues.

The roadmap's implementation relies on several factors being continually met – including the ongoing vaccination programme and testing of the community. Rutland is now well placed to play its part in this, but we need to ensure we do not get complaisant, so this roadmap remains on track.

Regards,

Mark

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1. COVID-19

a. Latest situation

As of 4.00pm on Thursday 25th February, 4,154,562 people have tested positive for coronavirus in the UK.

Of those who have tested positive for coronavirus in the UK, 122,070 people have died across all settings within 28 days of a positive test and 135,613 with Covid-19 on the death certificate.

As of 4.00pm on Thursday 25th February, 18,691,835 have received their first dose vaccination and 700,718 have received their second dose vaccination.

These figures continue to be published on the government's daily dashboard: coronavirus.data.gov.uk.

Rutland recorded 97 confirmed cases of COVID-19 during the latest week (15 to 21 February) – an increase of 45 cases compared with the previous week. This equates to 243 cases per 100,000 people. The average area in England had 103.

A total of 59 coronavirus-related deaths have been registered in Rutland up to 12 February.

b. Vaccination centre update

As of Wednesday 24 February 2021, over 10,000 COVID-19 vaccinations had been administered in Rutland. This is a fantastic achievement for the county. This means over a quarter of the population have received a vaccination.

Thank you to all the staff and volunteers taking part in the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

c. Lateral Flow testing centre update

Rutland's Lateral Flow Testing Centre opened this week, providing regular tests to people who are unable to work from home and have no Covid symptoms.

The Centre was open for two days this week and delivered 167 tests. We have received a number of positive messages on social media about the efficiency of the centre. A campaign is being developed to promote the centre to businesses.

d. Cases in Rutland

As you will see the figures above indicate a rise in cases in Rutland this week. Rutland's Covid-19 cases are currently higher than the national average. This is the result of enhanced Covid-19 testing at HMP Stocken following a localised outbreak. Our Public Health Team continues to work alongside the Prison Outbreak Control Team and Public Health England to manage this.

e. Business grants

The Government has confirmed that there will be further support for businesses on the rating list required to close from 15 February 2021. A 44-day payment of between £2,096 - £4,714 will be paid according to the size of business.

Payments will be made without an application process when funding is received from Government (hopefully next week but date not confirmed).

There is no additional funding available to support businesses not required to close or closed but not on the rating list. The Council will be looking at whether it has any remaining funds where it has discretion to provide support when current schemes close on the 12th March.

f. Covid-19 vaccine survey

The Clinical Commissioning Groups in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland have launched the [Covid-19 vaccination survey](#) exploring views of people in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, and what matters most to them. We want to understand if people are ready for their Covid-19 vaccine and how we can help them to feel reassured and confident in their decision to be vaccinated.

The survey closes on the 12th March 2021, Friday.

g. The reopening of schools and learning facilities

All schools will re-open on 8 March.

No primary or nursery children will be routinely tested; secondary school pupils will be tested 3 times at school in the first two weeks of wider opening (from 8th March) with the 4th test being a home testing kit.

Schools have also received funding to provide additional learning opportunities, particularly during the summer, and are currently planning for this.

In addition, plans for examinations this year have also been announced:

- Students will receive grades awarded and determined by teachers, with pupils only assessed on what they have been taught
- Teachers will be able to draw on a range of evidence when determining grades, including the optional use of questions provided by exam boards, as well as mock exams, coursework, or other work completed as part of a pupil's course, such as essays or in-class tests
- Results days - August 10 for A-levels and August 12 for GCSEs

RALSS will also open for qualification based learners on Monday 8th March.

h. Safe volunteering

Guidance has been updated to help volunteers work safely during the pandemic. This is being shared with our VCF partners and the PCN.

- [GOV.UK guidance for members of the public wanting to help informally \(not through an organisation\)](#) (available through short URL gov.uk/safehelp)
- [GOV.UK guidance for volunteer-involving organisations and groups](#)

- [GOV.UK guidance for people to want to volunteer with organisations or groups](#)

i. Further people added to the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable list

On 16 February, the list of adults asked to shield was extended as a result of research at Oxford University to build in learning about who is most at risk of serious outcomes from Covid-19. Adults likely to be at increased risk have been identified nationally, based on a combination of characteristics including their age, sex, ethnicity, body mass index and clinical conditions.

In this exercise, Rutland's list has been increased by some 800 people to 2100. Additions to the list who are over 70 have already been vaccinated, while the c200 people under 70 have been prioritised for vaccination. The RISE team is undertaking safe and well calls to this group, supplementing the calls already underway to the pre-existing list of people who are clinically vulnerable.

j. Vaccinating people with Learning Difficulties

Special sessions have been run in Leicester at the Peepul Centre to vaccinate people with Learning Disabilities.

