



SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15 October 2020

INITIAL REVIEW OF THE RESPONSE BY EAST SUFFOLK COUNCIL TO THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Scrutiny Committee has asked for a factual review of the Council's response to the pandemic. It is noted that the pandemic has not yet passed but, given that seven months has now passed, the Committee considers it appropriate to review the response to date.
2. This report is the first of two reports and provides information on the following key areas of the response for Members to consider:
 - Community Support
 - Business Support
 - Homelessness
3. The second report will provide the Committee with an update on the emergency planning process, winter preparedness, the Test, Track and Trace process and communications during the pandemic.

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| Is the report Open or Exempt? | Open |
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| Wards Affected: | All Wards |
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| Cabinet Members: | CLlr Mary Rudd, Cabinet Member for Community Health CLlr Letitia Smith, Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure and Tourism |
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| Supporting Officers: | <p>Stephen Baker, Chief Executive 01394 444378 stephen.baker@eastsuffolk.gov.uk</p> <p>Nicole Rickard, Head of Communities 01502 523231 nicole.rickard@eastsuffolk.gov.uk</p> <p>Paul Wood, Head of Economic Development & Regeneration 01394 444249 paul.wood@eastsuffolk.gov.uk</p> <p>Cairistine Foster-Cannan, Head of Housing 01502 523144 cairistine.foster-cannan@eastsuffolk.gov.uk</p> |
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Covid 19 coronavirus pandemic has had a profound global impact, and this effect has been felt by the communities, businesses, and people of East Suffolk. The pandemic is far from over. However, the Scrutiny Committee has asked that they be given the opportunity to review the response of East Suffolk Council to the pandemic, so far.
- 1.2 The Scrutiny Committee has been very clear about the scope of the review and the type of report they require. Accordingly, this report is pithy in style, and factual in content, providing the facts about the response by East Suffolk Council that the Committee has requested, allowing Members of the Committee to reach their own conclusions about the response to date.
- 1.3 Given the amount of information that pertains to the response to the pandemic, the Scrutiny Committee will consider this in two parts, over two meetings. This will allow adequate time for the Committee to consider the issues in depth.

2 INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESPONSE TO THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC

- 2.1 This is the first of two reports. In the appendices attached to this report are the statistics and information that relate to the following areas:
 - Community Support
 - Business Support
 - Homelessness
- 2.2 These appendices provide a summary of the activity undertaken by the Council in response to the pandemic. This response has, in many areas, been a joint response with partners, volunteers and other agencies.
- 2.3 The second report to the Scrutiny Committee will include detailed information on the Emergency Planning processes and winter preparedness, the Test, Track and Trace system and Communications during the pandemic.

Winter Preparedness

Although detailed information on the issue of winter preparedness will be provided in the second report, in order to provide Members of the Committee with some reassurance, given the time of year, Members are advised that the issue of winter preparedness is being addressed. In addition to the usual preparatory work, further assessments are being made of the extra implications of the ongoing pandemic, assuming it will continue through the winter months.

3 HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO THE EAST SUFFOLK BUSINESS PLAN?

- 3.1 When the East Suffolk Business Plan was written and developed, a global pandemic was not anticipated. However, the impact of the pandemic has been taken into account as work on the Business Plan has continued. Strenuous efforts have been made to minimise the effect of the pandemic on the delivery of the Business Plan. Unfortunately, some impact has been inevitable, and this is being identified as the themes within the Plan are reviewed.
- 3.2 The wider and longer-term impact of the pandemic is, as yet, unknown. However, the Council will need to assess the effect on mental and physical health and wellbeing within its communities and on its role in keeping people well. The economic impact is also likely to be far-reaching and the Council will need to consider how this affects its role in maintaining inclusive growth in East Suffolk.

4 FINANCIAL AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The financial effect of the pandemic has been significant and multi-faceted; income has reduced, expenditure has increased, and the extent of the financial impact is not yet known. The scoping report for this review by the Scrutiny Committee did not include the financial impact of the pandemic and so those issues have not been included in this report.
- 4.2 The response to the pandemic has required a huge collective effort by many organisations from all sectors; this has required complex governance arrangements and has tackled issues such as data management. Given that the Scrutiny Committee has focused on operational detail within the scope of its review, these issues are not referenced within this report.

5 OTHER KEY ISSUES

- 5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Scrutiny Committee consider the contents of this first report and make appropriate recommendations to Cabinet, to be considered as part of the continuing response to the Covid 19 pandemic.

APPENDICES

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Appendix A | Community Support |
| Appendix B | Economic Support |
| Appendix C | Homelessness |
| Appendix D | Questions from Committee Members and answers |

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

East Suffolk Communities Team Covid-19 Response Overview

25 March to 31 July 2020



Home But Not Alone (HBNA)

The Home But Not Alone Community Hub is a partnership between Suffolk County Council and the five District and Borough Councils in Suffolk. It was set up by the Suffolk Collaborative Communities Board to support anyone in Suffolk vulnerable to the impacts of Covid-19 due to self-isolation. This includes those with medical conditions which increase their risk of catching Covid-19 (those 'shielding'), those living alone and Over 70's.

Home, But Not Alone

Supporting vulnerable people in Suffolk

The Home, But Not Alone free phoneline is for people who need **urgent** help and support during the Coronavirus pandemic. It is only for people who do not have support available from friends, family or neighbours and are struggling for food, medicines or other essential supplies.

Coronavirus Emergency Phoneline

0800 876 6926

9am-5pm every day
For all other enquiries please visit: www.suffolk.gov.uk/homebutnotalone

East Suffolk residents were encouraged to call the freephone number (above) if they could not get help from friends and family to access food, medication, and other essentials, or if they were feeling lonely or isolated. Calls were triaged by either SCC or ESC Customer Services Staff, depending on the needs of the customer. All East Suffolk calls were then passed to one of the eight Communities Officers, depending on which Community Partnership area the call related to.

East Suffolk HBNA Referrals

The total number of referrals in East Suffolk between 25 March 2020 and 31 July 2020 (just over 18 weeks) was **1,841**. Most of these referrals came through the Customer Services Team (who overall dealt with **2,172** Home But Not Alone calls). East Suffolk Council was the only District to have a self-referral form on its website (which collected the same information as the call handlers), and we think that this was worth doing as **360 (of the 1,841) referrals came through this route**. Of the 1841 referrals, the needs identified can be broken down as follows:

| Need | Number | Percentage |
|--|--------------|-------------|
| Food – urgent/no food (red), 1-3 days' supply (amber), 3-7 days' supply or 7 days plus supply (green) | 1271 | 59.0% |
| Medicine – urgent/no medication (red), 1-3 days' supply (amber), 3-7 days' supply or 7 days plus (green) | 643 | 30.0% |
| Social isolation/Loneliness | 123 | 5.0% |
| Other e.g. social work support, dog walking, pet food | 134 | 6.0% |
| TOTAL | 2,171 | 100% |

In total **1,217 calls were classified as 'urgent'**. **498** of the 1,271 **Food referrals were 'urgent'** – meaning the caller had less than 24 hours food supply left - and **259** of the 643 **Medicine referrals were 'urgent'** – meaning that their prescription ran out in less than 24 hours.

The referrals to Home But Not Alone in East Suffolk, broken down by week, were as follows:

| WEEK | DATE | REFERRALS |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| 0 (PART WEEK) | 25 – 30 March | 82 |
| 1 | 30 March – 5 April | 216 |
| 2 | 6 – 12 April | 201 |
| 3 | 13 – 19 April | 201 |
| 4 | 20 – 26 April | 192 |
| 5 | 27 April – 3 May | 171 |
| 6 | 4 – 10 May | 120 |
| 7 | 11 – 17 May | 114 |
| 8 | 18 – 24 May | 87 |
| 9 | 25 – 31 May | 82 |
| 10 | 1- 7 June | 89 |
| 11 | 8 – 14 June | 77 |
| 12 | 15- 21 June | 49 |
| 13 | 22 – 28 June | 40 |
| 14 | 29 June – 5 July | 36 |
| 15 | 6 – 12 July | 35 |
| 16 | 13 – 19 July | 22 |
| 17 | 20 – 26 July | 19 |
| 18 | 27 – 31 July | 8 |
| TOTAL | | 1,841 |

Shielded/Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Group

In East Suffolk we had just over **14,000 people** (on 31 July) who are in what is known as the 'shielded' or Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) group. These are those people who are medically most vulnerable to Covid-19 and were required to 'shield' until the end of July 2020.

