

Broadwas & Cotheridge District Council Report – 8th June 2020

Over the last month support for individuals and business has continued and we've been moving into a recovery phase – working closely with the County Council and other local authorities.

Of course, advice has changed and we're now seeing more people back out and about. Over the coming month and more will open whilst still adhering to social distancing rules as things return to what is being called the 'new normal'.

A lot has changed already.

The total number of deaths across our district (up to the 5th June) has been 43, with 19 of those in care homes. There have been 138 confirmed cases of Covid-19 since the outbreak began.

In terms of support and recovery the Discretionary Grant Scheme for businesses who may have fallen between the other potential support was opened last week. This is businesses who were not eligible for the Small Business Grant Fund or the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Fund, and which have relatively high ongoing, fixed property-related costs, and which can demonstrate that they have suffered a significant fall in income due to the COVID-19 crisis. Businesses who have applied for the Self Employment Income Support Scheme and Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme are eligible to apply for this scheme.

As council we've put together a policy to distribute the money faster and contacted businesses to ask them to apply.

From the original grant funding scheme MHDC have paid out more than £17 million to 1,506 businesses now.

High street shops and shopping centres across England are set to reopen in June once they are COVID-19 secure and can show customers will be kept safe. The Prime Minister announced that outdoor markets and car showrooms will be able to reopen from 1 June and we are seeing this happen as long as they are able to meet the COVID-19 secure guidelines to protect shoppers and workers. Other non-essential retail including shops selling clothes, shoes, toys, all furniture stores, books, and electronics, tailors, auction houses, photography studios, and indoor markets, will be expected to be able to reopen from 15 June if the government's 5 tests are met.

The 15th June really is the big date this month and will see our high streets re-open.

As part of this a new fund was announced by the government to support local high streets re-opening. This is to safely re-open highstreets like the ones in Malvern, Upton and Tenbury and also to kick start the economy of those centres, although footfall is already good in these places given the last week – people are out of the house.

We have received £70,000 in Malvern Hills to support the re-opening of our high streets.

This will cover a whole range of things from dealing with pinch points to signage and enhanced cleaning regimes.

Our economic development team are working on recovery plans for our high streets and have been consulting with traders and business organisations as well as town councils and Worcestershire County Council. The message coming through is that if non-essential shops can reopen on 15 June, businesses will open gradually with many waiting to see how the public respond. There are however also some traders that are doing a very good job already of adapting to new ways of working and serving customers and we need to be ready to support and enhance what traders are already doing.

I can speak from a personal point of view that we've seen days in June which are 300% up on last year through our direct business and we're seeing trade customers who we work with – many of them national retailers also rapidly increasing business.

Importantly guidance has been issued on how to work safe during this time and employers and employees can access this information online. This, to me, is one of the most important aspects and I've continuously fed this back – that businesses need advice on what they should and need to be doing to ensure a safe place of work and a safe space for customers.

Innovation is going to be key in re-building the economy and we, as a council, have recognised this by increasing the grants given to Malvern Hills businesses supporting apprenticeships offered in IT, Engineering, Manufacturing, Agriculture/Horticulture, Hospitality or Construction. We'll now be giving £1,500 to those businesses. We want more people taking up Apprenticeships and we want to support businesses who want to take on Apprentices.

We're also working with Worcestershire Business Central to support a series of webinars to support businesses in Innovation and I'll be giving one on how businesses can recover and also how to deal through a crisis.

For individuals we continue to support people as needed. At a local level through the Here to help scheme and supporting those groups that have set up to support neighbours and on a financial level as needed.

For a more in-depth run through of how we can support individuals the latest update can be found at:

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKMHDC/bulletins/28bc36d>

The Government has awarded Worcestershire County Council £1.3million from its active travel budget to put in some emergency schemes to support walking and cycling. A submission is being made this week to the Government. Schemes being put forward at this stage are very modest but there will be further funding and scope for more ambitious projects in the future.

Also, household recycling centres are re-opening and for us, importantly, the one in Hallow is now open.

Away from Coronavirus and the recovery we haven't forgot about the flooding in February.

Some 200 properties and more than 100 businesses across the district were flooded following heavy rainfall on Saturday and Sunday, February 15 and 16. The majority were in the Tenbury Wells area.

Following the event, Malvern Hills District Council pledged a £100,000 fund to support flood-related recovery projects and Cllr Rouse has renewed that commitment.

Cllr Rouse has also met with Harriett Baldwin to discuss securing flood defence funding for the Tenbury area.

The council is also supporting virtual roadshows being held by the National Flood Forum, offering help, advice and support sessions to those affected by flooding.

In Malvern Hills District sessions will be held on the following dates:

River Severn and Powick Friday 19 June

River Severn and Powick Monday 22 June

Tenbury and Teme Valley Friday 26 June

With more and more people back around we've seen an increase in speeding and a growing increase of councillor business returning to normal. My inbox is certainly a lot busier.

One of the biggest issues is that of speeding and we're talking with the local police on a regular basis about hotspots which certainly includes the A44. Another thing we would ask all to look out for is where things may have been built during lockdown that do not have planning permission.