

Hi, it's Kim here, with this week's update from Hastings Borough Council.

We know now what the Government's plans are for taking the country out of lockdown over the next few months. The approach being taken will depend on many factors including the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine, pressure on the NHS, and any new variants of the virus.

It remains so important that we continue to follow the mantra of space, face, hands and to book a test if we have any concerns about symptoms even if they are mild and of course have a jab when it is your turn.

The vaccine programme at the Hastings Centre had been paused but as supplies of the vaccine become available people will be contacted with an appointment offer. This is the GP led service in our town.

There is also the NHS led service where people are being contacted and invited to book a test at one of the vaccination centres outside of town or at the pharmacy in Ore. Please do not worry if you can't travel out of town because you will be offered an appointment locally in time. Also, the GPs are working hard to contact any people in the first four priority groups who still haven't had their jab.

Our schools will reopen for all students on March 8th and I would like to thank all the teachers and support staff who are working so hard to prepare for the return of their school populations at the same time as continuing to provide lessons for those at home and those who have continued to attend school.

Well done to all the parents and carers who have managed to juggle the demands of their home and work lives and fit in supporting children in their learning. You have been brilliant!

Students in secondary schools and at colleges and sixth forms will be regularly tested. I think it is a shame that the government do not appear to have listened to the concerns of the nine education unions who are committed to bringing all children and young people back into the classroom but have called for a phased return to allow time to assess the impact.

The stay at home rule is still in force until March 29th but from the 8th you will be able to meet one other person outdoors recreationally, not just for exercise. So, for example, you could meet a friend for a coffee in the park.

Full details about the Government's roadmap plans can be found on their website.

We are supporting Hastings Voluntary Action's Going for Zero COVID-19 campaign and you can find out more about on HVA's website www.hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk

With local elections going ahead in May it is a good idea to apply for a postal vote, so you don't have to go to a polling station. Everyone is entitled to a postal vote; it is easy to apply and you can find the details on our website. Our polling stations will be COVID-secure of course.

Our new Additional Restriction Grant £2 million scheme for local businesses severely impacted by COVID-19 is open for applications. You can find the full policy and eligibility criteria on our website at www.hastings.gov.uk/covid19-funding

The Local Restriction Support Grant scheme for closed businesses has been extended to cover the period between 16 February and 31 March 2021. We are waiting on the funding to be provided from central Government and will distribute payments as soon as we can.

Thank you for listening, until next week stay safe and be kind.