People were included in the shielded group if they:

- have had a solid organ transplant
- have any cancer and are getting chemotherapy
- have lung cancer and are getting radical radiotherapy
- have cancer of the blood or bone marrow (at any stage of treatment) - for example, leukaemia, lymphoma, or myeloma
- have any cancer and are getting immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments
- have any cancer and are getting a targeted treatment which can affect the immune system - for example, protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
- have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or are still taking immunosuppression drugs
- have a severe respiratory condition - including cystic fibrosis, severe asthma, or severe COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease)
- have a rare disease or inborn error of metabolism that significantly increases the risk of infection - for example, SCID or homozygous sickle cell
- are getting an immunosuppression therapy that is sufficient to significantly increase the risk of infection
- are pregnant and have a significant congenital or acquired heart disease

Of the 14,000, only around half - **7,021** - responded to the Government to indicate whether they needed help to access essential supplies e.g. a food parcel and/or priority access to online shopping. At the end of shielding on 31 July, **1,013** people said that they needed support to access food, this was over 1,500 people at one point during 'lockdown'.

The Communities Team supported **516 people on the shielded list** with emergency food/medication and other support when they could not access the national food parcel service e.g. if their national food parcel was not delivered for one or more weeks during the shielding period or prior to their first parcel arriving.

The Team received a list of **42 people** in East Suffolk from the national shielding helpline who were flagged nationally as being of '**urgent safeguarding concern**'. We called all of them to check how they were and identified that four of them needed urgent additional support.

We also undertook weekly calls to anyone identified as having a non-delivery of their national food parcel to see if they needed an alternative food supply, and provided them with emergency food if required

HBNA Referrals by Community Partnership area

The breakdown of HBNA referrals by Community Partnership area is shown below:

| Community Partnership | Referrals | % |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| Aldeburgh, Leiston and Saxmundham | 73 | 4.0% |
| Beccles, Bungay and Halesworth | 96 | 5.5% |
| Carlton Colville, Kessingland and Southwold | 87 | 5.0% |
| Felixstowe Peninsular | 113 | 6.0% |
| Framlingham and Wickham Market | 12 | 0.5% |
| Kesgrave and Martlesham | 75 | 4.0% |
| Lowestoft and Northern Parishes | 1302 | 70.5% |
| Melton, Woodbridge and Deben Peninsular | 83 | 4.5% |
| TOTAL | 1841 | 100% |

The huge disparity in the number of referrals is mainly due to the impressive speed and comprehensiveness of the community response in many areas of the District, even before the lock down was confirmed. Communities set up their own local systems quickly and publicised them to anyone in the local community who needed help. The role of HBNA in these Community Partnership areas was to fill in the gaps between existing initiatives.

As can be seen from the table above, **more than seventy per cent of the referrals were from the Lowestoft Community Partnership area** (although it is important to note that this Community Partnership area is almost twice as big as any other Partnership in terms of population).

The table below shows a more detailed breakdown of referral by Community Partnership area by week:

| COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|--|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| ALDEBURGH, LEISTON, SAXMUNDHAM | 11 | 22 | 14 | 5 | 8 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| BECCLES, BUNGAY, HALESWORTH | 5 | 13 | 10 | 11 | 16 | 9 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| CARLTON COLVILLE, KESSINGLAND, SOUTHWOLD | 5 | 11 | 11 | 16 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 7 |
| FELIXSTOWE PENINSULAR | 9 | 9 | 17 | 18 | 13 | 12 | 8 | 7 | 5 | 2 |
| FRAMLINGHAM, WICKHAM MARKET | 0 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| KESGRAVE, MARTLESHAM | 5 | 18 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 11 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| LOWESTOFT & NORTHERN PARISHES | 39 | 119 | 132 | 126 | 133 | 124 | 92 | 89 | 71 | 63 |
| MELTON, WOODBRIDGE, DEBEN PEN | 8 | 21 | 6 | 15 | 8 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| TOTAL | 82 | 216 | 201 | 201 | 192 | 171 | 120 | 114 | 87 | 82 |

| COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | = |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-------------|
| ALDEBURGH, LEISTON, SAXMUNDHAM | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 73 |
| BECCLES, BUNGAY, HALESWORTH | 6 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 96 |
| CARLTON COLVILLE, KESSINGLAND, SOUTHWOLD | 3 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 87 |
| FELIXSTOWE PENINSULAR | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 113 |
| FRAMLINGHAM, WICKHAM MARKET | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 |
| KESGRAVE, MARTLESHAM | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 75 |
| LOWESTOFT & NORTHERN PARISHES | 75 | 68 | 42 | 33 | 27 | 33 | 15 | 12 | 8 | 1302 |
| MELTON, WOODBRIDGE, DEBEN PEN | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 83 |
| TOTAL | 89 | 77 | 49 | 40 | 36 | 35 | 22 | 19 | 8 | 1841 |

Other East Suffolk Communities Team (ESCT) Activity

Covid Protect - in the Norfolk and Waveney CCG area, as part of their Covid Protect scheme, we completed a list of call backs each day (typically between 2 and 5) to patients who completed the CCG Eclipse long term condition questionnaire and indicated that they had additional needs that were not being met. These resulted in a number of new referrals through both Home But Not Alone and other services/sources of support including Adult Social Care and Housing.

Low Income Family Tracker - we led a pilot using LIFT (Low Income Family Tracker) data to target over **120 potentially vulnerable families** in East Suffolk and check whether they need any additional support at this difficult time.

Vulnerability - the Team undertook other more pro-active outbound calls. In May, **we contacted 49 people who were identified as potentially most at risk from Covid-19 due to existing clinical, financial, and social vulnerabilities** using data provided by SODA – the Suffolk Office of Data Analytics. These calls were used to check that these people have support networks in place, that they knew about the Home But Not Alone service and were helped to meet any immediate needs around money, food, health, isolation, and social care support.

Tribe Volunteer - **almost 1600 Suffolk residents signed up to the Tribe volunteer app**. The Communities Team contacted our key groups to see whether they would welcome additional volunteers and led a matching process to link Tribe volunteers to their nearest community group in need of support.

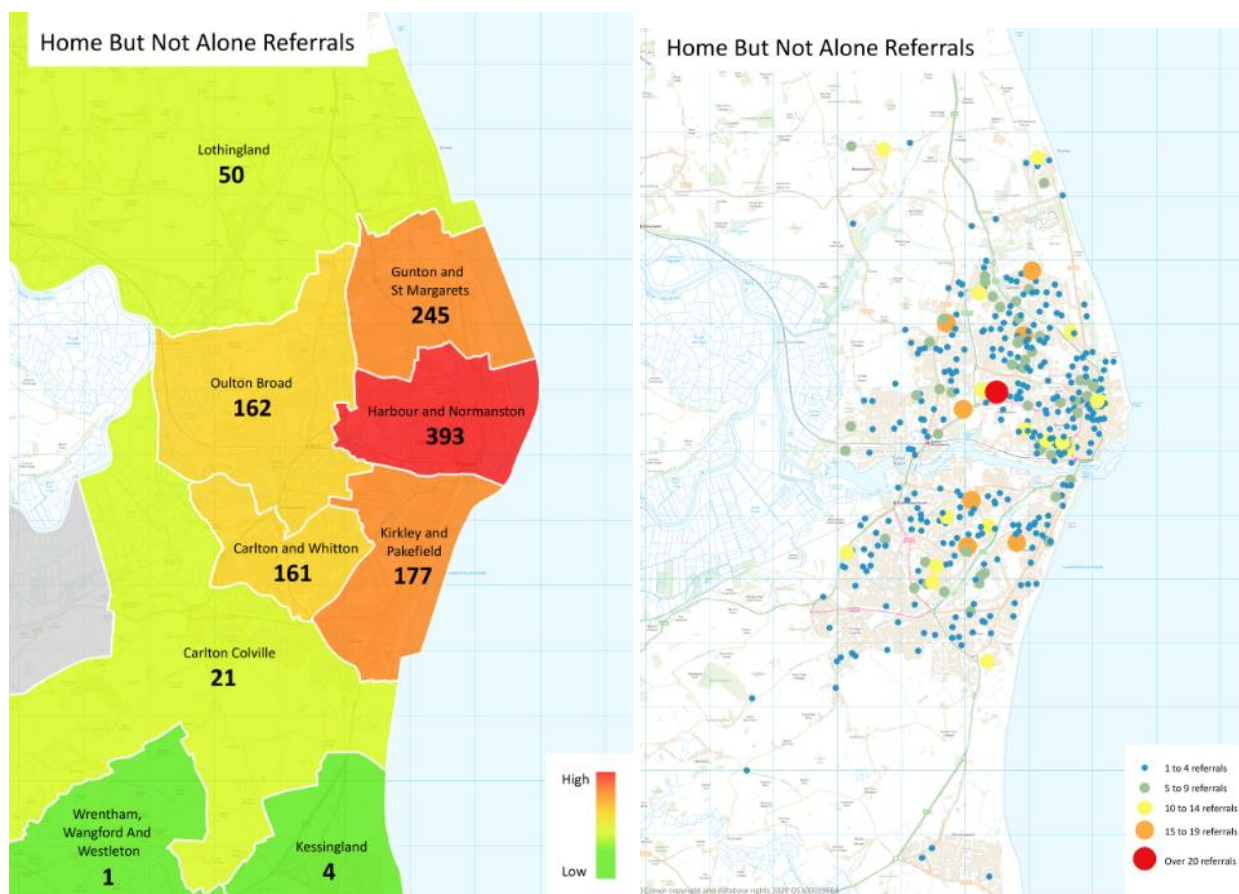
The Team set up a telephone befriending scheme and currently **151 people in this Community Partnership area are receiving weekly calls from a befriender**. Our befrienders include Councillors, staff and other volunteers and we secured funding through the Community Partnership for Citizens Advice North East Suffolk (who run the Solutions Social Prescribing scheme in Lowestoft) to take this service on from August 2020.