Longer slots were offered at quieter sessions with specialist staff available. Those living in Rutland's homes for people with learning disabilities have already been vaccinated.

People with learning disabilities who are living at home were approached by RCC this week to confirm whether they wanted to take up the Leicester offer or wait for local vaccination.

A few have taken up the Leicester offer, but the majority have chosen to wait. The PCN is proposing quieter end of the day slots at the vaccination centre for this group.

k. Asymptomatic testing for staff in the education sector

Early Years:

The asymptomatic testing programme in education currently covers all staff at school-based nurseries and maintained nursery schools.

The DfE is now expanding home testing kits to staff in all private, voluntary and independent nurseries.

These settings will start to receive deliveries of lateral flow device (LFD) home testing kits to offer to all of their staff for twice weekly testing from week commencing

22nd March. This will help to identify positive cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) more quickly and break the chains of transmission. Childminders continue to have access to the community testing facilities for asymptomatic testing.

Primary Schools:

The guidance on asymptomatic testing confirms that staff in primary schools will continue to test with LFDs twice a week at home. Primary age pupils will not be tested with LFDs.

Home testing will be available for independent training providers and adult community learning providers by the end of March.

I. Financial support for care providers

We are continuing to provide funding to Adult Social Care providers via three Department of Health and Social Care grants:

- £438,774 Infection Control Fund to undertake measures to reduce the risk of infection transmission. This has been offered to all of our care homes and homecare providers, our supported living providers and also to those local organisations who support vulnerable people such as Age UK. The fund covers expenditure from October 2020.
- £133,141 Rapid Access Testing Fund which is specifically for care homes and supported living providers to enable them to implement LFD testing for staff, covering expenditure from December 2020.
- £67,860 Workforce Capacity Fund to increase staffing capacity for care homes and homecare providers, covering expenditure from January 2021.

All of the funding must be spent by 31st March.

We are supporting providers as much as possible to identify spend that meets the Terms and Conditions of the funding, and keeping the requirements on them to a minimum, whilst enabling us to meet our reporting requirements to DHSC.

Any unspent funds as of 31st March have to be returned to the DHSC. It is likely that we will have a small proportion unspent, and this puts us in a similar position to most other authorities. The tight turnaround on the funding and burden on providers at a time when they are already pressured is something which has been fed back up through our regional networks to DHSC.

2. WIDER COUNCIL OPERATIONS

a. Annual Budget 2021/22

The Annual Budget for 2021/22 was approved by Council on Monday 22nd February.

A Council Tax rise of 1.99%, plus the Adult Social Care Precept of 1%, was agreed with 16 in favour and nine abstentions.

b. Council tax support

The budget report referred to the Council receiving £211k of funding in recognition of the increased costs of providing local council tax support during the pandemic.

This grant is effectively a continuation of funding we received last year (in the form of a hardship fund) where we were asked by Government to reduce council tax bills for the most financially vulnerable by up to £150.

The £150 reduction will be applied again in the council tax bills for 2021/22 (so the same residents are not disadvantaged) and based on current numbers, will still leave over £100k available to fund expected new claims.

c. Youth Council food waste campaign

Next week (1-7 March) is WRAP's inaugural Waste Action Week, which is being supported by the Rutland Youth Council.

As part of the week, the Youth Council will be aligning their Taste It, Don't Waste It campaign with WRAP's Love Food Hate Waste.

They will begin with the launch of the Youth Council's 'teaser' film, which will show clips of the families involved in the Taste It Don't, Waste It trial talking about why they have got involved.

BBC East Midlands Today will also be doing a piece about the campaign and will be interviewing members of the Youth Council and the families involved. This will be aired next week (subject to changes in scheduling).

d. Creative mentoring to children

Rutland County Council is now part of a project with Mighty Creatives to provide creative mentoring to children and young people in our care and care leavers.

They take a one-to-one approach to working with identified children in and leaving care who are struggling to engage in education, at risk of exclusion or social isolation.

When a young person is disengaged, resistant to support & professionals are struggling to improve the situation, a Creative Mentor can be commissioned to work 1:1 with the young person.

Creative mentors work in creative ways to help children and young people have more:

- self-confidence
- increased social competence
- improved resilience

This is designed to positively reengage them in learning and/or their community.

The Creative Mentor refocuses efforts away from negative 'behaviour' to identify what it is the young person needs to help them become 'unstuck'. This is a positive educational opportunity and excellent resource for our young people.

e. Bin Collections

As you may be aware, due to delays caused by winter weather and vehicle breakdowns the week of 8th February, there have been many homes that did not have bins collected on the planned day.

