

## **Briefing to Parish Council    February 2021**

I have included for your information a number of updates from the Council's communications team about the Council's activities on Covid-19 and business support. Most of the data contained in this update is taken from the first two weeks of January 2021.

### **Supporting the NHS**

Within 24 hours of being asked to support NHS staff who are working in hospitals, nearly 100 staff from SNC and Broadland Council put their names forward. While some will be helping during the week, others will be giving up their evenings, weekend and holidays.

This is a really fantastic example of a whole team effort across all the public sector services, working with local mutual aid groups and hundreds of volunteers, all working together to beat the Covid-19 virus.

Offers of help have come from staff working across the councils' services, including staff from the leisure centres that have closed as part of the lockdown measures.

### **Supporting business compliance**

In support on a MHCLG initiative we developed a plan calling for a big effort, over a two week period, focussing on Covid safety and compliance in retail premises.

Starting on Monday 18 January SNC officers have been making unannounced monitoring inspection visits and where needed, firmly challenging unsafe and weak practices. We have taken a supportive but assertive line with a positive tone to promote goodwill. Enforcement has been used where necessary, although our powers are limited.

We have assigned nine Covid Support advisors and 4-6 Environmental Health Officers to make these visits, and supermarkets have been high and early on the list of retail premises that we have been visiting:

1. Supermarkets
2. Larger retail stores that are not supermarkets.
3. Largely non-essential goods retailers permitted to open
4. Local one stop type village stores.
5. Small retailers.
6. Garden centres.

During the first week a total of 26 premises have been inspected, including large supermarkets, large mixed retail premises and also smaller national supermarket premises. We will continue to focus our activity on where our intelligence indicates the highest risks are.

The level of compliance witnessed has been very good overall, with customer numbers being checked and limited on entry, the enforcement of face coverings and the regular sanitisation of hands as well as trolleys and baskets.

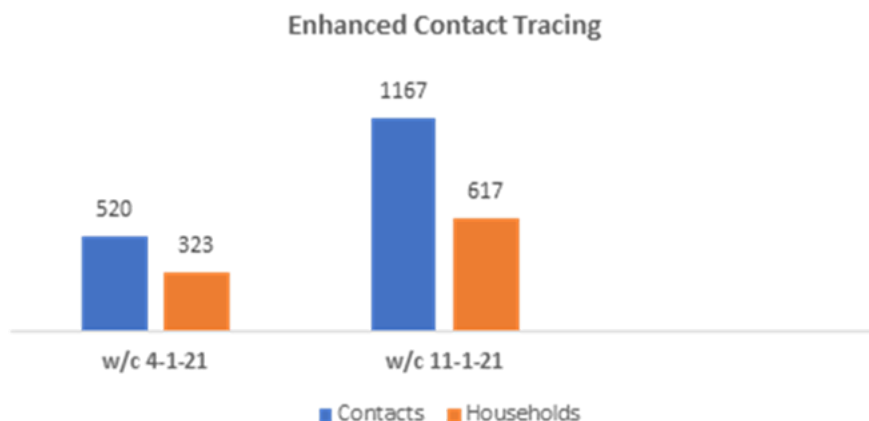
A few of the larger premises were identified as having some issues, but these have been resolved quickly with advice and guidance being issued to store managers and follow up visits being carried out.

The next focus will be on national garden centre/DIY store chains as well as independent stores, and visits being made to smaller national supermarket stores.

The initiative is also being supported by a communications campaign using all of our social media channels as well as the print and broadcast media.