Digital Inclusion - Grandpads

Some of the additional funding secured from the Government for our Covid-19 response was used to purchase **25 Grandpads**. Grandpads are aimed at those without access to either IT kit (tablet, laptop, or PC) or Wi-Fi, who are socially isolated and/or lonely. They are simplified tablets with large buttons, unlimited 4G internet and easy to use controls developed by a company called Techsilver and are relatively new to the UK.

Lowestoft HBNA Referrals

The map below shows the home location of the people using the service in the Lowestoft and Northern Parishes Community Partnership area, by ESC ward. **The majority (393) of the referrals during this period were from the Harbour and Normanston ward**, followed by Gunton and St Margarets (245) and Kirkley and Pakefield (177). The second map shows hot spots by postcode in terms of numbers of referrals into the service from that postcode area between 25 March and 31 July 2020:



Access Community Trust received two Hardship Fund grants from the Council to set up a hot food delivery service in the town and the Team identified **36 people to benefit from this service** which will provide a hot meal each day, seven days a week until the end of October.

We have **allocated 125 food boxes** (from the county supply co-ordinated through the Collaborative Communities Board and stored at the Riverside offices) to the most clinically vulnerable who are on the national shielding list and whose delivery failed or who needed food urgently.

Key East Suffolk Covid Community Response Groups

The main groups that each of the Communities Officers have been working with, and making referrals to, are shown below:

| Community Partnership | Key Groups |
|---|--|
| Aldeburgh, Leiston and Saxmundham | Access Community Trust Aldeburgh Good Neighbour Scheme (AGNES) Aldeburgh Town Council Citizens Advice Leiston, Saxmundham and District Leiston GNS St Johns Church, Saxmundham |
| Beccles, Bungay and Halesworth | Beccles Covid-19 Community Response (2) Bungay Emergency Community Support (2) Halesworth & Area Covid-19 Co-ordination Group |
| Carlton Colville, Kessingland and Southwold | Kessingland Covid Group Mutford Parish Council Southwold/Reydon Town Councils Wrentham Parish Council |
| Felixstowe Peninsular | Felixstowe Helping Hands Basic Life Charity FACT Salvation Army |
| Framlingham and Wickham Market | Hour Community Framlingham Town Council Wickham Market GNS |
| Kesgrave and Martlesham | Little Bealings Grundisburgh and District Good Neighbours Carlford Churches Parish Pantry – Grundisburgh and Hasketon Kesgrave Emergency Support Martlesham St Michaels Church Falcon Park Residents Association Rushmere Good Neighbour Scheme Swiland Church Neighbourhood Help Scheme |
| Lowestoft and Northern Parishes | Access Community Trust – Sam's Café Hot Food Coming Together Waveney Feed Waveney Community Friends of Gunton Gunton Baptist Church Group Lowestoft Community Church Food Bank Oulton Churches x3 Pakefield Community Group Salvation Army South / North Lowestoft St Andrews Church Community Fridge Supporting Lowestoft |
| Melton, Woodbridge and Deben Peninsular | Alderton Parish Council Hollesley Good Neighbour Scheme Melton GNS Orford GNS Rendlesham GNS The Teapot Project Woodbridge Emergency Response Group |

East Suffolk Hardship Fund

The Council created a Hardship Fund, with each of our 54 Councillors contributing at least £1,000, and most contributing £2,000, from their Enabling Communities Budget. This was matched with £20,000 from the Community Partnership Board, specifically for social isolation and loneliness and £15,000 from the Communities Team Budget, giving a total fund of £134,000.

All funding bids were processed within 48 hours and, so far, £124,000 of this funding has been allocated through grants to 62 different groups as shown in the table below (by Community Partnership area):

| Community Partnership | Groups Funded | Amount |
|---|---|--|
| Aldeburgh, Leiston and Saxmundham | Aldeburgh Good Neighbour Scheme Aldeburgh Town Council Citizens Advice Leiston & Saxmundham x 2 Leiston Good Neighbour Scheme IP17 Good Neighbour Scheme Young People Taking Action | £2,500 £2,500 £2,500 / £2,500 £2,500 £2,500 £200 / £1,000 |
| Beccles, Bungay and Halesworth | Beccles During Covid-19 x 2 Bungay Town Council x 2 Halesworth Volunteer Centre Pear Tree Fund | £2,500 / £1,000 £2,500 / £2,500 £3,000 £742 |
| Carlton Colville, Kessingland and Southwold | Southwold Town Council Southgen Reydon Town Council The Attic PRU | £1,500 £2,500 £1,500 £90 |
| Felixstowe Peninsular | Explorers at Felixstowe Salvation Army Levington and Stratton Hall PC | £480 £152 |
| Framlingham and Wickham Market | Great Glemham PC Hour Community/Framlingham TC x 2 Station House - Campsea Ashe Yoxford Covid-19 Support | £1,000 £3,500 / £2,500 / £2,000 £2,500 £250 |
| Kesgrave and Martlesham | Café 66 Kesgrave Emergency Support Kesgrave High School | £2,500 £103 £500 |
| Lowestoft and Northern Parishes | Access Community Trust – Sam’s Café Allsorts Support Service Afghanistan & Central Asian Association Baby Basics Lowestoft Coming Together Waveney Corton Parish Council Feed Waveney Community Lowestoft Food Bank Supporting Lowestoft Women Like Me | £2,000 / £3,000 £1,000 £975 £500 £1,000 £500 £1,200 £2,500 £1,000 £300 |
| Melton, Woodbridge and Deben Peninsular | Bromeswell PC Melton Good Neighbour Scheme Oyster Inn, Butley Rendlesham Good Neighbour Scheme Teapot Project Transition Woodbridge Village Voices magazine x 2 Woodbridge Emergency Response Group | £120 £895 £2,500 £600 £2,312 / £947 / £1,536 £265 £1,100 / £1,100 £1,500 |
| East Suffolk wide | Age UK Suffolk Active Lives Alzheimer’s Society Angels and Rainbows Clic Sargent Aspect Living Foundation Disability Advice North East Suffolk Equal Lives Faceshields for NHS Green Light Trust | £2,500 / £2,500 £2,500 £2,000 £480 £2,500 £2,500 £500 £2,500 £2,500 £2,500 / £1,500 |

| | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| | Headway Suffolk | £1,000 |
| | Home Start | £1,500 |
| | Inspire Suffolk | £1,000 |
| | Liquid 11 (GNS phone tree) | £2,500 |
| | Papworth Trust | £2,600 |
| | Parents and Children Together (PACT) | £500 |
| | Royal Mencap Society | £2,500 |
| | Rural Coffee Caravan | £2,500 |
| | SPOT Wellbeing | £250 |
| | Suffolk Sight | £1,700 |
| | The Voice Cloud | £1,900 / £1,900 |

Next Steps

Whilst HBNA ‘paused’ on 31 July, given that people were no longer required to shield as of this date, the Team is ready to stand it back up, quickly, in the event of a local or national lockdown and/or people being put back into shielding. It is important to note that in the event of a future lockdown or people going back into shielding, Councils will be responsible for ensuring that people can access food – there will be no national food parcel scheme.

