

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

25 February 2021

COUNCILLOR STUART DARK MBE - CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION

For the period January – February 2021

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Covid-19

The period since my last report to Council has been and remains very challenging, albeit there have been some really positive figures in key areas, which have been sustained over several weeks, indicative of clear trends.

Firstly, the rolling 7 day recorded infection rate, which had reached a high of c.600 people per 100,000 population locally at the peak of the second phase, has continued to decline. At the time of this report it stands at just under 200 per 100,000 having dropped by 50 (20%) in the last 7 days alone. It is highly likely that this downward trend will continue and I will provide the latest figure available at our Full Council meeting.

Whilst this is very encouraging, it should be remembered our lowest 7 day rate, last summer, between the two phases, was below 100 infections per 100,000 population, so we are still some way off this and the message to our communities must be continue to follow the guidance if we are to drive down the rate yet further so we are at the lowest rate possible as we emerge into Spring and hopefully the easing of protective measures.

Secondly, the vaccination rate is accelerating and many of our recognised priority cohorts have already been reached. I have already circulated to Councillors, Town and Parish Councils data from the Norfolk and Waveney CCG that shows our region has already given first vaccinations to 29% of the entire 16+ population. This rate makes it the 3rd highest performing Health Authority region in the Country at 6% higher than the average. Invites are continuing to go out as the programme works its way down the priority tiers and a new service for people to contact the NHS and book their appointment either by phone or online has been put in place.

Given the short timescale (The first vaccine (Pfizer), with associated storage and transportation complexities was only approved for use in the first week of December) I believe this is nothing short of phenomenal progress and the NHS, staff, volunteers and all involved deserve great praise for the hope and

protection they are bringing to so many. Council continues to play its full part in supporting the vaccination sites, including the first local mass vaccination centre in the Corn Exchange and continues to help in getting the other sites planned for the near future coming online.

The Kings Lynn Testing Centre for people exhibiting symptoms remains fully operational and Councillors will be aware from previous briefings this testing has now been complimented by 'rapid flow' asymptomatic testing teams and kits available for businesses and at community sites around the Borough to help check transmission by identifying infection in people who may not know they have the virus.

The Revenues and Benefits Team continues to work extremely hard to support affected businesses. I will provide the exact figures as part of my introducing the report at Council so that they are the most up to date they can be for members/public consideration.

I have worked with the Chief Executive, senior council officers and Cabinet colleagues to ensure core Council services continue to be delivered effectively throughout the period, new Covid-19 priorities and issues are addressed as part of the tiered multi-agency response (national, regional and local) and clear guidance and support is offered to residents, businesses and particularly the vulnerable.

I have, with the assistance of officers, continued to provide weekly updates to all Borough Councillors on key Borough Covid-19 developments and activities, along with links to useful resources/data/materials and ensured these have been circulated to all Parish and Town Council contacts for their information and passing on. These regular updates have been complimented by specific contact with ward members as and when a significant issue/development occurs in their area. I thank everyone who has assisted in this important work.

On Monday the 22nd February (after this report but before Full Council) the Prime Minister will be outlining the national plan re easing of restrictions and their timing. This will clearly have major impact and Council will reassess its activities along with partners immediately post this, to ensure it continues to be as proactive as it can in supporting and protecting our communities and businesses and in helping the multi-agency response. I will keep Councillors, Town and Parish Councils updated on developments in the now usual way.

Waste Collections

It was with some regret, particularly given the hard work, adaptability and effectiveness of our waste crews throughout the last year of the pandemic, that the last 7 days exceptional wintery weather forced disruption on collections across the Borough, with a number of collections having to be altered or delayed.

These decisions were taken to protect the crews safety as whilst main routes

between towns and villages were gritted, the collections need by their very nature to have heavy vehicles and people walking from street to street, house to house, bin to bin in locations where this was not the case. The worst affected areas on the Borough were the top end towards the Coast.

Messages were put out promptly on social media and the Council's website advising residents of delays and new schedules and it is a testament to the hard work of the crews that as I write this report to Council (Hunstanton still having snow and ice yesterday) all disrupted bin collections have already been mitigated and all waste collected, so that the service is essentially back to normal.

Councillors will be pleased to hear that there were no reported accidents to waste collection crew members during this bad weather, due to the decisions taken.

I will be providing an update to Council in my next report on the incoming Waste contract, but wish to reassure Councillors now that there are no plans for the new Contractor to significantly alter routes, days or times so that they can communicate this to residents, as I know such disruption to established routines could be of concern.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

The primary focus of my upcoming activity before next full council has to be the Borough's continuing response to the rapidly changing Covid-19 situation regarding both its core services and its assistance to the wider effort. I will continue to keep members, Town and Parish Councils informed of activity by weekly reporting or by exception if a development merits it.

I will also be working with officers towards successful introduction of the substantial new 'Waste and Related Services Contract' commencing at the end of March.

3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

Regular and irregular meetings with the Chief Executive, Communications Officers, relevant responsible Council Officers and partners with regard to the Borough's Covid-19 response.

Separate Meetings with Collection Services and EHO managerial staff.

Tri-District responsible lead member 'joint Waste Contract Review and Development Board' and pan-Norfolk 'Waste Partnership'.

Scheduled meetings associated with Cabinet.