

19/01/2021

Report from Cllr Andrew Saywell

Can I start by wishing you all a 'Happy New Year', and to thank everyone in Petrockstowe for everything you are doing to keep the community safe during this difficult time.

Coronavirus

- Stats – As of 19th January DCC area of Devon now up to 16,436 coronavirus infections since the start of the pandemic.
- Since the 14th January that is a weekly increase of 1,567 infections.
- By way of comparison... in Torridge there were 52 new infections in the last 7 days, North Devon 100 in the last 7 days, West Devon 79 cases in the last 7 days.
- There are now over 20,000 tests a week being carried out in the County.
- Locally, we have done incredibly well to keep our local infection rates as low as we have. **Torridge has one of the lowest infection rate per 100,000 in England (76.2)**, along with North Devon and West Devon, and **Devon as a whole has the one of the lowest rates in Upper Tier Authorities in England (195.3 per 100,000)**. At present Devon is actually the lowest Upper Tier authority, bar North and North East Lincolnshire, but things can change quickly.

However... **cases are stabilising and beginning to fall**. We still need two more days of firm data to be confident that the trend is heading down, but the early indications are promising.

Infection cases in Devon are highest in the working age population and elderly (75yrs +), with elderly cases, sadly, mainly attributable to some care home outbreaks. In Torridge, cases are very much in the working age bracket, and we had seen an increase in cases and outbreaks in workplace settings and subsequently households.

Even if we have reached the peak we must not let our guard down now. Hospital cases still rising and we expect that this will continue for a couple of weeks after the peak of community infection and deaths, sadly, will also still rise.

So while the situation is not as bad here as other areas of the country, the situation remains extremely serious. Please **stay at home**, and only leave home if you absolutely have to. When you do go out, **don't** forget to **socially distance, wear a face covering in indoor public spaces and wash your hands regularly**.

We don't have definitive proof yet but it is extremely likely that the new variant of coronavirus is here, and this strain is much more infectious than previous strains – where there have been outbreaks, in a workplace or care home, the number of infections has been much higher.

Community Testing

DCC will start rolling out Community Testing for coronavirus at the end of this month.

Community testing will help to find individuals who have COVID-19 but do not have symptoms and need to isolate and who may inadvertently be spreading the virus. A positive or negative result will not remove the need to follow existing COVID measures socially and in the workplace.

Rapid lateral flow tests will be used, which will provide a result within thirty minutes. This will not be a substitute for the national coronavirus testing – if you are symptomatic, people should book a free NHS test via the GOV.UK website or by calling 119.

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The first site is planned to open near the end of January, at County Hall in Exeter, with other sites planned to become available across the County in February and March.

COVID Vaccinations

On the more positive side... the good news is that residents of Torrington Rural aged 80+ and residents and staff of care homes **have started to receive their vaccinations**. County wide, **1000s of people have received their first vaccination dose**.

Main points for vaccine rollout:

- We now have vaccination hubs up and running at all four acute hospitals in Devon -these are vaccinating hospital staff and over 80's inpatients about to go home and outpatients
- 20 Primary Care Network (groupings of GP Surgeries) vaccination sites are up and running
- Mass Vaccination sites in Plymouth and Exeter to be opening before the end of January
- Vaccination of care home staff and residents is well underway, with the NHS aiming to complete vaccination by 24th January.
- Locally, there have been vaccination sites at Holsworthy, Barnstaple, Okehampton and now Crediton. This has been due to the complexities of storing the Pfizer vaccine. Now that the Oxford vaccine has arrived, I know from talking to the head of one of Torrington's GP Practices that they are looking at rolling this out more locally so people do not have to travel long distances.
- The NHS is also looking at mobile roll out for more isolated rural communities.

Priority for Phase 1 according to JCVI priority list is: Care home residents, over 80's and frontline health and care staff.

Thousands have been vaccinated already with each Primary Care Network having received at least one batch of vaccines (975 vaccines per batch); we received the Oxford vaccine last week and we have the workforce in place to undertake the vaccine programme. It is, however, a huge logistical exercise, very much dependent upon the speed and rate of vaccine supplies. Please though wait for the NHS to contact you when it is your turn.

Covid-19 Prompt Action Grant

DCC's COVID-19 grants have opened again for the third lockdown. The guidance is slightly amended and can be found on this link along with the online application form. <https://www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/document/covid-19-fund/>

The biggest difference to the first two waves is that DCC are working in partnership with Devon Community Foundation to fund food projects. So any project that is for food provision needs to apply here <http://devoncf.com/apply/community-food-programme-2/>

Libraries and Recycling Centres

- Devon's libraries are now temporarily closed for the new lockdown.
- Household Waste and Recycling Centres remain open for essential use only.

Can I again thank you for all you are doing to stay safe and to keep our communities safe during this difficult time. Hope is on the horizon with the vaccine... but we must not let our guard down or become complacent. Please follow the rules. DCC will do all that it can, as it has done during the first and second lockdown, to support the people of Devon during this difficult time and to protect the old, the young, and the vulnerable. We will recover from this pandemic and the lockdown. But

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in the meantime, please stay at home and stay safe.

DCC Budget

DCC's Budget is due to increase by just under £37million thanks to some additional Government funding. Specific details remain TBC and I will update the Parish Council next month.

Locality Budget

Please note if you have any projects in mind, funding for these will need to be allocated by the end of February.

Stay safe, and if there are any issues you need me to follow please don't hesitate to contact me.

Cllr Wiseman Report

TDC Business is normally quiet at this time of year but this year it is much busier. The highlights are:

- Additional vaccination centre at Westward Ho!
- Lots of grants available – business / hardship / all sorts. Look at the TDC website. Some are TDC and some North Devon plus. (Cllr Fisher is posting on village What'sapp and website).
- Supermarkets – these are being visited by environment teams to ensure compliance with current regulations.
- North Burrows – stones have been put back and the slipway completed. The visitor centre has had a simpler plan approved and will be mostly grant funded.

Cllr Hurley Report Petrockstowe January 2021

Car park charges and enforcement

There have been a number of questions with regard to car parking charges now that we have entered another lockdown period. There is recognition that this lockdown is completely different to that through to June 2020 when virtually everything was stopped and there was next to no traffic on roads. If Councils offer free parking then the loss of income cannot be recovered from the Government. Therefore Torridge car parks will continue to charge and the CEOs will still operate, although they will do so in more pragmatic and less punitive nature recognising that individuals needs are affected by the pandemic

Land Searches

I was called in December by a resident who informed me that he had been told that land searches were taking up 37 working days to complete. The number of applications to purchase property in our area had reached record levels and solicitors and surveyors were also struggling to service this demand. I'm pleased to say that the land search team worked during the Christmas break to try and reduce the backlog. I'm now happy to report that the turnaround time is now around 10 days.

There is a new solicitor, Damien Hunter, commencing at Torridge on Feb 1st. His title will be Legal Services manager. He comes to Torridge from N Devon Council and has assisted at TDC plans meetings in the past so is no stranger to some Councillors and Officers.

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TPO's

A list of tree preservation orders is being drawn up and will be issued to Parish Clerks when it is available.

Management Appointments at TDC

Head of Legal Staci Dorey

Head of Community and Place Sean Kearney

Planning Manager Shaun Harrington