We continue to work alongside our East Suffolk community response groups to support their ongoing work within their communities and as part of the Suffolk Collaborative Communities Board, whose focus is now on those who are newly vulnerable and those with multiple vulnerabilities.

The East Suffolk Community Partnership Board at its meeting in June identified three priorities for the Community Recovery:

- Social isolation and loneliness
- Sustaining community hubs and community resilience
- Supporting the most vulnerable people and places

At its September meeting the Board allocated £180,000 to four projects – an extension of the Hidden Needs Grants Programme, a further 25 Grandpads (Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG have funded a further 50, so that brings the total to 100 Grandpads), a volunteering campaign to retain recent ‘Covid’ volunteers and promote volunteering as a pathway to work, and a new East Suffolk ‘Bounce Back’ fund to help VCSE organisations to survive and thrive, including those supporting young people, involving volunteers, key to prevention and community buildings.

Covid Response Scrutiny Report – Economic Development

Summary

Impact

- UK Economy contracted by an unprecedented 20% in Q2 (financial crisis highest quarterly contraction was 2%)
- Unemployment in East Suffolk increased by 90% between March and July
 - 30,000 employees furloughed
 - 9,100 claims to the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme

Response

- £66m of Small Business, Retail/ Hospitality/ Leisure and Discretionary Grants allocated to over 5,800 businesses
- Engagement with over 4,000 businesses to provide support and guidance
- 9,300 visits to the dedicated Covid page on East Suffolk Means Business website between March – August

Immediate Response

The Economic Development (ED) team were involved in distributing over £66m to more than 5,800 businesses via the Small Business, Retail/ Hospitality/ Leisure and Discretionary Grants schemes. This support has been vital in maintaining the viability of these businesses and retaining employment during the lockdown and subsequent reopening. This involved the team directly contacting more than 1500 businesses to ensure they were made aware of the grants available.

The team also established a dedicated Covid19 support page on the [East Suffolk Means Business website](#) which provided a comprehensive guide to all the local, regional and national support available to businesses, self-employed and employees. Since March the website received almost 9,300 views demonstrating its value during the crisis. Alongside this a very proactive social media campaign was run informing businesses of the latest announcements, support available and news.

Since the beginning of the crisis the team have engaged with almost 4,000 businesses to provide support and guidance.

The team works very closely with the various business associations, in fact they assisted the establishment of a number of them, in east Suffolk to ensure effective engagement with the micro/ small business community and established a small grant scheme for BAs to allow them to adapt and enhance the support they provided to their businesses.

In addition to these specific measures East Suffolk Council's (ESC) ED team has worked closely with our fellow Councils, Chambers of Commerce and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) across Norfolk and Suffolk to ensure the most comprehensive package of support was being delivered to businesses in need. This culminated in the Norfolk and Suffolk Restart Plan which was launched in June.

Recovery

The ED team led on the implementation of the 'Reopening High Streets Safely Fund', a central government funded initiative to support the safe reopening of town centres following the easing of lockdown measures. This involved working with all the Town Councils in east Suffolk to determine

what measures they required on their high streets to ensure people could safely return to the town centres whilst obeying social distancing guidance.

Measures implemented included road closures in Felixstowe, Woodbridge, Halesworth and Beccles town centres to aid social distancing. These measures were greatly assisted by the Environmental Health team, in particular Tim Durell. Other measures included a 'shop local, stay safe' PR campaign developed by the ED team to encourage people to start using east Suffolk high streets, services, and attractions safely again. This campaign is highly flexible and can respond to any new measures which are implemented. Other measures under the RHSSF included the provision of signs and barriers to support adherence to social distancing guidelines and on street hand sanitisers.

A number of existing ED initiatives have been adapted to ensure they reflect the challenges and opportunities the Covid crisis has posed the local economy. These include the Town Centre revitalisation programme which involved additional resources and a tool kit providing recovery guidance to support town centre businesses. Furthermore, several town action plans have been enabled which include measures to tackle and adapt to Covid challenges.

The Smart Towns initiative, which forms part of the Town Centre programme now includes a Digital First Aid package, developed in response to Covid to support businesses in making digital adaptations to support new ways of working.

The Youth Employment Service (YES), which the ESC ED and Communities teams established in partnership with SCC and aims to support young people who are NEET into employment, training and volunteering was rapidly adapted to a virtual service so that this vital support, which is now even more critical could continue.

East Suffolk's annual business festival, which is due to take place this autumn will focus on promoting all the support that is available, large scale investments which will inspire confidence in the local economy and provide opportunities, promoting good news stories. This will supplement the regional Restart Festival which the ES ED team will be participating in.

The ED&R team have established and are directly involved with the delivery of a number of high profile projects, which means that ES is well placed to recover strongly from the Covid recession. These projects include:

- **Lowestoft Town Investment Plan** – this plan includes a £25m capital investment in the towns public realm to diversify and attract further investment in the town centre which will be delivered over the next 6 years.
- **Town Centre revitalisation programme** (incl Smart Towns) – see above
- **Felixstowe Business Improvement District** – Felixstowe Forward team have enabled the development of the BID business plan which goes to ballot in the autumn. If approved this will allow businesses to raise additional funding to enhance and promote the town centre at a time when such areas are facing increased challenges due to Covid.
- **Felixstowe South Seafront Development** – £1m public realm and new café/ community space which will increase and enhance the tourism offer
- **Felixstowe/ Harwich Freeport bid** – ED team leading ESC's input into these major initiatives which could see huge economic growth in around the port
- **Leiston town centre regeneration scheme** – proposals for a two phased scheme, put forward by Leiston Community Land Trust, that will benefit Leiston town centre. To include a new area of open space and housing.

Fishing

'Call4fish' was introduced to enable the industry to sell directly to consumers via a web-based platform following the collapse of the restaurant market. The initiative has now expanded to provide business support to the sector across Norfolk and Suffolk. This is a further demonstration of the value of ESC led collaboration as the scheme is jointly funded by ESC, SCC, Norfolk CC and the LEP and instigated by ESC.

Arts & Culture

Established the ES Arts and Performance Forum to understand the specific challenges facing this sector with venues unlikely to reopen until Spring 2021. The group is looking at the tangible support that can be provide to the sector through lobbying central govt for additional funding, supporting adaptation and diversification within the sector, ensuring the sector is engaged and can benefit from the ED teams ongoing initiatives such as Smart Towns.

Tourism

The visitor economy was particularly badly hit by the Covid lockdown. Locally and regionally surveys of the sector were undertaken to understand the scale of the issue. This culminated in the production of a regional Tourism Recovery Plan focussing on targeted business support, collaborative campaigns (e.g. 'Unexplored England', which focuses on promoting the area for autumn and spring breaks) and investment in the tourism product. This sector is particularly important for ES as it accounts for 15% of total employment and is worth £695m pa, and rising, annually.

Rough Sleeping and Homelessness

This short report outlines the Council's response to COVID-19 in regard to homelessness and rough sleeping in East Suffolk.

