

## ESCC Report for Parish Councils    October 2020

We are lucky that East Sussex has lower rates of Covid/19 than many parts of the country. As i write this we have one case of coronavirus in the Conquest Hospital. However, numbers of cases are slowly rising and ESHT has been told to prepare more beds for a surge. We all need to reduce infection in our community;

- no more than 6 people inside and outdoors
- keep 2 metres apart
- regularly wash hands
- immediately self-isolate and organise a test if you have symptoms
- wear a mask in shops, on public transport and enclosed public places

Figures on September 11<sup>th</sup> indicated that the total number of cases in East Sussex is 1776 with a rate per 100,000 population of 325.5

Testing sites are facing increasing demand, and laboratory capability has been prioritised to the areas of high prevalence. For people in the south east this means there will be delays in accessing a test locally, or testing may be offered a considerable distance away. Councils and Resilience Forums across the south east region are lobbying Government hard to do more to meet the increase in demand.

To request a test <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test> or call 119

ESCC are working hard with partners to prepare against a local outbreak and to support residents and businesses. The local outbreak plan (Public Health) has been updated .

The East Sussex Economy Recovery Plan involves £45m to be injected into our local economy to aid recovery. Among the projects to be funded are:

- Development of the historic Observer Building in Hastings
- A new commercial and medical centre in Bexhill
- A business and skills centre in Lewes
- A new fishing quay in Eastbourne
- The world's first solar farm to power railways in Eastbourne

The plan, published by Team East Sussex-a partnership of business, ESCC, social enterprise, and education representatives, seeks to maximise this funding from central government and the SELEP.

By 11<sup>th</sup> September children were back in every one of the county's 187 schools and they were catching up on learning after months of disruption. There has been 100% attendance in some schools but overall attendance is around 65%. School transport is running well and still has space available. The positive attitude in children, young people and their parents is making this work. Teachers have worked hard to design new curricula, revise timetables, create hand sanitiser stations, reorganise school furniture, increase cleaning, and make safety markings inside and outside school buildings, plus arranging children into "bubbles". These measures apply to primary, secondary and special schools. Support is available for children who are anxious about returning to school via the Educational Psychology Service, and for children with SEND and their families via the Education Support Behaviour and Attendance Service.

There is a special page on the ESCC website for more information about schools [www.eastsussex.gov.uk/backtoschool](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/backtoschool)

Families are being encouraged to travel by foot, bike, or scooter. Parents are being asked to help cut congestion and reduce carbon emissions so as to improve childrens' health. There are some revised arrangements for bus timetables and parents are urged to check updates.

Residents struggling to afford food and essentials due to the economic impact of Covid -19 will continue to be given help. Working with voluntary, community groups and food banks, ESCC has developed a range of support for those worse affected. With just under £600,000 from the Department for Environment, Food, and Rural affairs, the county council will offer financial support to the county's food banks, and organisations working with food bank users. Funding will also be made available for Fuel Vouchers via Citizen's Advice. The council plans to support new and emerging food partnerships to address longer term needs, with additional funding from Public Health Covid-19 recovery projects. During lock down ESCC delivered more than 9000 food boxes to vulnerable residents. If any money is unspent it will be redistributed to food banks. [www.eastsussex.gov.uk/communityhub](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/communityhub)

A public consultation was launched on 14<sup>th</sup> September on reducing the opening hours at The Keep, home to our archive services. The Keep is run in partnership with Brighton & Hove City Council and the University of Sussex. Our MTFP for 2019/20 to 21/22 identified a savings target of £210,000 from the CC's contribution to The Keep budget over this 3 year period. The partnership is considering ways to further reduce the annual running costs of The Keep, including a reduction in public opening hours. The proposals are based on customer usage of the building, opening later in the morning and closing earlier in the afternoon, with 2 additional half day closures. The Keep would continue to open 5 days per week. Based on an analysis, the impact on visitors would be limited. The consultation closes on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

<https://consultation.eastsussex.gov.uk/>

A new national campaign to find families for children waiting for adoption is being backed by the Regional Adoption Agency for the South East. **#YouCanAdopt** has been launched to tackle misconceptions around eligibility, and to encourage more people to consider adoption, particularly from Black, Asian, and minority backgrounds. Up to 120 children in the south east are in need of an adoptive family at any one time, some are older, some have complex needs or a disability. All want a home. Adoption SE brings together services for East Sussex, Brighton & Hove, West Sussex and Surrey councils. There are systems and support in place to ensure that assessments and preparations can be conducted safely and easily. **#YouCanAdopt** encourages people to take the first steps towards becoming an adoptive parent:

[www.adoptionsoutheast.org.uk](http://www.adoptionsoutheast.org.uk)

Businesses and residents in rural areas can be helped by the government's **Rural Gigabit Voucher Scheme**. ESCC has invested £500,000 to support the scheme. Currently, those people who are eligible can apply for government funding towards the installation of gigabit capable technology (up to 1000Mbps) with businesses receiving up to £3,500 and residents £1500. Those receiving the government subsidy will automatically receive an additional top-up subsidy of up to £1000 per eligible applicant from ESCC towards the cost of installing fast broadband. Funding is available on a first come first served basis till March 2021.

<https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/>

The order necessary for **Civil Parking Enforcement** will come into force on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

East Sussex Highways is currently conducting a long term **tree survey** on the rural roads ie roads not within 30mph speed limits. All trees within falling distance of the highway are being inspected. Works will be done by ES Highways, but private trees have to be dealt with by landowners and a request will be sent for them to organise the work. Any queries to our Customer Service Manager, Corinne Black.

Angharad Davies      East Sussex County Councillor Northern Rother