

SERVICE HIGHLIGHT REPORT – COVID-19 AND KEY SERVICE UPDATES

SERVICE AREAS:	Customer and Digital Services Directorate: including Communications, IT & Digital, Emergency Planning and Health & Safety for Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council. HR, Learning & Development and Customer Services for Cambridgeshire County Council.
REPORT AUTHOR:	Sue Grace
REPORTING PERIOD:	February -March 2021
LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council

Part 1 - COVID-19

NEW GUIDANCE AND IMPACT

The Government Roadmap which sets out how, from 8 March, people in England will see restrictions start to lift in accordance with the Government's 4 Steps, and the criteria that need to be achieved to progress from one step to another.

The Director of Customer and Digital Services, who is supporting our COVID response, has been working on the re-writing of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Outbreak Control Plan to align it to the Roadmap and the easing out of Lockdown.

She has also been working with our partners on the implications of the Roadmap on our COVID activity and our core, business as usual activity.

With the leadership team, supported by HR, Health and Safety and Facilities, we will be working through the implications of the Roadmap for our workforce and for how we use our council buildings in the future as we all prepare for how we will be living with COVID.

NEW CHALLENGES AND ACTIVITY

HR Advisory and Learning and Development – Cambridgeshire HR have continued to support the recruitment process and set up of the self-isolation support service, as well as the projects that are running in relation to Lateral Flow Testing, Contact Tracing and Community Testing, which are being led by Public Health. Work has been completed to support of the vaccination programme for staff through the development of a recording process so we can accurately report on the number of staff who have been vaccinated.

Communications - In the past month we have continued to deliver our communications plan which focusses on the third national lockdown, with the message 'stay home, save lives'. It encourages practical actions that people can take to protect themselves, their families and their communities – including testing and getting a vaccine when it is offered to them.

Linked to the Government Road Map announcement on 22 Feb, we have:

- Produced an interim toolkit to help promote the new national assets.
- Developed new local road map communications plan with the key message 'this depends on us' communications will be developed in advance of each key date.

We have produced a locally focussed communications plan that encourages people to say yes to the vaccine. In particular, it looks to increase uptake amongst those communities where there is hesitancy and/or where uptake is low.

A full communications approach is being prepared to support surge testing for any new variant of the virus, if needed. This includes website copy, posters, letters, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) etc. in order to support the Local Resilience Forum's Tactical Co-ordination Group who are looking at the operational requirements which may be necessary for such a surge.

We have launched our #StandFirm campaign which tells the stories of people who have been affected by COVID. Five films have now been published. We continue to look for more case studies to feature in this campaign.

A double page A5 leaflet has been produced which will be delivered to every home in Peterborough with council tax bills, focussing on the support for people to self-isolate, support from the Peterborough Hub and financial help for businesses.

We have supported the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) with the vaccine communications campaign. As part of this we have:

- Developed a vaccine FAQs for care home staff with the CCG.
- Shared community and faith leader videos outlining how they back the vaccine.
- Developed set of community translation videos explaining the importance of the vaccine.
- Prepared a letter for Peterborough businesses.
- Supported a webinar with the Romanian community on COVID prevention and vaccine myth busting.
- Publicised Members receiving their vaccine.

We have led the communications for the rapid testing programme in Peterborough which has included the promotion of two static sites and home testing for households with children. For each site we have produced marketing materials ranging from posters, leaflets, Aframe boards and vinyl banners and we have advertised the sites on social media, on five local radio stations and in print media. We have also produced a pack for businesses in the City to encourage take-up, scheduled daily social media including paid for, produced translated video blogs and worked closely with the media to attract interest. Coverage has been achieved on Look East, ITV Anglia, BBC Radio Cambs and in print and web media about the testing, on an ongoing basis.

We have launched a film co-produced by young people in Peterborough encouraging others to stick to the rules. #BePartOfTheSolution brings together a range of creative local talents from different communities, including acting and music, to share their important message. Coverage achieved on BBC Radio Cambs and BBC Look East. We also issued a social media toolkit to partners so they can support in promoting it.

We led on the communications around schools reopening which has included a press release about the support which is being offered to schools to prepare and handling requests from the media for interviews. We led the communications for the Peterborough Summit "Fighting for our City" which took place on Tuesday Feb 23. We also led the communications response for the visit of the Cabinet Office to Peterborough and Fenland which began on Feb 24.

We have supported with communications around the outbreak at Peterborough Prison, including managing media enquiries and sharing posters and leaflets about lateral flow testing with the prison.

We have produced information about preparations being made for COVID safe elections in Peterborough and Cambridgeshire.

Issued a press release and social media about self-isolation support totalling almost £1million being given to residents to reduce spread of COVID-19. The piece also mentioned that the scheme has been extended until the end of June and that parents who need to have time off work to care for a child self-isolating will also be able to apply.

