

Town and Parish Council

COVID-19 update

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Central
Bedfordshire

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update Briefing – October 2020

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1. Public Events Guidance

Remembrance Sunday, Halloween, Guy Fawkes Night, Christmas Light Switch-On and Christmas Craft Fairs are key dates which are usually marked by an event or public gathering and are a great way to bring communities together.

Event organisers are legally responsible for ensuring any such events are organised and managed to ensure public safety. Of course, this includes additional measures to ensure the event complies with the latest Coronavirus guidance too. Some organisers and landowners have taken the decision to cancel this year's events because they cannot hold their events in the way they normally would and cannot ensure social distancing.

Organisers will need to take into account the relevant Government guidance and ensure a thorough risk assessment is in place. Of course, guidance can change, and it will be the organisers responsibility to keep up to date with changing legislation and/or guidance.

Both Police and Environmental Health Officers have enforcement powers under the Coronavirus Act 2020 (sch2) and The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England)(No.3) Regulations 2020 (Reg.12) to prosecute the organiser and associated parties if a breach under current legislation is found.

Useful links

[Outdoor events guidance](#) prepared by the Events Industry Forum with input from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and in consultation with Public Health England (PHE) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Supplementary [guidance](#) has also been produced by the LGA, in conjunction with BEIS.

Latest [Health Protection \(Coronavirus, Restrictions\) \(No.2\) \(England\) Regulations 2020](#) which states what an event organiser is required to demonstrate.

[The British Legion guidance](#).

Advice and guidance

If you need help or advice the Central Bedfordshire Safety Advisory Group is a FREE SERVICE which brings together a number of Statutory Agencies including the Emergency Services to provide Event Organisers or Landowners with advice and guidance on the safe running of their event.

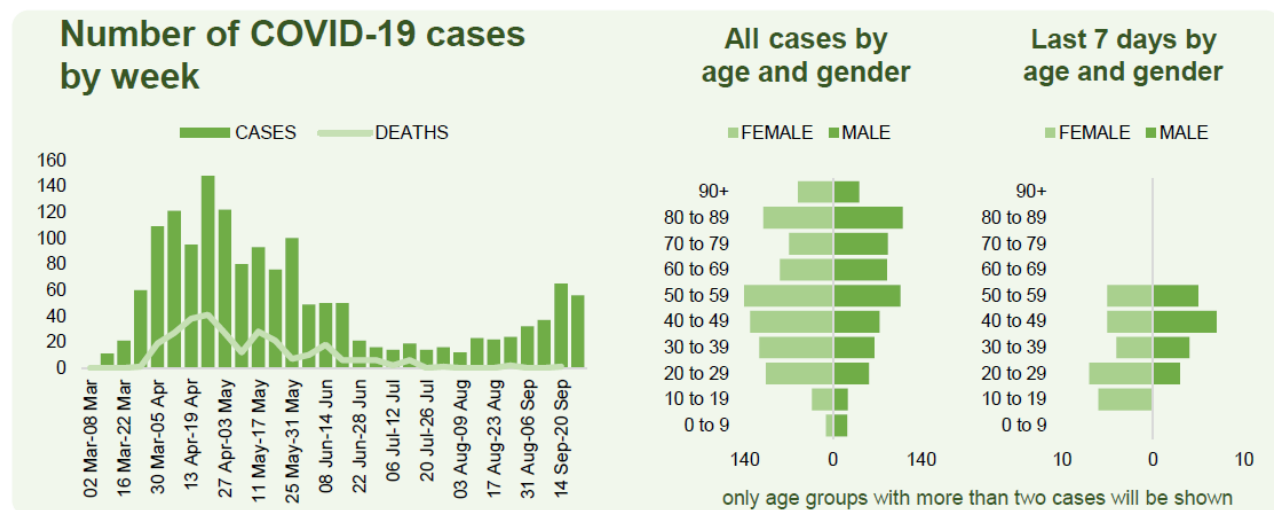
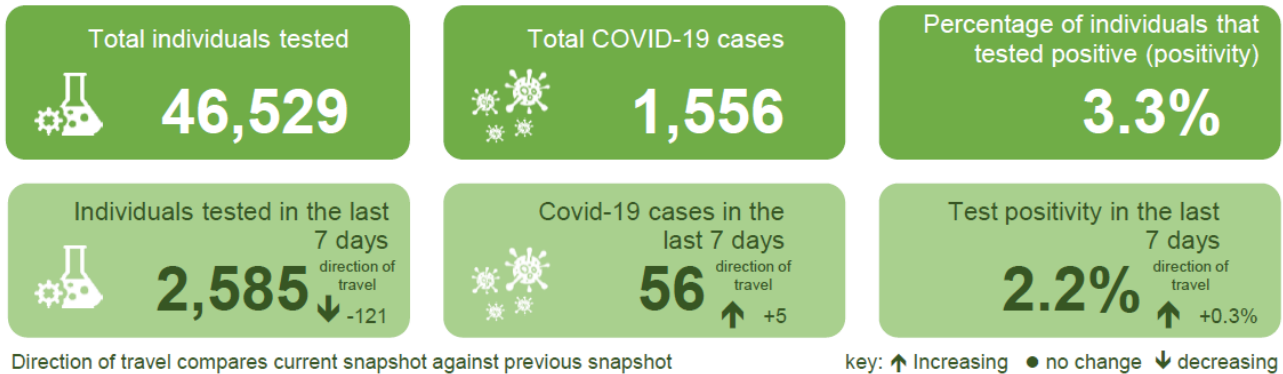
More information about [SAG is available online](#) or contact the SAG Officer via email: SAG@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