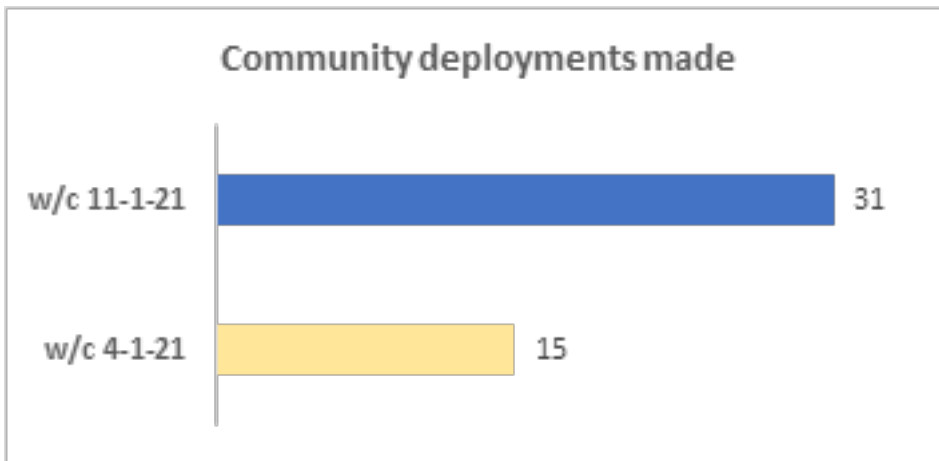
### Supporting residents

Enhanced Contact Tracing went live on 7 January. The aim is to visit every person who has tested positive and their contacts across both Districts. The purpose of the visits is to ensure that people are able to self-isolate and identify any welfare needs that may present a barrier to people staying at home. In the first full week of operation (W/C 11-1-21) 1167 contacts were visited in 629 households. The rate of contacts referred from Public Health remains constant at between 190 and 260 a day. The service operates seven days a week.

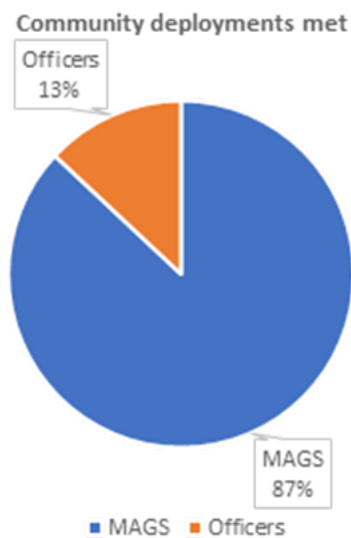


### Community Deployments following requests to the Hub or via contact tracers:

A dedicated officer (Community Connector) processes these requests and connects the resident with a person able to meet their need. These requests are all for shopping or prescription collection and the various MAGS (Mutual Aid Groups) are very successful at meeting requests, usually within an hour of receiving it. Where officers have been deployed, this has been because meeting the request required a Council spend (food or fuel poverty). Numbers are much smaller, 90% less than in the first Lockdown. Other resources such as online shopping are more available and many residents are going directly to MAGs to meet need.



See below.



## Business Support Grants

### Overall Summary

Late January has been particularly busy with £11m being paid out to eligible businesses across all the active Business Support Grant schemes.

**The Additional Restrictions Grant (Discretionary Scheme)** - this scheme has now reopened for new applications.

Extra Government funding (our share of the £594m announced by the Chancellor) of £2.4m to top-up our ARG was received in late January, increasing our overall ARG fund to £7.8m.

Those that successfully applied to phase 1 of the scheme, and still meet the qualifying criteria for phase 2, will see their grant awards increased, to remove the need for them to reapply.

Following the Supreme Court's recent decision that in certain instances Business Interruption Insurance claims should now be allowed to compensate businesses for their losses as a result of the pandemic, we have modified the scheme slightly to allow us to take this into account. Whilst having such insurance will not exclude businesses from applying, it was considered to be prudent that we factor this in to the calculation of any potential grant award.

Additional resources have been deployed to the verification and processing of claims. This will ensure that claims are managed promptly and will allow us to release payments to those businesses that have been successful in a timely manner. Since reopening the scheme recently we've received more than 200 applications.

Promotion of the scheme is ongoing, via Social Media, targeted mailshots and to those that have completed our Expression of Interest form via our websites. Additional messaging is also going on Council Tax and Business Rates bills that are being sent to make all businesses and residents (who may be self-employed) that this scheme is now open.

### **Other Grants**

The following grants continue to be available.

### **Closed Business Lockdown Payments (CBLP) Lockdown & Tier 4 - Local Restrictions Grant (Closed) Addendum**

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