

App. 2 Diptford Parish Council meeting 8th December 2020
Update from South Hams Cllrs. Pannell & Smerdon
DECEMBER 2020

COVID 19

The second set of national restrictions ends on 1st December. Our area has seen an increase in cases of COVID 19, but the latest information appears to show a levelling off of this trend. The encouraging news with regard to several vaccines becoming available, at first to the most vulnerable and then more generally, is very welcome. The whole of Devon has been placed in the Tier 2 level of restrictions. This brings some good news with the reopening, in a COVID compliant way, of a range of businesses including non-essential retail, hairdressers and gyms. The news isn't as positive for the Hospitality Sector who will be able to open but will be subject to a range of restrictions for what is traditionally their most lucrative time of the year. There are similar restrictions on the general public in terms of who they can mix with. It is understood that the arrangements will be reviewed on a two-weekly basis but how and what that may mean for the District is not clear. SHDC's two most immediate priorities are to continue to process applications for business grants and to support our towns as many more retail outlets reopen post lockdown. Whilst attention at SHDC remains firmly focussed on providing support to businesses, individuals and the wider community, conversations are now beginning around the logistics of delivering a national vaccination programme. It is early stages and nothing is confirmed but residents can be assured that the Council is exploring what it can do to support the programme and we will continue to update everyone as matters become clearer.

LOCAL RESTRICTIONS SUPPORT GRANT (LRSG)

Businesses that were open as usual, but were then required to close between 5 November and 2 December 2020 may be eligible for this support. Further details are available for qualifying businesses on SHDC website.

ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS GRANT (ARG)

The ARG provides local councils with grant funding to support closed businesses that do not directly pay business rates, as well as businesses that do not have to close but which are impacted. In addition, larger grants can be given than those made through LRSG. The policy will be based on business need. District Councils across Devon are aligning distribution methods, a key proposal is to fund wider business support measures as part of the total budget, as well as business specific grants. This Grant is evidence based and so a period of time is needed between lockdown start and scheme commencement to allow evidence gathering. **Village and Community Halls may be eligible for this payment of between £500 and £2,100 a month. Go to the SHDC website for details and an application form:**www.southhams.gov.uk/ARG

COVID COMPLIANCE OFFICERS APPOINTED

A key part of our activity will be to support local business to comply with COVID secure requirements and to enable them to trade safely and help encourage the public back into the high street. SHDC and WDBC have appointed five COVID Compliance Officers (THREE IN South Hams) for a six-month period. These posts are Government funded. Their role is to support our Environmental Health Specialists dealing with business compliance of COVID regs. This will include proactive visits, visible high street presence and dealing with complaints from the public and other businesses. They will always help businesses to comply where possible, but can take enforcement action where necessary. Please send any enquiries regarding COVID regs compliance to this mailbox EnvironmentalHealth@swdevon.gov.uk

The enforcement responsibility for COVID regulations falls to a number of Agencies. Broadly speaking the Police devon-cornwall.police.uk will deal with issues regarding people and domestic property (gatherings, house parties, second homes, etc) and our Council will deal with issues at business premises. The HSE will enforce at larger manufacturing premises and building sites. South Hams District Council is working in collaboration with The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to carry out COVID-secure spot checks on business premises where we are responsible for the enforcement of health and safety legislation.

COLLECTION ROUND CHANGES-UPDATE.

You may be aware that there have been **significant teething problems** with some of the rounds. We (Peter and Guy) have been working with our SHDC staff and FCC our contractors to help get the service back to the normal good standard. Additional crews and vehicles put into service last week have brought the number of missed collections down significantly.

- Those collections which appear to have been repeatedly missed are now being checked on a daily basis. The additional resources will remain in place until the new service is embedded next spring.
- The second lockdown resulted in recycling banks filling quicker than normal, as was the case last time. Additional measures have been brought in to relieve this pressure.
- If a collection is missed the householder should report it via the South Hams Council website the following day. [www.southhams.gov.uk/report a missed collection](http://www.southhams.gov.uk/report-a-missed-collection)
- The contractors have three working days to remedy the situation. If this is not done please contact Peter or Guy.
 - SHDC continues to monitor the waste contract through constant examination of a range of data. These issues are taken up with the contractor on a daily basis and SHDC has worked hard to ensure the customer has remained the focus.
 - **Some staff at the Ivybridge depot are having to self isolate. This means there may be some impact on collections of recycling sacks etc. If this happens please take the sacks back in to await the next collection. It may not be possible to report this on the SHDC website. If essential take material to the Devon CC recycling centre.**

LEISURE CENTRES

These reopen on Wednesday 2nd December, with revised hours. Check on whether it is necessary to book in advance.

THE WINTER SUPPORT FUND

The Government has made available a Winter Support Fund to support households in extreme hardship. This has been created in particular to address the gap filled by Free School Meals in term time leading to the significant issue of Holiday Hunger. For Devon, the following actions have been agreed

- A £15pw supermarket voucher will be offered for all pupils eligible for Free School Meals to cover the Christmas holidays. This can be redeemed in six supermarkets (Asda, Tesco, Morrisons, Sainsburys, Waitrose, and M&S) and each supermarket will provide a help desk. There will also be some funds/vouchers available via Social Services and SHDC for anyone who is vulnerable and may not be covered.

- DCC is also developing a series of food networks to draw together organisations including foodbanks, community kitchens, holiday clubs, local business, wider charities and schools. Grant funding will be offered for programmes as appropriate. That means, looking ahead there will be a wider range of solutions for applicants to the hardship funds, and also more involvement of local businesses.

Devon Community Foundation will lead on this work and help SHDC to understand what the needs and opportunities are in our area. They will also keep us informed about what organisations have signed up and what programmes are being supported.

SPENDING REVIEW

The 2020 Spending Review was announced on 25 November. It outlines the Government's spending plans for 2021/22 by setting budgets for each central government department. This year's Spending Review provides more certainty for councils next year, but the long-term outlook remains unclear. Public finances will undoubtedly be under huge strain in the years ahead but investment in our local public services is critical to our national recovery next year and beyond.

GREEN HOMES GRANTS

SHDC is offering Green Home Grants worth up to £10,000. The grants can be used to install either an air source heat pump heating system or solid/single wall external insulation. To be eligible:

- Your property must be rated E or below on your Home Energy Performance Certificate, **and**
- You or someone in your household must receive a means tested benefit **or** you must have a net household income of less than £30,000 a year.

Installations will be subject to a technical survey as not every property will be suitable. The funding is limited. You can register your interest at eco@swdevon.gov.uk, confirming what measure you would be interested in.

DEVON CARBON PLAN UPDATE

On 7 December the 25 organisations who make up the Devon Climate Emergency (DCE) partnership, will be launching a consultation on their Interim Carbon Plan.

The Interim Devon Carbon Plan will be updated to a final plan after the Citizens' Assembly which has been postponed due to Covid-19.