Rough Sleeping

1. In response to the 'Everyone In' initiative by the government in March, the Council closed its night shelter accommodation (the Hub) and relocated clients into self-contained accommodation at Avenue Mansions in Lowestoft. Our Housing Maintenance Team worked alongside local contractors to bring the building back into use in just seven days. The quick response was made possible by the Housing teams working closely together, supported by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), Access Community Trust and other local partners.
2. The Hub service has continued to be delivered from Avenue Mansions and is currently continuing to support rough sleepers. The service will continue to be delivered from this location until the end of the current financial year.
3. Additionally, in late March the Gateway to Homechoice partnership agreed to suspend the choice-based lettings system and implement a special local lettings plan for several weeks to allow each council to individually respond to the urgent need for accommodation due to Covid.
4. East Suffolk Council made the decision to prioritise smaller units of empty council housing stock for emergency housing for Covid placements rather than long-term tenancies to meet this immediate and unprecedented demand. This has helped to keep our costs lower than relying on hotel accommodation.
5. The Housing Needs Team has devised a Personal Housing Plan for each client accommodated to support access to suitable longer-term accommodation and has worked closely with partners to make offers of longer-term accommodation wherever possible.
6. Funding of nearly £10k was received from MHCLG to fund COVID related responses to rough sleeping. However, the costs of our responses go beyond this figure. As such, due to the impact of the pandemic we have worked with MHCLG to reprofile our grant funding allocation. This reprofiling provides sufficient financial support to continue to run the Hub from its new location until the end of the current financial year, and to recruit two new members of staff on a fixed term basis to the Housing Needs Team. The posts will specialise in supporting rough sleepers and are expected to start in October.
7. A further funding bid was also made to MHCLG's 'Next Steps Accommodation Programme'. This funding is targeted specifically at continuing to support those rough sleepers accommodated due to the Covid pandemic. ESC has received the £93k of revenue funding it bid for and this funding will be used to facilitate move on into accommodation in the private rented sector; to provide employment and skills support through a personalised, one-to-one coaching service delivered by Access Community

Trust; and to provide additional emergency beds in the district during the coming months with colder weather.

8. The Government recently announced the end of the moratorium on residential evictions. The moratorium was put in place soon after lockdown was announced and came to an end on 21 September 2020. It is too early to assess the impact of this but the Housing Needs Team are working with the Council's partners to minimise any impact this may have on homelessness and rough sleeping, including working closely with Anglia Revenues Partnership who administer our revenues and benefits services to award Discretionary Housing Payments wherever possible to prevent homelessness.

Interim review of the response of East Suffolk Council to the Covid-19 pandemic

(Part 1 – Community response, business and economic support, homelessness)

Q1: Home But Not Alone (HBNA)

Cllr Mike Deacon

- (a) In the Needs Statistics, what percentage of recipients fell into the Red/Amber/Green criteria regarding food and medicine supplies?
- (b) The report states that at the end of Lockdown, 1013 shielded residents said they needed support. What is happening to them now?
- (c) The HBNA breakdown of referrals by Community Partnership areas sharply indicates the disparity between partnership areas. It explains that some of the areas were very proactive whereas some were not (and I paraphrase). What can be done to encourage those less proactive areas to up their game?
- (d) What long term lessons can be learnt from the huge variations of HBNA referrals shown across the Lowestoft Wards?

Cllr Caroline Topping

It is good to recognise that some local groups sprang into action pretty quickly and therefore it might be that residents were already engaged with those local groups before the HBNA number arrived on their doorstep.

- (e) Are we happy about how the HBNA system worked? How was it advertised? Are we sure it got a good reach (including hard to reach people, those not on social media, in rural communities, disabilities like being blind)?

There were 14,000 people shielding on 31 July 2020 or on CEV, but by week 19 we had only helped 1841 people and some of those numbers would have been repeated requests by some people.

- (f) Are we happy about how many people we reached? How can we reach more people if a second spike happens?

Cllr Louise Gooch

- (g) How was contact made with residents who had 'communication' disabilities, such as having compromised hearing or vision?

Cllr Caroline Topping

Some people are still receiving calls from a 'befriender'. I was not aware of this service and I am sure there are some in my area who would benefit from this.

- (h) Who is providing this service and how do we refer people from our spreadsheet for this?

Cllr Tracey Green

- (i) I would like to see a more detailed breakdown of the statistics by age and location (not by Community Partnership), but I would not want the 15 October 2020 meeting to be dominated by more statistics on a power point.

Cllr David Beavan

- (j) The shielded 14,000 in East Suffolk, what happened to the ones not contacted? Why did only half of them respond, and only 1,500 need help? Was the form straightforward? Danger of people falling through the gap between Council efforts and community groups? Need for more coordination?
- (k) How do we gear up to help shielded (still wary) isolators, long Covid, mental health (social prescribing), unemployed?
- (l) GDPR and medical confidentiality – get permission from East Suffolk Council applicants for referral to local group where available?

A1:

- (a) 39% of Food referrals were Red/Urgent, 46% were Amber and 15% were Green. 42% of Medicine referrals were Red/Urgent, 40% were Amber and 18% were Green.
- (b) These 1013 residents were the ones that were receiving the free doorstep Government food parcels. Towards the end of the shielding period, they were contacted by the Government and asked to contact HBNA if they required any assistance to access food or prescriptions beyond 31 July 2020. From this date shielding ended and, along with the general population, people who were shielding were able to go to the supermarket/shops/chemist. Towards the end of HBNA (and for four weeks after 31 July 2020) the Communities Team spent time supporting people into self-sufficiency eg to register with supermarkets for their priority slot, to contact their local shop for a delivery, to register for prescription deliveries etc.
- (c) 70% of referrals were from the Lowestoft and Northern Parishes Community Partnership area, mainly due to the lack of community response groups in large parts of the area. Since the end of shielding, the Communities Team has met with both the Town Council and with a Task and Finish Group of Lowestoft Rising to discuss the gaps and what we can do to reduce the impact of the gaps in the town in the event of people being put back into shielding and/or a general lockdown. Various ideas have been discussed, including working more closely with sports and other local groups to identify volunteers, a volunteering campaign targeting Lowestoft and closer working with the Town Council, including potentially greater use of Town Council resource. It is important to note that some groups eg in Pakefield and Oulton, were very effective in supporting their local community.
- (d) As outlined above, the variation in referrals (both within the Lowestoft and Northern Parishes Community Partnership area and between this area and others) highlighted the gaps in groups in some of the most deprived areas of the town and/or the reliance of existing groups on older volunteers who were unable to undertake their role because they themselves were shielding or were over 70 and therefore isolating. We have commenced a piece of work with Community Action Suffolk, focussed around both volunteering and additional support for local groups, to try and stimulate/enable community action in order

to fill these gaps and will be working with Access Community Trust on a project around Community Circles (see response to Q3(d)).

- (e) Overall, HBNA worked well and was a real team effort between East Suffolk Council, Suffolk County Council and Community Action Suffolk (at a county level through the Collaborative Communities Board), and our network of local groups. There have been comments that it took a while to set up HBNA but it was live by the 23 March 2020 which, for a county-wide system set up from scratch with a new phone line and tailored response services around food, prescriptions, isolation/loneliness, personal care, mental health and various other issues, is a reasonable response.

Every household in Suffolk received a flyer (although this took longer than anticipated because of Royal Mail's delivery time of three weeks). There was also promotion in the written press and on the radio, as well as through social media. Information was also disseminated through disability charities and support groups (eg Suffolk Family Carers and the Alzheimer's Society) to try to ensure that as many people as possible were reached.

- (f) Although only 516 people (approximately a third overall) who were shielding were supported through HBNA, it is important to remember that this group had access to national food parcel deliveries, prescription delivery schemes and support from the NHS Responders (formerly known as GoodSam app volunteers). For this group, HBNA was intended to be a back-up service if things went wrong eg they did not receive their food parcel, or their source of support was no longer available. The majority of the referrals we received were from those who were isolating and vulnerable, rather than shielding eg over 70s without access to help from family and friends.
- (g) We worked through specific support groups like the Disability Advice Service, Disability Advice North East Suffolk (who we funded to extend their service), Suffolk Sight and Sensing Change.
- (h) Many local groups in East Suffolk set up their own befriending or buddy schemes but because of the gaps in some parts of Lowestoft and the high numbers of people identified as experiencing social isolation and loneliness in the town, the Communities Team set up a new befriending scheme for the town. The befrienders were a mixture of staff, Councillors and community volunteers. This project has now been funded through the Lowestoft and Northern Parishes Community Partnership and handed over to North East Suffolk Citizens Advice (who deliver social prescribing in Lowestoft) who are running the new 'Voice of a Friend' programme. They have indicated that they may be able to extend this to the wider Waveney area.
- (i) We did not collect information about age, although lots of people using the service were over 80. In terms of more detailed geographical statistics, we have this for Lowestoft but not for the other areas of the district. We could produce this, but it would require a significant amount of work.
- (j) Contact was attempted with everyone on the shielded list by the Government contact centre at least seven times. Many people chose not to respond, despite everyone on the shielding list being asked to register on the website even if it was just to indicate that they did not need any support because they had help from family and friends. Given that contact was attempted multiple times via landline and mobile phones, that everyone in Suffolk had a HBNA postcard delivered to their door and many local groups produced their own doorstep publicity, hopefully most of those who needed help in East Suffolk were reached.