We have worked closely with Biffa to resolve this over the past two weeks and all non-rural properties are now up to date.

A special lorry is used to collect waste from farms and lodges, and we have now taken delivery of a new vehicle and it is expected that collections for farms and lodges will be completed by close of play today.

f. How GCSE, AS and A-levels will be awarded in summer 2021

The DfE has announced that students will receive grades awarded and determined by teachers, with pupils only assessed on what they have been taught.

Teachers will be able to draw on a range of evidence when determining grades, including the optional use of questions provided by exam boards, as well as mock exams, coursework, or other work completed as part of a pupil's course, such as essays or in-class tests.

Schools will have their internal quality assurance processes signed off by exam boards prior to grade submission; teachers will submit grades to exam boards by 18 June.

In June and July, exam boards will randomly pick schools to sample the evidence they used. There will be more targeted scrutiny where exam boards identify "cause for concern". Risk-based checks will look at a range of criteria, from changes to entry patterns, to new schools. Also, if they have results that are unusual, it could trigger a visit by the exam board, although this could be virtual.

This year's results days are August 10 for A-levels and August 12 for GCSEs. These results will not be published or compared nationally.

For the second year in a row, a full autumn exam series will be held for students who want to improve their grades.

g. Holiday activity and food programme

The Department for Education (DfE) has provided Local Authorities with funding to offer holiday provision for children who receive benefits-related free school meals.

Rutland County Council has been allocated an indicative maximum allocation of £63,740 for the delivery of the whole programme.

The programme will take place for one week during the Easter Holidays, four weeks during the Summer Holidays and one week during the Christmas Holidays. It is specifically targeted to offer provision for four hours a day, four days a week during the identified holiday periods. The aim is that the children who attend the provision will be supported to:

- eat more healthily over the school holidays;
- be more active during the school holidays;
- take part in engaging and enriching activities which support the development of resilience, character and wellbeing along with their wider educational attainment;
- be safe and not to be socially isolated;
- have greater knowledge of health and nutrition; and
- be more engaged with school and other local services.

Local authorities have flexibility about how they deliver this level of provision to best serve the needs of children and families in their area, and we are currently working on plans for the Easter break which will meet the requirements of the offer. Rutland is working closely with neighbouring LAs to provide a cohesive programme across the area, to share ideas and resources and to ensure children who live in one LA but attend a school in another do not miss out on their entitlement.

The Covid Winter Grant Scheme which was set up by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has been extended to cover the Easter holidays and will be used in Rutland to supplement the healthy eating requirement of the HAF programme

h. Homelessness

Since 17th January we have had 39 new cases of homelessness present themselves as at risk of homelessness. This is a significant increase on previous months, where we have averaged around ten new cases a month.

Looking at the data, the vast majority of these cases is because friends or relatives are no longer able to house. We believe that this has been caused due to pressures created by the lockdown.

This has also resulted in more than double the cases being supported by the Council for emergency accommodation.

Our housing options team continues to proactively support to ensure all needs are met during this difficult time.

Speaking to other authorities, this is reflected across the whole of LLR.

3. GOVERNANCE AND DECISION MAKING

a. Budget Full Council

Our Budget Full Council meeting took place on Monday 22 February. The full agenda and reports for this meeting can be viewed [on our website](#), together with a link to a video recording of the meeting on YouTube.

b. Audit and Risk Committee

Our latest Audit and Risk Committee took place on Tuesday 23 February. The full agenda and reports for this meeting can be viewed [on our website](#).

c. Look ahead

The following meetings are due to take place next week (w/c Monday 1 March)

- [Special Planning and Licensing Committee, Tuesday 2 March](#)

The latest version of the RCC Forward Plan [can be viewed online, here](#).

4. STAFF NEWS

a. Starters

We welcomed the following new starters this week:

- Kasia Holt – System Support Officer

b. Leavers

We've said goodbye to the following colleagues in the past week:

- Denise Wynter – Independent Reviewing Officer
- Kit Silcock – Governance Officer

5. RCC IN THE NEWS

a. Press releases issued this week

- [New Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder announced](#)
- [Rutland's Covid-19 rapid testing centre opens](#)
- [Rutland County Councillors vote to protect residents from 5% rise in Council Tax](#)
- [Leader responds to Government plans to ease Covid-19 lockdown measures in England](#)
- [Update on bin collections this week](#)
- [Rutland County Council and Biffa apologise to residents for bin collection delays](#)
- [10,000 people have received their Covid-19 vaccine in Rutland](#)

b. Other media coverage

- [Expansion plans for Greetham Quarry will be reviewed by Rutland County Council](#)
- [Rutland's Covid infection spike due to HMP Stocken testing](#)

ENDS