

Cllr Shrobona Bhattacharya, District Report

December 2020

Prime Minister's statement on the coronavirus Winter Plan

The Prime Minister made an oral Statement on 23 November on the Government's coronavirus Winter Plan and set out the Government's approach to ending the national restrictions on 2 December.

Statement: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-on-covid-19-winter-plan-23-november-2020>

Making a Christmas bubble with friends and family

On 24 November, it was announced that the Government and the Devolved Administrations have agreed on joint arrangements for an easing of social restrictions that will allow friends and loved ones to reunite over the Christmas period. The Government also published a joint statement on UK-wide Christmas arrangements and guidance on meeting friends and family over the Christmas period – forming a Christmas bubble. The guidance sets out what you can and cannot do in over the Christmas period in the UK.

Announcement: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-wide-christmas-arrangements-agreed-by-the-uk-government-and-the-devolved-administrations>

Statement: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-statement-on-uk-wide-christmas-arrangements-from-the-uk-government-and-devolved-administrations>

Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-a-christmas-bubble-with-friends-and-family>

How tests and testing kits for coronavirus work

On 23 November, the Government also updated guidance for members of the public, patients, professionals and industry on the different types of tests and testing kits for coronavirus to include information on about lateral flow tests. Lateral flow tests are rapid turnaround tests that can process coronavirus samples on site without the need for laboratory equipment, with most generating results in under half an hour.

Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-tests-and-testing-kits-for-coronavirus-covid-19-work>

Businesses invited to sign up to our local business directory

Council had created a local business directory <https://www.scamb.gov.uk/local-business-directory> to help residents find out more about what local businesses are offering. Included in the listings will be details of Covid-secure measures that businesses have put in place, and information about current opening arrangements/online ordering/click and collect facilities. Businesses are able to add their details to the directory via the link above, and we will be promoting the directory from Wednesday onwards to help residents support local business in the run up to the festive period and beyond.

During December we will also be inviting businesses to tag us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram in their own posts with information about any festive offers or seasonal specials, so that we can help to share these promotions with our followers. Please do spread the word in your wards!

Are rural residents or businesses in your area looking for faster, more reliable broadband?

The COVID-19 pandemic has made us all more reliant on internet services. It's vital that people can keep connected when being asked to stay at home and work remotely where possible. But getting fast, reliable internet access can be a challenge – particularly when several people want to go online at the same time. The good news is that there's still time to apply for funding via the government's [Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme](#) to help residents with homes and businesses in our harder to reach rural areas install gigabit-capable, full fibre connections to their premises when part of a group scheme.

- Gigabit-capable broadband connections offer the fastest and most reliable speeds available.

- A group scheme means two or more premises need to want a better broadband connection installed by a supplier.

Groups of two or more **rural premises with broadband speeds of less than 100Mbps** can then combine 'vouchers' worth up to **£1,500 per residential premise and up to £3,500 for each small to medium-sized business (SME)** to support the cost of a registered supplier installing new gigabit-capable connections (to more than double current broadband speeds).

- Vouchers don't give you actual money to spend - payment goes straight to the broadband supplier towards covering the installation costs.

Connecting Cambridgeshire has also secured extra top-up funding from the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority to provide an additional **top-up of £1,500 per premise to connect groups of rural properties getting less than 30Mbps** (residential or business).

- Premises that qualify for the top-up will have a total value of £3,000 per residential property and £5,000 per business awarded to the registered supplier.

Eligibility is checked via the postcode search on the [Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme website](#). If the postcode is eligible, results show suppliers in the area registered to the scheme. Contact them to discuss your needs, telling them you want to use the voucher scheme. They will then advise you and guide you through the process. This scheme only remains open for new applications until 31 March 2021 - or until the funding runs out (the supplier then has a year to complete the connection). Connecting Cambridgeshire cannot advise on exactly which supplier to use, however, the team can help to support residents with the application process.

Several rural communities are already planning to use the vouchers to improve their connectivity. [Find out more about one particular village](#) on our website. If you require further information, please contact the Connecting Cambridgeshire team on contact@connectingcambridgeshire.co.uk.

Launch of countywide Test and Trace service

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough contact tracing service launched this week.

Cambridgeshire County Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council will be working closely with NHS Test and Trace to contact people who have tested positive for Covid-19, giving them help, advice and support to self-isolate, in a further bid to crack down on the pandemic.

Both councils have staff who have undergone special training in contact tracing and who will be following up on people who have tested positive for Covid-19 but have not responded to a call or email from the national service, asking them for details of their close contacts.

Council staff will initially make contact by phone, text or email asking people to call a local number. If this fails, staff carrying local authority ID will make house to house visits to reach those people who have tested positive. They will be given advice and support on how they can stay isolated to break the chain of infection, and prevent it spreading to their household contacts. They will also be asked to share details of others they have been in contact with. Anyone who is concerned by being contacted can call the council or local community hub to check the identity of the tracer on 0345 045 5219.