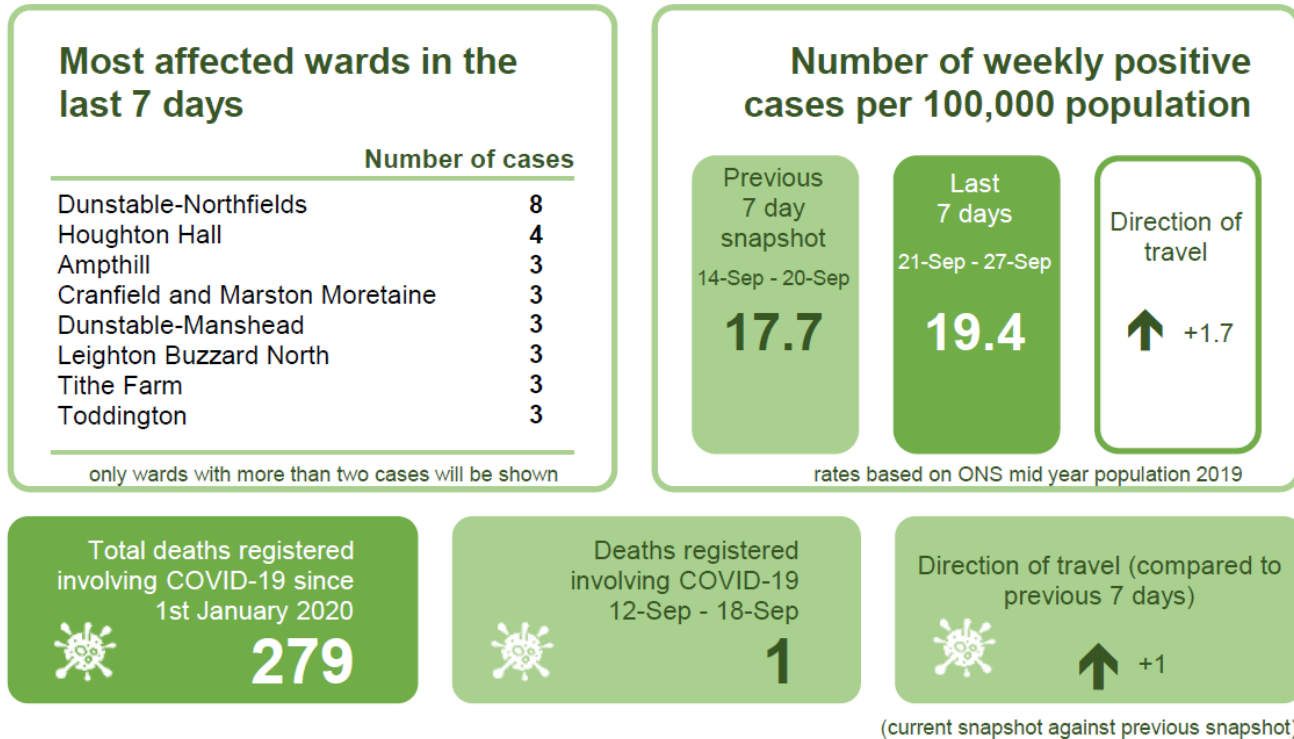
If you are planning to hold an event, whether it is a new or repeat event, you can notify the SAG using the [notification of event form](#)

2. Weekly Coronavirus statistics

The infographic below provides the latest Coronavirus statistics for Central Bedfordshire.