Issued a media release about a Peterborough car wash being fined by trading standards for operating illegally during lockdown.

Issued a press release about the support for people who are carers, including a case study of a man from Peterborough who has been a carer for his wife for 10 years. In particular the piece looks to identify hidden carers, people who are caring for someone who may not recognise themselves as a carer.

RECOVERY ACTIVITIES

HR Advisory - the focus on staff wellbeing continues with twice weekly wellbeing updates, guidance and tips issued in the staff bulletins as well as monthly Wellbeing Hours on a wide range of subjects to support staff. Monthly pulse surveys continue to be delivered with the latest one focussed on the Way We Work and a range of questions around agile working and the impact of the enforced changes in working arrangements due to COVID. Action plans are drawn up and published each month to set out the response and the commitment to address matters raised with a focus on continual improvement and learning.

DECISIONS MADE SINCE LAST REPORTING PERIOD

Isolation support Service – Current priorities for phone calls being made are:

- Cases within Peterborough and Fenland
- Cases within the other 4 districts
- Contacts within Peterborough and Fenland
- Contacts within the other 4 districts

Some highlights of data from January:

- We've made calls to 7742 residents
- We've been able to contact 94% of those residents with information about the support that is on offer to help them to self-isolate
- Almost all residents advise they are isolating at the time of the call and will continue to afterwards

NEW COVID-19 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS SINCE LAST REPORTING PERIOD

N/A

WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

N/A

COMMUNICATIONS

Media and Major Reputational Issues:

- Led communication on the phase two budget which included briefing media and a range of stakeholders on the offer of exceptional support from Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government plus the publication of the phase two proposals later that same week. Achieved coverage in Peterborough Telegraph, Peterborough Matters, BBC Radio Cambs, BBC Politics Show and Look East, all of which presented the council's position in a balanced way.
- COVID-19 – Proactive media reminding about the national lockdown and the rules, Peterborough libraries select and collect service during lockdown, rapid testing sites, Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) Scheme for Peterborough taxi drivers, Councillors receiving the COVID vaccine, update to marriages and ceremonies, communications support following Roadmap announcement, self-isolation support update, refuse teams getting COVID tests, schools preparing for re-opening, warning from Trading Standards after car wash business fined for breaching COVID restrictions, rapid homes testing kits, COVID business spot checks.
- Census 2021 – sharing social media, translated video blogs, media articles, press release.
- Further information about the successful Town's Fund initiative.
- Visit by the Cabinet Office to support the work we are doing around 'enduring transmission' which has resulted in a proposal for a new pilot project for which we are waiting Government feedback.
- Call to Prayer – prepared the communications for this before and after the first planning application and again for the second time.
- Laptops for schools campaign.
- Other Proactive – Fast Growth Cities, heritage survey, Stanground solar park, plans for the Vine library, creative writing competition launched, community minded residents to take over

community centres, LGBT+ adopters and foster carers, café culture in the city centre, Commonwealth Day, elections, Peterborough Lido re-opening.

- Other Reactive – schools reopening, secondary school place offer day, COVID rates in Peterborough, in particular high rates in Millfield and the outbreak at the prison and plans to turn the former Solstice pub into student accommodation.
- 96 reactive enquiries handled.
- 29 proactive releases issued.

Campaigns

As well as the COVID campaigns we have:

- Continued to help support or deliver a number of campaigns which divert people from attending A&E unnecessarily, highlighted support for mental health support lines, increased the numbers of people applying to become foster carers (particularly during LGBT+ Fostering week) or adoptive parents, encouraged people to join the council as social workers or homecare or reablement workers and launched a campaign around supporting hidden carers signposting them via the media and social media to support advice. We are also developing another campaign aimed at hidden carers for later in the year.

In addition, we have launched a campaign to recruit care home workers across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, begun developing a domestic violence campaign. An evidence-based full media campaign is planned in the spring to support a regionwide stop loneliness campaign in conjunction with local radio. We have also supported Commonwealth Day.

Internal Communications

- Regular weekly update on COVID specific issues for staff released, including information about rapid testing for staff, self-isolation support, Roadmap out of lockdown and guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable staff.
- Weekly briefing – magazine - issued to all staff each week to highlight key good practice information and good news stories including 'It takes a whole council to be a Covid hero' campaign.
- Regular well-being information for staff in newsletters and on the intranets. Wellbeing hour focussed on sleep in March and April will be on anxiety. Promotion of mental health awareness training for all staff.
- Weekly COVID conversations for staff based on regular updates on Coronavirus and vaccination campaign, update from Cabinet Office visit, budget update.
- Monthly pulse survey – The way we work to inform and shape our workplaces of the Future.
- Regular articles to support managers such as how to report that a staff member has COVID.
- Weekly Vaccination Facts information to help bust myths around the vaccine and linking to the British Society of Immunology guide to vaccines.

