

Council leader Kim Forward video script 16.10.2020

Hi, it's Kim here with a weekly update.

All the council meetings are live streamed as they happen now and on Wednesday at 6pm, you can join us for our first virtual full council meeting. You can find out how to watch the meeting and see the agenda on our website.

On Monday this week the Prime Minister announced a new three-tiered system of local COVID alert levels for England based on the number of cases in an area per 100,000 of population. The alert levels in the new system are medium, high and very high. Hastings, and the rest of East Sussex, are currently at medium.

In a medium alert level area, such as Hastings, there are no changes to the current national measures in place – the rule of 6 still applies as does the 10pm curfew for hospitality businesses. High and very high alert levels involve increased local measures. Details of the new system can be found on the government's website, where there is a postcode checker to look up the current alert level of an area. This alert level will also correlate with that on the NHS track and trace app.

This system is the government's attempt to standardise and simplify what has become over the last weeks of announcements about new national measures and increasing local lockdowns a rather confusing and complex picture. I think many people are bewildered by this and we are working hard to ensure we keep up and understand the latest guidance, the changes and their implications, both for how we operate at the council and for our town.

With winter approaching and our town at medium alert level, in part possibly due to how we as a community have followed the guidance and helped to keep the infection rate relatively low, we must keep doing all we can to keep it that way.

We know that the best way to protect ourselves and those we care about is to keep our social distance, wear a face covering and wash our hands. It is becoming a mantra for our times: space, face, hands.

Our town has a new walk-through Covid-19 testing centre opening at the former Helenswood Academy upper school site this week. If you do have Covid-19 symptoms you should book a test through the government's website.

At the council we are continuing to do all we can to support residents and businesses. On Monday we launched our self-isolation financial support scheme for those who are told by the NHS Test and Trace that they need to self-isolate because they've tested positive or have been in contact with someone who has. More information about the criteria and how to apply can be found on our website.

We are one of 38 councils around the UK who are part of a new scheme working with the Health and Safety Executive to support local businesses ensure they are COVID-secure. As part of this work the council will be conducting spot checks on

local businesses to assess the measures they have in place and provide advice and support. Action will be taken when businesses don't comply.

It is National Hate Crime Awareness Week, which aims to bring people together to stand in solidarity with those affected by hate crime, to remember those we have lost, and to be there for those who need ongoing support. We have been sharing messages and materials all week on our social media feeds.

We've had an award-winning week at the council which is testament to the great work of teams during what has been a challenging year.

Fresh from receiving praise for its new Indigenous Engagement Policy, our amazing Hastings Museum and Art Gallery has been shortlisted for a Museums Change Lives award for the incredible #DigitalMuseum work it did over lockdown. The museum has been open again since late August with new COVID-secure measures in place and it is well worth a visit.

Alexandra Park, St Leonards Gardens and Hastings Country Park have all retained their Green Flag Status for another year.

Active Hastings' Community Sport and Physical Activity Worker Georges Gouet was the winner of the 'Inclusive award' at the National Community Fitness awards. The Active Hastings team has also been shortlisted for the Community Engagement award at the Sussex Sport Awards. The winner of this award will be announced on November 27th.

And finally, it is Hastings Week and the Mayor has given the Order of 1066 Award to the people of Hastings in recognition of their Covid-19 response. Well done everyone and thank you.

As ever, please look out for and look after each other. Stay safe.