

## **South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward**

### **Report to Haslingfield Parish Council January 2021**

#### **Covid 19**

Rates in our area have gone up: in South Cambs it is now 462 per 100,000, up from just 50 per 100,000 at the beginning of December. In Addenbrooke's hospital on 31 December there were almost 100 patients on Covid wards, at the end of last week it was up to 211. On the effect of the new variant, numbers are coming through slowly, but it is clear that the variant is more transmissible and has been leading to the marked increase in hospital admissions.

On the vaccines, whilst this is generally good news, there are a number of difficulties. One is supply: some supplies of both are coming in from Europe and are delayed (not all the AstraZeneca vaccine is manufactured here); the other is the availability of suitable sites for the vaccination. The NHS is centralising the roll out and it is not clear where the South Cambs sites will be; nor do we yet know what vaccines we will be getting or when. Whilst the BioNtech vaccine requires special refrigeration, the AstraZeneca vaccine also has special instruction and training. It cannot survive long outside a fridge and it cannot be shaken. With concern over the security of sites chosen, the police are also involved in site selection.

We're aware many vulnerable residents have been invited to book in for a vaccination in Stevenage. This is a regional mass testing site and the offer is being made to at risk groups within a 30-45 drive in an attempt to speed up the vaccination program. However, we know that for many of these residents that journey won't be possible (or won't feel safe). The advice if you can't or don't want to make it to Stevenage is to sit tight and wait for a local appointment.

The local NHS has a regularly updated FAQ page on the vaccination program in our area here: <https://www.cambridgeshireandpeterboroughhccg.nhs.uk/news-and-events/latest-news/covid-19-national-vaccination-programme/>

#### **Vaccine scam warning**

On the subject of vaccines, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Against Scams Partnership (CAPASP) are warning residents to watch out for fraudulent text messages from scammers posing as the NHS, claiming to offer Covid vaccines. This recent scam has seen residents being sent a text message which includes a blue link, which takes them to a fake webpage with NHS branding. The resident is then asked to 'confirm ownership of address' by providing their bank details. Scammers claiming to be from NHS are also telephoning residents, instructing them to press a key to confirm they'd like to receive the vaccine or asking for bank details as affirmation to receive the vaccine. Please remember that your surgery or the NHS will administer your Covid vaccine free of charge – do not give out your bank details to pay for a vaccine or to confirm your address.

For more information about CAPASP visit [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/against-scams](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/against-scams)

#### **Help for School children**

Digitally-excluded children in South Cambs are to be given a helping hand to get online with funding from a package of grants. The District Council is using its £30,000 share of the grant

pot allocated to the County to support local charities and community organisations, including Cambridge Online. The digital charity will help provide data packages or devices to children in families in the District who currently have no internet access, enabling them to get online to learn and keep up-to-date with school work. With the schools now shut for many pupils, this is particularly timely. For more details, see [www.cambridgeonline.org.uk](http://www.cambridgeonline.org.uk), email to [help@cambridgeonline.org.uk](mailto:help@cambridgeonline.org.uk) or call the Cambridge Online helpline on 01223 300407, quoting 'South Cambs Winter Support Grant'.

Cambridgeshire's District and City Councils, along with the County Council, received a total of £2.2 million in Government Winter Support Grant payments and are working in partnership to ensure the money reaches those most in need. Amongst other areas of help, it will pay for vouchers for all children in the county who receive free school meals to cover additional food costs during the Christmas holidays and February half term, with extra support offered to other families not receiving free school meals but identified by schools as potentially needing extra help.

South Cambridgeshire District Council also used its allocation to help fund other schemes in the District, such as the provision of Christmas meals for disadvantaged families and elderly and vulnerable residents in many of its communities.

### **Grants to Community Groups**

The District Council is also supporting Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service (CCVS) with a £5,000 grant and from Wednesday, January 6, South Cambs parishes and community groups will be able to apply to the charity for sums of up to £500 for local projects which provide food, fuel and essential supplies. More information can be found at <http://www.cambridgecvcs.org.uk/home>

### **Shop Local Directory**

Mentioned this last time, but we wanted to highlight again the Council has launched a 'Shop local' directory to help local residents find alternative ways to get their shopping while also supporting local jobs and businesses. With a boom in online sales during 2020, the new 'Shop local' directory will help residents who would prefer to spend their money supporting local businesses – rather than international retailers and chains – to do so more easily. The directory lists local shops, restaurants, cafés and pubs, and for each business sets out what safety measures are being taking during the pandemic, e.g. an independent shop offering orders via Facebook for home delivery.

The directory is live at [www.scambs.gov.uk/local-business-directory](http://www.scambs.gov.uk/local-business-directory) and businesses can sign up via the same link.

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