

Hi, it's Kim here, the leader of Hastings Borough Council.

We heard the stark news this week that the number of people in our country who have died from the corona virus has risen to more than 100,000. We have 200 local people have lost their lives and many grieving families and friends in our community. These are the saddest of times and our kindness and compassion towards each other will continue to help us get through.

Locally the number of COVID-19 cases continues to fall slowly but there is still a lot of pressure on our hospitals. The GP led vaccination centre at The Hastings Centre is continuing to vaccinate people who are over 80.

If you are in this group please don't worry if you haven't been contacted yet, they won't forget you. They will contact you by phone, text or letter with an appointment time. There is also a roving service visiting care homes and those who can't leave their own homes.

The Conquest hospital is still vaccinating front line health and social care workers.

There is also another system run by the NHS where vaccinations are being offered at large vaccinations centres such as the Brighton Centre and at some pharmacies. You may get a letter from the NHS telling you how you can book an appointment at one of the large centres within a 60-mile radius or a local pharmacy.

Please don't worry If you don't want to or can't travel outside our town because you will still be contacted by the GP service and given an appointment at The Hastings Centre. It is your choice.

These services are working alongside each other to vaccinate as many people as quickly as possible in order of the government's priority list. Sussex NHS are on course to vaccinate the top four priority groups by mid-February, in line with the national target.

Please be on your guard against fake COVID-19 vaccination appointment text and email messages. The COVID-19 vaccination is ONLY available from the NHS and it is FREE – you will never be asked to pay for it or give your bank details.

Remember that if you have any symptoms of the virus book a test immediately and you can be tested here in our town.

There's a new local walk through testing site opening at the college's Ore Valley campus in Parker Road this weekend to replace the site at the former Helenswood Academy upper school, which closes at the end of January.

There will also be a mobile testing unit in Pelham Place car park next week from Monday February 1<sup>st</sup> until Friday.

This week we launched our draft local plan consultation and you can find everything you need to know about it, including a video showing the importance of the plan and information on how to share your thoughts, on our website.

The Local Plan is used to plan for the development and infrastructure that our borough needs until 2039, covering themes such as housing, the environment and transport. If you are interested in our town and its future, please get involved.

Our new draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire License vehicle policy is also on our website for your comments. The Department for Transport has issued new statutory guidance which means we must adapt our own policy.

This week also saw Hastings' virtual Holocaust Memorial Day event, which Dr Shelley Katz developed with our support. This moving commemoration is now online at [www.hastings.gov.uk/hmd](http://www.hastings.gov.uk/hmd). Thanks to everyone who contributed and helped ensure this important event could happen virtually.

Finally, back to the virus. Please follow the rules. Stay at home whenever you can and if you do go out keep your distance from others, wear a face covering wherever possible and wash your hands regularly. Space, Face, Hands.

Thank you all for listening and please stay safe.