We know that the quicker we can reach people who've tested positive and get them to isolate - and get them to share details of who they've been in contact with - the quicker we can break the chain of infection.

Information will be provided by the local team about the support available for those who need to isolate, including the £500 payments that are available for people who have been asked to self-isolate, where this has led to a loss of income.

Please feel free to share information about the new local team

<https://www.scamb.gov.uk/coronavirus/contact-tracing/> in your communities.

How the system works

- If the national NHS Test and Trace service is unable to make contact after 24 hours with anyone who tests positive, they will refer the details into our new, local Cambridgeshire contact tracing team
- The local team will receive this information daily, seven days a week

- The Cambridgeshire team will contact people, initially by phone/text/email, and this will show up as a local number or come from an official council email address. The person will be asked to contact a local number
- If they can't be contacted by phone/text/email after another 24 hours, we will send a council member of staff to the person's address to speak to them personally
- We will provide advice to them, get details of their 'contacts' and then update the national system with this information
- The national process and service will then take over and contact the close contacts of the people we've been in contact with. The loop currently ends there for us in Cambridgeshire
- When our colleagues make contact we will also see if people need any support or help – this could be financial support if people are unable to work, or support to shop for food, get medication or undertake essential household chores etc.

Updated guidance on opening community facilities

The Government updated its <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-multi-purpose-community-facilities> on Tuesday for those managing community centres, village halls and other community facilities on safely using multi-purpose buildings in line with national restrictions. If you need support please email commercial.envhealth@scams.gov.uk.

Funding for parish council and community groups

We recently issued grants to parish councils and community groups to help with your Covid response. If you are a parish council, please ensure when using this grant that you are adhering to parish council legislation. For example, using the Power of Competence / using s137 funding. The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) issued helpful guidance in their bulletin LTN31 on 14 May 2020, which is available online to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils (CAPALC) members.

Innovate & Cultivate Fund

The next deadline to apply for Cambridgeshire County Council's [Innovate & Cultivate Fund](#) for £2,000-£15,000 is 1 February 2021. The fund supports initiatives that strengthen communities and reduce pressure on the County Council's adult social care and children's services. The fund is open to voluntary, community and social enterprise sector organisations, and public sector organisations in Cambridgeshire.

The County Council strongly advises organisations to seek pre-application advice on their project ideas before submitting an application – you can book an advice slot for Thursday 10 December [on Eventbrite](#).

Application guidance is also available to run new projects such as Mobile Warden Schemes and Digital Inclusion Projects – or for Timebanks, Good Neighbour Schemes, Dementia-Friendly Communities and Men's Sheds. You can find guidance on how to apply for a start-up grant for each of these projects on the Cambridgeshire Insight website

<https://data.cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/dataset/cultivate-project-ideas>

C3 hot meals scheme – update

We mentioned last week that we are able to relaunch the hot food scheme with C3 Church. Please continue to let us know if you are aware of individuals or families in your community who would benefit from a weekly meal top up, please email duty.communities@scams.gov.uk.

LEAP – energy and money saving advice

The Council has partnered with [LEAP \(the Local Energy Advice Partnership\)](#), which offers a free energy advice service for residents, offering:

- energy saving advice
- debt advice
- free LED bulbs, radiator panels and draught proofing (including fitting for disabled customers)

- help to understand tariffs and meters, and to find the cheapest energy tariffs (saving an average £250 per year)
- referrals for funding for home improvements such as loft insulation (even in rented accommodation we can partially fund improvements)
- free replacement fridges, freezers, washing machines and electric cookers (if over nine years old and broken, through the HEART scheme)
- to register residents for a Warm Home Discount (£140 off their electricity bill), a Social Water Tariff, and Priority Services Register.

The service is available to anyone that either is already in, or is at risk of, falling into fuel poverty. It is open to all types of householders – homeowners, private renters and social housing tenants. You can check the eligibility criteria <https://applyforleap.org.uk/eligibility/> on the LEAP website.

Job role: Community Connectors

We are aware of [10 Community Connector roles](#) which are being recruited to by the County Council and, as you have been working to perform such a similarly supportive role during 2020, we thought it may be of interest.

It is critical that we all follow the rules so that we can start December in the lowest tier possible and have the best chance of being able to spend the festive season with friends and family. Please do remember that we are here to help you in your ongoing efforts to support your community – don't hesitate to contact your patch lead with any queries or requests for support.

Fundraising in Rural Communities Event: Thu 10 December 6pm to 7:30pm

The Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service (CCVS) are running an evening session aimed at community groups to look at successful online fundraising ideas and other ways of raising finance beyond grant funding. Priority will be given to groups/communities in (or serving residents of) South Cambridgeshire. This is an opportunity to hear from other community groups about:

Running a successful crowdfunding campaign

Hosting an online community fundraiser including raffles and competitions

More details are available on the CCVS [website](#).

Shrobona Bhattacharya

Cllr.Bhattacharya@scambs.gov.uk

07852753216