We publish the latest infographic across our website and social media channels each week, so please share with your followers, along with any other COVID-19 updates we publish.





3. NHS COVID-19 App launched

The new NHS COVID-19 App launched at the end of September and is used alongside existing contact tracing.

It allows people to 'check-in' to venues by scanning a QR code and alerts individuals that have spent time near other app users, who they may not know personally and who later test positive for coronavirus.

Some council buildings, such as children's centres and leisure facilities will have posters displaying a QR code. Currently, this doesn't apply to locations such as our offices.

All businesses that deal with the public face to face have had to take customer contact details, by law, since Friday 18 September for NHS Test and Trace. And from Thursday 24 September some businesses and community buildings will also need to display the COVID-19 App QR code. We have now written to all such businesses reminding them of their obligations.



Please share with us any intelligence about where measures to keep customers and staff safe not being followed, or any other social activities or events that are of concern by emailing susan.childerhouse@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

We would really appreciate your help to promote the use of the app in your local community. You can find out more about the app on the NHS website.

4. Government announces Winter Economy Plan

The Chancellor announced his new **Winter Economy Plan** in the House of Commons. A new **Jobs Support Scheme** will be introduced from Sunday 1 November replacing the current furlough system. The **Self-Employment Income Support Scheme** is to be extended for six months. He also announced changes to the various pandemic-related business loan schemes.

5. Self-isolating support

From Tuesday, 29 September it is a legal duty to self-isolate if you have tested positive for Coronavirus or been told to isolate by Test and Trace. For some people, isolating and not working can bring real financial hardship. In recognition of this the Government announced a new payment scheme for people on low incomes who need to self-isolate and can't work from home.

Local authorities have been tasked with administering the scheme. We are working quickly to set up the self-isolation support scheme for Central Bedfordshire to be in place by 12 October. However, those who start to self-isolate from 28 September will receive backdated payments once the scheme is set up. Residents can register for this support on our [covid pages on our website](#) or call

As a council we will have responsibility to put in place checks to prevent fraud and ensure compliance through welfare check-ins, phone calls and employment checks.

The Government have also introduced new fines for those breaching self-isolation rules which start at £1,000 – bringing this in line with the penalty for breaking quarantine after international travel - but could increase to up to £10,000 for repeat offences and for the most egregious breaches, including for those preventing others from self-isolating.

6. Community Champions update

Following the launch of the Community Champions on 22 September, we've had an amazing response with over 170 people registering to become a Champion.

Three introduction sessions were held last week and it was really helpful for us to listen to the Champions' feedback and suggestions about they can help ensure advice and messages are accessible and targeted to our communities. One of the ideas was that posters could be made available to town and parish councils for placing in your notice boards. Please let us know how many you will need and we will get them to you in the next week.

So far , we have attracted Community Champions from across the area and a good range of ages and backgrounds, but we would like to find more Champions in Dunstable , and Houghton Regis, where only a few have come forward so far. We would especially like to hear from young adults who are under 30 years and from residents in our more deprived areas , if you are able to assist in encouraging people to come forward please do so and ask them to register [online](#).

Community Champions can help protect their communities in the fight against Coronavirus by sharing information and advice through their contacts and connections. We will provide the information and they will share it.

7. Ward Councillor Grant Scheme – COVID-19 extension

Councillors have access to extra funding so that they help local groups in their area affected by the impact of COVID-19.

At a meeting on Tuesday 16 June, Executive agreed a proposal to extend the existing [Ward Councillor Grant Scheme](#) and allocate an additional £1,000 to each ward councillor. This is to enable them to support local groups that are dealing with the direct consequences of the current public health emergency. Unlike the existing scheme, bids for the additional funds do not require match funding.

