

Hi, it's Kim here, with the last update from Hastings Borough Council until the new year.

This is that time when people reflect on the old year and look forward to the new one.... never before have so many of us been waiting for the new year and the hope that it brings.

This has been a very difficult and different year and like no other that we have ever experienced. Even before the latest 'tier 4' restrictions were introduced from Sunday this was going to be a very different Christmas for most of us.

It is really sad that our Covid infection rate has increased so rapidly here in the last few weeks despite all that everyone has done to try and limit the spread of the virus and keep themselves and others safe.

Our thoughts are with all those who have lost loved ones this year.

What has stood out during these bleak times has been the best of the fantastic Hastings community spirit with very many local people volunteering to help those who are more vulnerable. As a community we have really come together to work in partnership to support those who need it most.

Thank you to everyone who has played a part in helping others this year, every act of kindness has made a real difference.

I would like to pay tribute to the key workers in our community who have ensured throughout the pandemic that we have all we need. We are grateful to the many people engaged in essential work such as manufacturing parts for ventilators or for the Nightingale hospitals, providing necessary equipment, delivering goods and providing front line services including those at the council, our police, firefighters and ambulance service.

So many people working in our shops, nurseries, schools, colleges, care and nursing homes, in people's own houses, and for the NHS. To all of you who have helped to keep us going and looked after us and our families through this troubling time, we thank you so much.

Over the Christmas period, the council will continue to operate many of its services online through our 'MyHastings' website where you can also find details of your revised waste and recycling collection dates. The community hub will close on December 24th at 3pm and then be open again from Tuesday 29th December to Thursday 31st December between 10am and 3 pm, with normal opening hours resuming on Monday 4th January.

Let's continue to work together to try to stop the spread of the virus and to reduce the rate of infection here in Hastings. If you have any symptoms at all, please book a

test immediately: the testing sites at the former Helenswood Academy upper school and in Bexhill will both be open across the Christmas period.

Let's do all we can to not give an unwanted gift of the coronavirus for Christmas or the New Year to those we care about. We can do this by following the rules and only leaving our homes when it is essential, only mixing indoors with the family we live with and those in our support bubble and keeping our distance from people.

During this season of goodwill, let kindness and compassion guide us. I wish you all the best possible Christmas and join you in looking forward to a much happier 2021.

Please stay safe, keep others safe and remember Space, Face, Hands.