- (k) There is definitely scope to work more closely with the three social prescribing schemes in East Suffolk (Solutions Lowestoft, Social Connections (South Waveney) and Connect for Health). A piece of work has been commenced by a sub-group of the Collaborative Communities Board, led by Community Action Suffolk, to check the position of local response groups to be able to support vulnerable people on an ongoing basis. The new Local Welfare Assistance Scheme (LWAS) is helping people impacted by Covid-19 to access white goods, furniture and fuel vouchers, and a new service is being set up through the network of Citizens Advice, primarily aimed at the newly vulnerable as a consequence of Covid-19. East Suffolk Council is undertaking a piece of work focussed on helping people to navigate the various sources of advice and support about training and employment and we are also currently mapping befriending schemes and identifying gaps.
- (l) Communities Officers usually identified to the applicants that they would be contacting a specific local group and that they would be making contact.

Q2: Rough Sleepers

Cllr Mike Deacon

- (a) How many rough sleepers were housed at the height of the pandemic?
- (b) Currently how many remain in accommodation?
- (c) Is there a breakdown of rough sleepers per Community Partnership area?
- (d) Apart from the individual use of the Council's housing stock, is Avenue Mansions the only facility in the district?
- (e) As there is no Council housing stock in the former Suffolk Coastal area, what provision was made for rough sleepers in this area?

Cllr David Beavan

- (f) Any updated figures on homelessness after the eviction embargo ended?

A2:

- (a) Just after the Government's 'everyone in' instruction at the end of March 2020, East Suffolk Council made the necessary arrangements to accommodate 26 clients. The figures increased over the months of April, May and June to a maximum of 38 at the peak. These were known rough sleepers, as well as people who presented themselves to us as being at risk of rough sleeping, and those living in our 'Somewhere Safe to Stay Hub' which was night shelter style provision with communal sleeping areas. Whilst this represents the vast majority of rough sleepers in our district, it should be noted that 3 clients could not be accommodated - 2 of these clients repeatedly refused accommodation and 1 has such a complex and challenging set of support needs that a multi-agency approach is being taken with Health and Social Care partners and a specialist accommodation solution will be required.
- (b) Five of the 38 placed are still in the emergency accommodation provided in response to the 'everyone in' initiative. The remaining 33 have been offered 'move on' accommodation. This has been a mixture of privately rented, social rented and supported accommodation depending on the individual needs and circumstances of the client. Each client was

allocated a named officer to support them and a Personal Housing Plan was prepared setting out the housing and support needs of every rough sleeper accommodated. We are also working with new rough sleepers to the streets of which there are around 12 at present, although this figure also fluctuates quite frequently and so there is ongoing demand for our Hub and other rough sleeping provisions.

- (c) Whilst we do not usually record rough sleeping information in this way, over recent weeks we have been aware of rough sleepers in the following Community Partnership areas:

Lowestoft and Northern Parishes

Felixstowe Peninsular

Melton, Woodbridge and Deben Peninsular

Kesgrave, Rushmere St Andrew, Martlesham, Carlford and Fynn Valley

It should be noted that rough sleepers do often have transient lifestyles and can move between areas.

- (d) In terms of accommodating rough sleepers during the pandemic, East Suffolk Council used Avenue Mansions and other units of its own stock, properties within our Private Sector Leased scheme, properties leased from Registered Providers, hotels where we have ongoing arrangements for temporary accommodation, and supported housing provided by Access Community Trust and Sanctuary. In more general terms, we work closely with partners across the district and there are a number of accommodation options for rough sleepers including all of the options set out above.
- (e) Four rough sleepers from the south of the district were placed during the pandemic - 1 in Registered Provider leased accommodation, 1 in a House of Multiple Occupation and 2 (a couple) in a private rented sector property. In general terms, we do have provision in the south of the district which comprises hotel accommodation, Registered Provider leased units and supported accommodation. Clients in the south of the district are also offered accommodation in the north as long as this is suitable and reasonable taking into consideration any support needs.
- (f) It is still very soon after the moratorium being lifted to establish its impacts on demand. The courts have large backlogs to get through and so we do not anticipate understanding the full impact of the moratorium coming to an end for some time, possibly not until well into 2021. However, we are aware of one family who have approached us with an eviction warrant, albeit this is not directly related to Covid. We are aware of c70 cases under a threat of eviction for a number of reasons and we are working closely with them to prevent as many instances of homelessness as possible. We have concentrated our efforts on trying to identify those Council/Registered Provider/Private Rented Sector tenants who would benefit from assistance via a Discretionary Housing Payment, administered by the Housing Benefits Team, to enable us to save their tenancy and are taking this work forward at pace with the Anglia Revenues Partnership. We have also been working with our in-house Citizens Advice worker to ensure that everyone has an up to date affordability assessment in place. We have attempted engagement and mediation with landlords throughout the lockdown period and in all cases where we have accepted a 'homelessness prevention duty.' These attempts have been successful in some cases, although some landlords do not wish to engage and/or will still be evicting because they are selling or have other reasons why they do not wish the tenants to remain. We are currently holding weekly meetings to understand each case and to thoroughly assess the options available that will enable us to save as many tenancies as possible.

Q3: Community Access Suffolk

Cllr Caroline Topping

- (a) They have been invited to attend as a key provider of support (unless I am mistaken), but it appears to me they only helped with two groups (Aldeburgh, Leiston and Saxmundham and Lowestoft Northern Parishes). Are they happy with their performance? I had thought, as they had been asked to be a key witness, that they had provided more extensive support?

Cllr David Beavan

- (b) Can we integrate local volunteer groups, where they exist, more closely into the local authority organisation and give them something to do?
- (c) Where they do not exist, how can we help?
- (d) Should Community Access Trust get funding to co-ordinate Lowestoft groups? We could send volunteers from oversubscribed areas like Southwold to help in Lowestoft?

A3:

- (a) Community Action Suffolk was a key partner for East Suffolk Council in mapping and supporting its response groups and provided a huge amount of proactive support to groups across the county throughout the pandemic. They provided materials on their website to support both existing and new (mutual aid) groups, they provided one to one advice and support (for response groups, community buildings, Good Neighbour Schemes etc) on a wide range of topics including funding, PPE, operating safely, handling money, safeguarding etc and held webinars on key topics. They also undertook regular surveys on the 'state of the VCSE sector', the results of which were fed into the Collaborative Communities Board for consideration and action and worked with all Suffolk Councils on the SWOT analysis of the community response.
- (b) The Communities Officers are maintaining contact with their response groups and are working with Community Action Suffolk to support those who want to transition into a more formal Good Neighbour Scheme that provides support to the local community on an ongoing basis (with the potential to expand its remit in the event of a further lockdown). This would be the ideal path for many of the groups to go down as there is an Good Neighbour Scheme Officer at Community Action Suffolk who can work with them to formalise their group (including considerations such as governance and safeguarding) and enable them to meet the needs of their community on an ongoing basis. However, this is not what all groups want to do and some have paused and are not currently active.
- (c) See response regarding Lowestoft in 1(c). The idea of excess volunteers helping to fill the gaps in some areas is a good one and would certainly have helped the hub in Lowestoft at the height of the pandemic. We did identify a good network of volunteers in the town through social media and the local papers, but struggled to fulfil referrals when furlough ended and those volunteers went back to work.
- (d) Access Community Trust is being funded through Barclays to establish Community Circles in Lowestoft and has offered, as part of their role in Lowestoft Rising, to incorporate a co-ordination role for local community groups/Community Circles, working closely with Council staff. The two are definitely not mutually exclusive and any new volunteers we can identify for wards like Harbour and Kirkley would clearly benefit from working alongside experienced volunteers from other areas who were active during the first lockdown.

