

FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE

9 March 2021

‘Roadmap out of lockdown depends on us’ warns Council leader as restrictions begin to ease

The Leader of Fenland District Council has urged residents to continue to listen to Government guidance as lockdown eases to help everyone get back to a more normal life.

“The Government has outlined a four-step roadmap out of lockdown but the dates for each step are not set in stone,” said Cllr Chris Boden. “Coronavirus infection rates in Fenland are falling but less quickly than in some other areas, so we all need to do our best to follow the guidance and stay safe.

Restrictions started to ease this week with the reopening of schools on Monday, 8 March, and will lead to the planned lifting of all restrictions by 21 June at the earliest.

“I’d like to thank everyone in Fenland who has worked hard and given up so much to help tackle the virus to date, but now is not the time to become complacent,” added Cllr Boden. “We all want to get back to normal, but we must tread carefully. It’s up to us to make this work.”

Cllr Boden said there were a number of factors that put the district at greater risk including many people working in the food sector and other front-line jobs where they have to leave home to work, households with several adults living together in the same house and some people on low incomes who need financial support to self-isolate.

“These factors all make it more challenging to reduce the spread of coronavirus in our communities,” he said. “That’s why we’re investing further funding into rapid lateral flow testing and contact tracing, our compliance and prevention work and extending the local discretionary hardship fund to help those on low incomes to self-isolate if they need to.”

The Council has recently secured £540,000 of additional government funding to continue delivering the key interventions, including £170,000 for the local discretionary hardship fund. To find out more about the hardship payments and to apply, visit: www.fenland.gov.uk/testandtracepayment

Rapid lateral flow tests for people with no symptoms are available at the Queen Mary Centre in Queen’s Road, Wisbech, and from Monday, 15 March, rapid tests will also be available from three pop-up sites at Chatteris, March and Whittlesey. To find out more and book tests online, visit: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/rapidtesting

The Council is also offering rapid testing to businesses. Any businesses and organisations which would like to set up a lateral flow testing programme for employees can email: LFTWorkplace@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Cllr Boden added: “We are not out of the woods yet; it is vital that anyone who has to leave home regularly for work, volunteering or training takes part in rapid testing to help break the chain of infection. Ideally, they should be having tests twice a week.”

Other funding is being invested into a new, dedicated Citizen's Advice service available through the Council's COVID-19 Community Hub, to help people with concerns including debt, benefits, Universal Credit claims, pensions, employment and much more.

Funds are also being spent on additional Environmental Health and Streetscene staff to provide monitoring, compliance, and prevention support, and on-street management such as signage, traffic cones and barriers at test centres.

Dr Liz Robin, Director of Public Health for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, said: "We are starting to see a reduction in Covid-19 infection rates across Fenland but they are still much higher than other parts of Cambridgeshire.

"We all need to play our part and continue working hard to see this reduction continue by following the government's lockdown rules. This means staying at home as much as possible and only going out for essential reasons. If you have to go out to work or for other essential reasons, please try to avoid car-sharing with anyone you don't live with, keep a two-metre distance from other people, avoid crowded or poorly ventilated areas, wash or sanitise your hands regularly and wear a face covering where this is required.

"If you are leaving home regularly for work, volunteering, training or education, or if you are a household member for a child attending school, please access a rapid test twice a week. If you have one or more of the three Covid symptoms, then self-isolate immediately with your household and book a test.

"Together we can all make sure Fenland emerges from lockdown in the best possible position."

- If you need extra support during the pandemic, you're not on your own. Call the COVID-19 Community Hub on 01354 654321 or email: covid19@fenland.gov.uk

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