Many local voluntary and community groups, both new and well established, have stepped up to help as part of their response to the pandemic, playing a phenomenal role in their parishes, villages and towns. This grant scheme will help them to manage the impacts.

8. Coronavirus Community Support Fund

The Government's new Coronavirus Community Support Fund is now open for applications.

A new Lottery fund has recently been added and is detailed below, please bring to the attention of local groups in your parishes if their activities have been impacted by COVID-19.

This new funding stream, managed by the National Lottery Community Fund, is making £200m available, aimed primarily at small to medium organisations. The Fund has two key objectives:

- To increase community support to vulnerable people affected by the COVID-19 crisis, through the work of civil society organisations.
- To reduce temporary closures of essential charities and social enterprises, ensuring services for vulnerable people impacted by COVID-19 have the financial resources to operate, and so reduce the burden on public services.

Grants will allow organisations to meet service costs, where they are experiencing increased demand and/or short-term income disruption. Grants will also allow organisations to refocus services to address more immediate beneficiary needs in light of COVID-19.

- For funding between £300 and 10,000 for up to 6 months, [click here](#).
- For funding between £10,000 and £100,000 for up to 6 months, [click here](#).
- For funding between £10,000 and £100,000 for up to 6 months for partnerships. [click here](#).

Applications will be assessed in the order they're submitted, and the fund is likely to be heavily oversubscribed.

Other News

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9. Marcel Coiffait appointed as new Chief Executive

Following an extensive recruitment process, Central Bedfordshire Council has confirmed the appointment of its new Chief Executive, Marcel Coiffait. Currently the Director of Place and Communities at the Council, Marcel will take on the new role, later this year when Richard Carr is due to stand down from the role he's held since 2009.

10. BT Payphone consultation

BT are continually reviewing the demand for their payphones and they've identified 29 public payphones as unnecessary in Central Bedfordshire. The details of the payphones which may be removed can be seen on our website: www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/consultations.

To make sure that the local community are fully informed, they've placed consultation notices on these payphones and asked us to carry out a public consultation.

You may remember we undertook a similar community consultation for BT at the start of the year, which sought the views of the local community and other public organisations, which received 86 responses for the final stage of the consultation.

The consultation responses indicated there was general support for retaining the payphones in villages – either as payphones or adopting them for community use. There were a handful of suggestions that the phone boxes could be used by the community as small lending libraries.

Based on community feedback and evidence provided during the previous consultation and recent feedback received from Leighton Linlade Town Council relating to the payphone on Vimy road, the Council is now proposing to object to all 29 payphones being removed.

Our consultation which runs from Wednesday 7 October 2020 until Friday 6 November 2020 enables residents to comment on whether they agree with the proposed removal, would like to request to adopt the phonebox or want to object to the removal of the payphone.

You can find the full details of the consultation on our website at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/consultations

11. Council approves sustainability plan

On Thursday 24 September a full meeting of Central Bedfordshire Council adopted its new Sustainability Plan aimed at making the council carbon neutral by 2030.

The detailed plan outlines a 'road map' developed jointly by officers and elected members and it commits the council to lead by example by investing in sustainability while encouraging and working with others – residents, businesses and key partners - to do the same.

It follows a July 2019 climate action motion which was also supported by all councillors.

Cllr Steve Dixon, Executive Member for Transformation and External Partnerships said: "We've deliberately called this a plan, because that's exactly what it is. Clearly defined steps towards our carbon neutral goal."

Members will be given annual progress reports in late spring with success measured against a detailed survey of the current council carbon footprint.

Added Cllr Dixon: "We are going to appoint a sustainability lead to co-ordinate our work and provide expert advice, working alongside our staff from all departments, to ensure sustainability is at the heart of everything that we do.

"We have a host of other projects which will not only make our residents' lives and our local businesses greener but get everyone thinking about the climate challenge and what steps can be taken by an individual or on a community basis.

"As a council we've already got solar panels on 16 of our buildings with another installation planned. But we are going to be looking at the rest of the estate and work with more schools like the eight we have already helped install theirs. This will be taken forward along side a concerted effort to reduce energy use from all our buildings as well as making best use of other technologies, such as battery storage.

"We will target working with schools to support pupils take actions like conserving water, litter picking and hedge, tree and wildflower planting to with the aim of achieving Keep Britain Tidy's Eco-School status.

