

Hi, it's Kim, here with this week's update from Hastings Borough Council. I hope that you are keeping safe and well.

Last week's re-opening of the high street was a significant moment in our recovery from the impact of COVID-19. It is good to see the town's high streets open again and we are keen to see our shops do well which is why the council is backing the buy local campaign.

Our businesses – who do so much to make this town what it is - now need our support to help them recover and flourish again. Many of them have been there for us throughout this time and they continue to need our backing as do those who are reopening.

Please buy local wherever that is possible for you.

Following Wednesday's government announcement, we have been busy planning, with our partners, the continued recovery and re-opening of the town and we will be doing so in a way that is 'COVID-secure' as the government guidance tells us everything must be. We are keen for this re-opening to happen safely.

Last week was about retailers re-opening and getting ready to do business again in line with new guidelines and this week is about beginning to welcome visitors back to the town.

We feel the time is right to cautiously welcome visitors back to our town and we expect and trust that everyone, whether they are people who live here or visitors, to follow social distancing and respect the government guidance to ensure not only their safety but the safety of others.

Our businesses are working hard to follow the new guidelines and make sure they are operating safely, and this is very challenging for them.

As a result of the new operating restrictions our town's new full capacity will not yet be what our pre-COVID-19 full capacity was.

For the past few months the council has been working to support our businesses: from the distribution of £20m small business grants, to developing the new discretionary business grant scheme, and providing advice to businesses about operating and re-opening in line with government guidelines.

It was lovely to hear the Hastings Business Improvement District Manager acknowledge the council's support last week saying of the officers that 'everyone was bending over backwards to help the borough's high streets get back on their feet.'

We are still here for this next phase ready to offer advice and support and do all we can for businesses. We are also here for you to report any concerns you have about health and safety regulations being complied with.

Although things are easing, the impact of COVID-19 is still being keenly felt and most of us are concerned about the threat that still exists. Along with partners we continue to do what we can to support the town and manage and minimise this impact.

Showing respect for and kindness towards each other is so important. The Hastings community hub is still here for you if you need it.

Call 01424 451019 if you need urgent support or fill out our online form for less urgent requests.

This crisis has highlighted just how important coming together as a community has been and the essential role that local government plays along with community and voluntary groups and the other public sector organisations like the NHS and the Police as well of course as all the other keyworkers who have kept going throughout this time.

It is hard to imagine how our town would have been supported through this without them all.

For the council the cost of helping the town through this crisis has been significant and without further financial support from the government we will be limited in what we continue to do.

Local councils across the country are calling for fair funding to ensure that we can continue to work for our communities.

We were saddened to see our public toilets vandalised last weekend, just a few days after them being opened, meaning some facilities have had to close again. You can find details of the ones that are open on our website. I urge everyone to respect our town and its property and please let us know if you have any details about who may be responsible for the damage.

We have been having some lovely weather recently and this is just a reminder that if you head to the beach please be aware that we have fewer lifeguards around than usual, so you need to be extra cautious in and around the water.

The RNLI has some great advice on how to keep safe at the beach on their website.

If you decide to take a walk down to Buckshole Reservoir at the beginning of next week, then you may see some engineers around who are assessing the ground conditions in preparation for safety improvements that are due to be made next year.

Remember to continue to support each other, keep social distancing, respect our town and where you can please buy local.

Thank you and please stay safe.