Web and Social Media development and activity.

Website Statistics

Cambridgeshire County Council website = 514,096 page views.

- The Society for IT Managers Index which benchmarks our website against all other UK Council websites has our current accessibility score for February 2021 at 84/100, 'Great'.
- Siteimprove, a tool used by our digital team to manage and improve many aspects of our website, including accessibility, has our accessibility score as 98/100. The industry standard is 76/100.

Peterborough City Council website = 262,961 page views.

Visit Peterborough website = 9,542 page views.

- The Society for IT Managers Index which benchmarks our website against all other UK Council websites has our current accessibility score for February 2021 at 87/100, 'Great'.
- Siteimprove, a tool used by our digital team to manage and improve many aspects of our website, including accessibility, has our accessibility score as 98/100. The industry standard is 76/100.

The Stand firm, young people videos and local and national COVID prevention campaigns have reached over 300,000 social media accounts across the local area.

In planning for next month

- Elections
- Selective Licensing consultation
- Towns Fund
- Cafe Culture approach in city centre
- Lincoln Road rough sleeper centre going live
- Peterborough United ground being sold back to club
- City centre opening-up following lockdown (shops, pubs etc)

Part 2 – BUSINESS AS USUAL ACTIVITY

KEY SERVICE UPDATES – INTERNAL / EXTERNAL

Customer Services (Cambridgeshire) – calls presented in Feb 2021 were 10,197. The highest call volumes were seen across the Registrations (1745), Adult social care services (1750), Highways (1575), a similar pattern to that of the previous month. COVID-19 calls continued to reduce with a total of just 218 contacts throughout the month, compared with 605 in January.

With regard to other channels, 9891 non phone contacts were received in February, slightly higher than in January, with the highest volumes received for Children’s social care services and Blue Badges.

HR Advisory - work continues to plan the roll out of a new appraisal approach across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough in April. In addition, refreshed Values and Behaviours will be rolled out at the same time. This new framework is being launched in April with a 12-18 month rolling campaign to embed the values across the Council. In addition, “Our Values and Behaviours” will be fully integrated into the new performance management framework as well as other people related processes and policies such as recruitment and induction.

The Government announced the launch of the national Kickstart scheme in September 2020, providing funding to create new job placements for 16 to 24 year olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long term unemployment. Cambridgeshire County Council applied to be a Kickstart Gateway organisation and in January 2021 received confirmation that the application was successful. This means that we are now able to arrange placements for ourselves, as well as on behalf of Peterborough City Council and other partner organisations that wish to host placements.

This scheme is an excellent way to attract younger employees to the Council and help them see the Council as an attractive employer whilst also giving us a mechanism to encourage some of our own care leavers into roles - both things that we have outlined in our people strategy as being priorities.

Health & Safety – continue to work with HR and Property colleagues to evaluate and clarify the processes staff and managers need to undertake if someone experiences COVID symptoms or is tested positive. In addition, they have been engaged in supporting the regular response to changes in government advice in relation to safe working in offices including the tightening up of our advice around the use of face coverings in shared workspaces. The team continues to provide regular advice to managers on risk assessments and individual cases to put appropriate safeguards in place.

Emergency Planning - The Fletton COVID-19 emergency mortuary remains ready for use in support of partners in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Resilience Forum. The Cambridge facility is also prepared to enable it to be opened as required. These facilities will remain available for as long as demand requires. Planning is now underway to establish what the medium and longer term solutions will be.

IT & Digital Services – The Disaster Recovery (DR) test planned for February did not take place due to operational issues relating to the anti-virus software. Those issues were significant, unexpected and service affecting (in Cambridgeshire County Council only) and extensive investigations are underway to ensure that the cause is fully understood. The date for the DR test has been rescheduled to the 24th April.

Cambridgeshire County Council training on Office 365 has been delivered to 858 staff during January–March across 8 live events. The next phase of the project will now begin where the project team will meet with

various cohorts of staff/teams to understand how they work and how Office 365 can be best used to support them.

Over the past 12 months the IT service has deployed over 100 laptops and 90 Chromebooks to teams supporting the COVID response working within the Councils and Public Health.

The iPhone replacement project has been completed in Peterborough which introduced a new simpler setup process making it easier for users to setup their own devices, resulting in far fewer requests for support. In Peterborough a new Mobile phone billing dashboard has been rolled out, giving managers visibility of their usage and saving the accounts team 2 days' worth of time processing the reports every month.

FINANCIAL ISSUES

N/A

PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES AND CHALLENGES

N/A

UPCOMING ISSUES & HORIZON SCANNING AREAS

N/A

POSITIVE NEWS STORIES