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| <p>Q4: Age UK <i>Cllr Caroline Topping</i></p> <p>(a) When did Age UK Suffolk get awarded their 2 x £2,500 and for what purpose? Can we track what this money was used for as I believe they have since ceased to exist? Are we sure the money was spent wisely?</p> |
| <p>A4:</p> <p>(a) They received their funding on 4 April and 6 June 2020. The first grant was for core services to continue through the pandemic and the second was to continue their Good Day Call scheme. They have since ceased to exist and this has had a huge impact on individuals across the county.</p> |
| <p>Q5: HBNA <i>Cllr Caroline Topping</i></p> <p>The HBNA process was somewhat lengthy and by the time I telephoned a referral, it was the third call that person had had either that day, or within two days.</p> <p>(a) Are we sure that this is an efficient use of resources? Do we think it is potentially confusing for the client to have 2 or 3 people telephone them in that short space of time and does it make us look inefficient? Is there a more efficient way to do this?</p> <p><i>Cllr Tracey Green</i></p> <p>(b) This is an extension of Councillor Topping's question in relation to the communication and our processes of the HBNA service. What timescales were we working to from initial public request for help to delivery of service? Did we have a service level agreement in place? This was a national scheme. Did East Suffolk Council receive any instruction from central Government regarding service delivery?</p> <p><i>Cllr David Beavan</i></p> <p>(c) Requests went to HBNA, then to East Suffolk Council's Communities Team, then to local volunteers. Can this chain be improved by cutting out HBNA ie making it East Suffolk specific? (FYI - there is a Covid mutual aid group in the Southwold ward with 415 members – Sole Bay Virus Help on Facebook).</p> |
| <p>A5:</p> <p>(a) HBNA was always intended as a back-up service, there for those who were not aware of the support available from their local groups, or where a local group did not exist. Once the initial outline referral was received, the role of the Communities Officers was to contact the individual in order to triage their referral and check the best response route eg are they on the shielding list? When should their food parcel have been delivered? Had they alternative sources of support? Did they need to access the food bank? In some cases individuals rang all of the numbers they had and therefore made contact with their local group, HBNA and other organisations at the same time but as long as we were able to join up locally, which we did, this is better than them not knowing who to call (as per the question above about reaching everyone who needed support).</p> |

- (b) HBNA was not a national scheme but was set up for Suffolk by the Collaborative Communities Board and delivered through the East Suffolk Council Communities Team (working with partners and local response groups) in East Suffolk. The only instruction from the Government was that each area must set up a service to support anyone who might be vulnerable and in need of help. HBNA was available to anyone in Suffolk (shielding or not) who could not get support from family or friends. Any referrals that came into HBNA were always dealt with the same day (even at the weekend) if they were urgent, but most people were contacted the same day if their referrals were urgent or not. The Shielding Support was delivered nationally through a national contact centre and national food parcel deliveries. The only specific service expectations from Government in relation to the shielding group was that we would follow up food parcel non-deliveries (provided to us on a weekly basis from week 6), contact those identified as urgent safeguarding referrals (provided as a spreadsheet three times during the lockdown) and help and advice on our local population as necessary.
- (c) The purpose of referrals going through HBNA was so that any relating to personal care, mental health support or other services that are Suffolk County Council's responsibility could be dealt with by them. Over 12,000 calls were dealt with through the helpline overall, up to the end of August 2020. Basic information was taken which allowed the referrals to be passed to the relevant Communities Officer who knows the patch and knows the active groups in their area. In many cases, the referrals were multi-faceted and the team made onward referrals in a range of directions. We produced a handbook of sources of support which allowed us to pick up some of the wide issues around money, mental health, disability, benefits etc.

Q6: Food parcels

Cllr Caroline Topping

The NHS food parcels were inconsistent. People who were shielding thought they would get one and some people got week 1 and then did not get another for several weeks. Some people did not get them until much later in the lockdown. The boxes were not tailor-made, so some items did not fit with health issues/lifestyles and items were not required, so I was getting calls to collect the stuff back in and either redistributing or giving to the food bank. If local people had been doing the distribution it could have been more efficient. We then had people who cancelled the NHS boxes, only to find they also had lost their priority supermarket slots.

- (a) How will this be addressed?

Cllr Louise Gooch

- (b) Was there any provision for those with special dietary requirements in terms of emergency food parcels?

Cllr David Beavan

- (c) Do you agree that food parcels were incorrectly delivered to shielded people?
- (d) Would it be better to use local volunteers who could maintain regular human contact as well?
- (e) Would it also be better to have locally sourced fresh food?

- (f) Can we make sure that if someone declines the food parcel, they do not lose their supermarket priority slot next time?

A6:

- (a) There will not be a national food parcel service during any future lockdowns; councils will be responsible for access to food. There were problems with the national deliveries but that was the system we had to work with; we had no local flexibility. A local system would have been more flexible, but during wave 1 it was not an option. In terms of the future, the Government is keen that people are much more self-sufficient and so our role as East Suffolk Council will be to 'connect' people to food rather than supply it. A piece of work is underway to establish the capacity and support needs of all local food banks and to understand what local response groups can provide in terms of access to food.
- (b) No, they were standard, very basic, food parcels full of ambient goods. We were able to supplement some with fresh produce provided by Morrisons and Lowestoft Town Council in Lowestoft. Where people had special dietary requirements, they had to be met by us locally through HBNA, often by the local response groups.
- (c) Around a fifth of the calls received through HBNA from week 4 and beyond were about missing food parcels, parcels delivered to the wrong addresses and from people who no longer wanted their parcel as they had managed to access a supermarket delivery slot.
- (d) As outlined above, we did not have any choice in wave 1; it was a national system, delivered nationally and there was no scope for variation at a local level. We are currently exploring various options for both those who cannot access food and those who cannot access or afford food in the event of a second wave of shielding.
- (e) The logistics and the differences between areas would be a challenge, but yes. We are currently scoping what local groups have provided and could provide in the future should people go back into shielding. As an example of alternative options, we have provided a lot of support to the Teapot project based in Woodbridge who turn food surplus into food parcels and offer both a 'paid for' and 'pay what you can' service.
- (f) We are only aware of this happening in a couple of cases and this was where people cancelled their food parcel before their supermarket slot was confirmed, but it may be that this was flagged with the local response groups and not HBNA. There will not be any national food parcels in the event of another lockdown.

Q7: Grants/Funding/Business support

Cllr Caroline Topping

Some businesses had complications applying for a grant as they did not pay the business rates directly, so did not have a rate number to use. The process to access the grant took many months in some instances and I know that one of the questions was can you supply 3 months of bank statements (I think it was April 2019, April 2020 and May 2020).

- (a) Why was a bank statement from last year needed? If the company had not been trading for a year would it have not qualified for the help?

Cllr Louise Gooch

- (b) Is there any possibility of feedback from groups who were recipients of the Enabling Communities Budgets in terms of lessons learnt should there be another spike/wave?

In relation to business support, it might be difficult because of commercial confidentiality to provide specifics of companies that required assistance, but

- (c) perhaps a pie chart to show the share allocation to industries would be useful? Have we had feedback, now that furlough arrangements are changing, about the long-term viability of these businesses?

Cllr David Beavan

- (d) Has there been any monitoring or evaluation on the Southgen grant of £2,500?
- (e) How many newly self-employed got nothing and what about seasonal workers, did they qualify? How can we help with the added problems associated with Brexit this winter?

A7:

- (a) Under the Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund, one of the key requirements in the Government's guidance was that businesses should be able to evidence loss of income. For seasonal businesses eg bed and breakfasts, the provision of previous year bank statements demonstrated the level of income that the business could reasonably have expected to achieve during the period that they could not operate. However, trading for under a year did not exclude businesses from support under any of the schemes. The key cut-off date under all these schemes was that businesses had to be trading as at 11 March 2020.
- (b) Appendix A to this report is taken from a longer version of a report which provides more analysis, including significantly more narrative. This also includes case studies from a number of the groups supported with Covid-19 Hardship Grants. All projects were asked to provide information about what they used the funding for and the outcomes achieved.
- (c) The businesses who applied for a Small Business Grant or a Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant were asked to self-describe the nature of their business. In a substantial number of cases, the descriptions were inadequate eg some described what they use their premises for rather than what their business is/does. In total, 5,452 grants were paid (4,033 from the Small Business Grants Fund and 1,419 from the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund). The value of the grants was split with 516 receiving £25k and 4,936 receiving £10K. Of the businesses that applied, only 45.5% said they were registered companies, the remainder were mainly sole traders, with a few Limited Liability Partnerships. We do not have information about the size of the businesses. The breakdown by business sector is shown in the table below:

| Business Sector | No of Grants |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| Agriculture | 13 |
| Arts & Craft | 55 |
| Automotive | 347 |
| Charity CIC | 31 |
| Construction and landscaping | 139 |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-------|
| Education and training | 52 |
| Energy | 6 |
| Engineering | 109 |
| Entertainment | 21 |
| Environmental | 3 |
| Food production | 29 |
| Food retail | 145 |
| Forestry | 1 |
| Health care services | 109 |
| Home improvement | 41 |
| Horse/ Pet industry | 90 |
| Horticulture/ Arboriculture | 9 |
| Hospitality | 606 |
| Communications and IT | 38 |
| Leisure | 203 |
| Manufacturing | 142 |
| Marine | 36 |
| Online retail | 16 |
| Other | 8 |
| Parish / Town Council | 11 |
| Personal Services | 342 |
| Printing / Publishing | 40 |
| Professional services | 194 |
| Property | 85 |
| Recycling and waste management | 10 |
| Retail | 1,008 |
| Safety and security | 26 |
| Services | 10 |
| Services to Business (B2B) | 32 |
| Shipping, Freight, haulage, Logistics | 71 |
| Sport, fitness or leisure facility | 158 |

| | |
|---|-------|
| STEM businesses not otherwise categorised | 13 |
| Tourism and leisure | 1,120 |
| Transport for hire | 32 |
| Unknown | 7 |
| Wholesalers | 12 |
| Youth services | 32 |
| Total | 5,452 |

