

FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE

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Fenland prepares for safe re-opening of the district's high streets

A recovery plan to support the safe and successful reopening of Fenland's high streets has begun in earnest as the district takes its first steps towards getting back to business.

Fenland District Council has drawn up a blueprint of measures to help kick-start the local economy, keep people safe and encourage customers back to the shops as coronavirus lockdown restrictions ease further next week.

From Monday, June 15, people will be able to visit non-essential retail outlets such as clothing stores and charity shops, which can reopen if COVID-19 safety guidelines are met.

In the first phase of its plan, the Council will introduce a range of visual measures in and around Fenland's four town centres, such as pavement markings, street signage and banners, to help shoppers observe social distancing.

Signage will also be installed at car parks, bus stops, and busy or narrow footways, to compliment measures from local highways authority, Cambridgeshire County Council.

There will also be additional cleansing of town centres, Council-owned public toilets and public open spaces, and Council officers will regularly patrol each of the towns to offer guidance to shoppers and respond to any concerns.

The measures will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure they remain relevant, with changes being made in response to public concerns or suggestions and business need.

The Council is also working with businesses to help identify areas where it can further support business recovery. Local businesses and market traders are being contacted, and a survey has been launched, to gauge the level of support needed.

Any businesses that need assistance to re-open safely, such as help with signage or co-ordinating how people can queue and social distance safely, can fill in the survey at: www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/L7H8D3X.

In the second phase of the plan, the Council will develop ideas to encourage people to shop locally and investigate how the recovery work can build on proposals to boost the economic fortunes of the towns as outlined in the Growing Fenland Masterplans.

It will also use business survey feedback to provide more tailored support for businesses, and develop its approach for the re-opening of food businesses ready for early July.

The Council is set to receive approximately £90,000 for the work from the Government's £50million Reopening High Streets Safely Fund.

The Leader of Fenland District Council, Cllr Chris Boden, said: “As lockdown measures are gradually eased it is imperative that our retailers, who have been significantly impacted by this pandemic, are given the opportunity to get back to business and people have the confidence to support them.

“We welcome funding from the Government to start the careful process of reopening our high streets and look forward to working with businesses to make this happen, with customer safety as a top priority.”

Cllr Ian Benney, the Council’s Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, added: “Essential shops, such as supermarkets and pharmacies, have already shown that while safe trading is challenging, it is achievable.

“Many retailers are well prepared and ready to re-open, but we are here to help if any businesses need support to do safely. As we get used to a ‘new normal’ on our high streets it is also more important than ever for communities to shop local. By choosing to spend your money in a small business you are helping to support and protect our local economy.”

ENDS

For more information contact Fenland District Council press office on 01354 622226