

## **Kim Forward Video Update 19.06.2020**

Hi, it's Kim, here with this week's update from Hastings Borough Council. I hope that you are well and managing in these difficult times.

The Hastings community hub is still here for you if you're struggling. Call 01424 451019 if you need urgent support or fill out our online form for less urgent requests. Please reach out if you need help.

This week many businesses opened their doors to customers for the first time in months and our high streets started to fill with people. As more and more of the shops on the high street re-open we will be doing all we can to ensure the safety of staff and shoppers.

The council is here to help and our officers have been working hard to assist businesses as they re-open by providing advice and support and they will continue to do so. If you run a business and need any assistance with adhering to social distancing guidelines when reopening you will find guidance on our website. We appreciate the hard work that business owners and managers have put in to ensure that our residents can shop safely. We can do our part by supporting our businesses and shopping locally.

We've also been helping businesses by distributing the original funding provided to us by the government to help those who have been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. We have had 1661 applications (84% of those we expected) with over £19 million distributed. We know there are eligible businesses who still haven't applied, and we are having one final push to encourage those businesses to apply.

Our new discretionary funding scheme which opened last week has had 108 applications so far. The closing date is Wednesday June 24th -make sure you don't miss out! You can find details of all the schemes including eligibility criteria on our website.

Although the reopening of our high streets has begun we are still saying that we are not yet ready to welcome tourists and we are encouraging visitors to save their trip for another time. We remain focussed on keeping our infection rate low and protecting people. We have opened 11 of our toilets across the town in recognition of the fact that more people are out and about and to support our businesses but we're not actively publicising this in order to try and keep the tourist numbers down.

We have put measures in place to ensure that we keep the facilities as clean and safe as possible with our limited resources and most of them will be cleaned every 2 hours, with some busier facilities having an attendant present all the time. The opening hours are reduced slightly compared to this time last year. A big thank you to the cleaners and attendants who are ensuring these facilities are available for those who need them. I must emphasise that if you use these conveniences you do so at your own risk. You can find details of opening times and names of which toilets are open on our website.

This week is Refugee Week and as a City of Sanctuary, we have committed to being a safe place for refugees and asylum seekers. We recognise and value the positive contribution that refugees make to our community with their wealth of knowledge, experience and understanding. Hastings has a long standing and well-respected reputation welcoming people seeking refuge and I would like to thank all those groups and their volunteers such as The Links Project and the Hastings & Rother Refugee and Asylum Seekers' Buddy Project for all they do to help to ensure that people can thrive and build relationships with the local communities. We are proud to be One Hastings, Many Voices. You could make a picnic and join the virtual Festival by the Lake on Sunday from 12 until 3pm organised by Hastings Community of Sanctuary and broadcast on Facebook by Isolation Station.

I would also like to thank Marcus Rashford, the premier league footballer, whose lobbying, alongside others, led to the government to reverse its decision on funding free school meal vouchers this summer. 1.3m children in

England's most deprived communities will continue to receive free school meal vouchers during the summer holidays. This is so important for families and children in our town: thank you Marcus you are a star!

Before I say goodbye a reminder to continue to stay kind and patient towards each other. Many people are very vulnerable to this virus: the threat of COVID-19 is still real. Thank you and please stay safe.