The change in furlough arrangements reflects the reopening of the economy so there is an expectation that the reduction in wage subsidy will be matched by businesses increasing their revenues. Clearly, there are certain sectors where this is not the case eg theatres and, to a lesser extent, the hospitality sector, whose capacity has been significantly reduced due to social distancing regulations. We have received no direct feedback from the businesses supported through the various grants schemes about their long-term viability now the furlough arrangements are evolving and, as you will appreciate, this is dependent on a number of factors, some of them not necessarily Covid related. We received a significant amount of positive feedback about how critical grant support had been in securing ongoing business activity and retaining employment and that this was a crucial stepping-stone between enforced closure and the gradual reopening of the economy.

- (d) They have been asked to provide their monitoring information so this could be provided once it is available.
- (e) East Suffolk Council, as part of the Suffolk Public Sector Leaders group, has funded two Brexit Advisers who are working with businesses across the county to support their preparedness for the UK's departure from the EU. Our Economic Development Team, along with our partners such as the LEP's Growth Hub, continue to provide ongoing business support particularly aimed at the self-employed, micro and small businesses on how to improve their business processes and to increase business efficiency. This support, whilst not directly Brexit related, will strengthen such businesses ahead of any additional challenges Brexit presents.

Q8: Community Partnership Key Groups

Cllr Louise Gooch

- (a) Which of the Community Partnership key groups were pre-existing and which were specifically convened? Which are still 'live' with contactable personnel?

Cllr Tracey Green

- (b) Key groups within each Community Partnership – will you be consulting them individually to obtain their statistics and allowing them to provide constructive feedback to East Suffolk Council?

A8:

- (a) Around half of the area specific groups were existing groups who took on very different roles eg Town and Parish Councils. Some were completely new groups eg the IP17 Good Neighbour Scheme and Yoxford Covid-19 Community Support. Community Action Suffolk is currently undertaking a survey to understand the future intentions of each response group in the county, what resources they have available and any additional support needed - see [here](#).
- (b) The Collaborative Communities Board undertook a county-wide SWOT analysis, including two Zoom focus groups which East Suffolk Council led on behalf of the Collaborative Communities Board, to gather views from our main response groups. 45 East Suffolk groups responded and the results are now available [here](#). This report has been considered by the Board and various follow up actions have been agreed. A separate report has been produced by the Communities Team for East Suffolk.

Q9: Tourism economy

Cllr Louise Gooch

- (a) What else can be done to make the case for the attractions of the open spaces of the East Suffolk Council district for all-season tourism?

A9:

- (a) East Suffolk Council, through its local and regional partners, has been engaged in a comprehensive promotional campaign that promotes the district's open spaces for many years. Through our funding of the Suffolk Coast Destination Management Organisation (DMO), we are engaged in year round promotional campaigns promoting outdoor spaces within the district through their highly successful website <https://www.thesuffolkcoast.co.uk/suffolk-coast-towns-and-villages> (which receives more visitors than the county-wide tourism site) and through targeted campaigns. This is supplemented by a comprehensive social media campaign which, again, highlights outdoor spaces in East Suffolk. These promotional vehicles cover all our coastal areas, market towns and woodland/forests. Furthermore, as part of the response to Covid-19 and its impact on the visitor economy, the Council and the DMO are partners in the 'Unexplored England' tourism campaign which promotes Suffolk and Norfolk as a tourist destination all year round and stresses the benefits of being outdoors amongst other things. This has attracted £150k from Suffolk and Norfolk local authorities and a further £350k from the Cabinet Office. All these campaigns have a regional, national and international reach.

Visit Felixstowe also heavily promotes outdoor spaces within the town as part of its ongoing tourism promotional work. This includes a focus on areas such as the Grove, Landguard Nature Reserve and the seafront, including the refurbished Edwardian Seafront Gardens and Trimley Marshes.

In addition, the Council has been proactive in enabling the 'spill out' of bars, restaurants and cafes onto adjacent land to maximise their turnover following the end of lockdown. Surveys of these initiatives in Felixstowe show an overwhelming level of support for these measures and this has gone down well with visitors.

The Economic Development Team has also commissioned a 'shop local/stay safe' campaign to encourage residents and visitors to come back into our town centres safely. This will encourage and promote some of our key visitor outdoor attractions ie market towns to tourists but will also direct visitors to nearby open space attractions.

Q10: Digital inclusion

Cllr Tracey Green

- (a) What was the criteria for selection – geographically and how did we identify them?
- (b) What sort of follow up service did we provide?
- (c) Have we monitored usage? Have they switched them on?
- (d) The second phase – how will we identify and select new users?
- (e) “Digital inclusion” – is this a pilot scheme or do we have plans to extend this service as part of our Strategic Plan – Delivering Digital Transformation?
- (f) Is this scheme here to stay?

Cllr David Beavan

- (g) Did the Tribe Volunteer app ever allocate tasks to volunteers? If so, how many? Can this be made into an East Suffolk app that works with an East Suffolk contact number? Can we also supplement the NHS 111 number instead of the overloaded NHS paying private call centres to read from a script? Why not delegate it to us with funding?

A10:

- (a) An initial list of recipients was based on nominations from the Council’s Communities Team and community response groups. Key criteria included those (primarily older people but also those not able to use standard technology) experiencing isolation who would benefit from access to a device that does not require home broadband/WiFi. Location details were used to achieve a geographic spread across the district.
- (b) A named ‘community liaison’ representative was allocated to each recipient who organised delivery, handover and initial instruction. Regular contact is maintained with each recipient to ensure devices are delivering the desired. A telephone survey is being organised to collate more detailed information and feedback. Techsilver (the supplier) provides a 24/7 helpline.
- (c) The agreement with each recipient states that the Council will not monitor individual usage. However , we are developing high level reports so we can assess most/least popular apps, usage trends, technical issues etc. We can confirm that all devices have been activated.
- (d) Additional recipients are being identified through a combination of referrals from the Communities Team, community groups, social prescribers and personal recommendations. For phase 2 we are placing some Grandpads in Care Homes.
- (e) This is currently a pilot scheme to assess the potential benefits and viability of using dedicated technology to support key groups of residents. This pilot project is being managed as part of the Council’s Strategic Plan – Delivering Digital Transformation (Priority P18 Skills & Training).
- (f) Decisions on long term life of the scheme will depend on the outcome of the pilot project and funding. We have managed to secure external funding from the Ipswich and East

Suffolk CCG as well as the Community Partnership Board and there is significant interest in the pilot across Suffolk and beyond.

- (g) The Communities Team used the Tribe app to identify additional volunteers to support three local groups that identified that they needed additional support. The Collaborative Communities Board is leading a project to explore how the app could be used in the future so that it is fit for purpose and is being assessed alongside other platforms, including Connected Communities.

Q11: Other

Cllr David Beavan

- (a) Tell us about your “other activities” when they happen please.
- (b) How well are the CCG and medical professionals coordinating with us?

A11:

- (a) Noted.
- (b) We have worked closely with both CCGs that cover East Suffolk throughout the pandemic, both through the Collaborative Communities Board and directly. We worked with the Norfolk and Waveney CCG on the Covid Protect work that is described in the report and to secure funding to continue the two social prescribing schemes in the north of the district until at least March 2021. We worked with the Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG on weekly meetings with our social prescribing Community Connectors to embed them in the response, to develop the prescription delivery service locally and they provided funding to purchase an additional 50 Grandpads.