"As well as converting all of our streetlights to more energy efficient LEDs we'll be looking to make lampposts smarter, able to react to different light conditions and even install electric vehicle charging points in some of them, as well as working to expand and enhance the network of electric vehicle charging points across Central Bedfordshire.

"We've bolder projects as well, ranging from delivering the significant commitment that was made by Full Council in February 2020 to plant significantly more trees, improving and enhancing cycling routes, as well as embracing innovation, initially at our Highways Depots and eventually through the setting up of a Innovation Hub.

12. Highways Resilient Network

To secure the maximum capital funding from the Department for Transport's 'Incentive Fund,' local highway authorities in England must have a '[Highways Resilient Network](#)' in place and for it to be reviewed every two years.

As a highway authority, we are responsible for the construction and maintenance of non-trunk roads, cycle ways, street lighting, bridges and structures and other highway assets.

A 'Highways Resilient Network' identifies the roads that are given priority during adverse events, such as extreme weather (e.g. floods, storms, ice, snow etc.). These roads are the main priority to remain open when this occurs in order to maintain access to key services such as schools, railway stations, key food shops, petrol stations, hospitals, police, fire services etc, and maintain economic activity to town centres, industrial estates and business parks.

The roads within the network are reviewed after any relevant event or every two years if no events occur. The Highways Resilient Network was adopted by the Executive on 5th December 2017 following a public consultation.

In 2020, our Highways Officers and the Bedfordshire Local Resilience Forum reviewed the Highways Resilient Network and having fully considered the existing road network determined that no changes are required to the Highways Resilient Network published in 2017. Therefore, the Highways Resilient Network has been readopted.

It is anticipated that changes to the Highways Resilient Network will be required over the next two years to encompass changes to the road network and the way in which we use the road network. Therefore, at the next review in 2022, a full public consultation will be undertaken (as it was in 2017) to allow all stakeholders to provide feedback on any proposed changes to the Highways Resilient Network.

13. Getting ready for the winter roads

The gritting season starts at the beginning of October and will run through to the end of April. The temperatures and the forecast are monitored regularly throughout the day to inform our decision to grit or not.

We've a fleet of ten new gritter lorries. Instead of just spreading salt like the older ones, they can spray a mix of brine (salt-water) and rock salt which helps roads become clearer much faster, especially less well-travelled ones. The new machines are also a lot greener. They have state-of-the-art diesel engines and can direct their spread much more precisely.

We salt just under half of the roads in Central Bedfordshire. Roads carrying the highest volumes of traffic, with the greatest risk of accidents or providing key access are given priority. These include all A&B roads and most smaller roads, especially if they are busy commuter routes, routes to hospitals, schools, or key to the emergency services. The list of roads can be seen on our [website](#).

When we decide to grit, we send an email alert to residents who are signed up for this information. You and residents can [sign up for gritting updates on our website](#). We'll also spread the word on social media, via our [Facebook page](#) and [Twitter accounts](#).

To help local communities and more rural areas, we also offer Town and Parish Councils road salt to store and use ready for a cold snap.

14. Residents praised for recycling efforts during recycling week

What and how we recycle really matters. Recycling just one item rather than throwing it in the general rubbish bin means that it will be dealt with in the most environmentally friendly way and means that materials can be reused for a longer lifespan.

Recycling at home is something everyone can do to help protect the environment and planet. Here in Central Bedfordshire we want to help residents to recycle right and that's why we've created a short [video](#) to show examples of some plastics which can and can't go in the recycling bin. Alternatively visit the council's [website](#) or waste [Facebook page](#).

We are currently distributing garden waste bins to replace the sacks previously available to residents in the north of Central Bedfordshire and we will be rolling out food waste bins to those in the south later this year. We're making every effort to make it as easy as possible for residents to recycle as much of their waste as possible.

15. Council plans free parking on Saturdays at four car parks

In a bid to add a boost to High Streets hard-hit by the pandemic, Central Bedfordshire Council is to offer free parking Saturdays at four of its car parks.

The car parks taking part in the scheme will be two in Leighton Buzzard at Hockliffe Street and Duncombe Drive and two in Dunstable at Priory Gardens and Ashton Square. An exact starting date will be announced shortly after taking account of any further Covid-related announcements made in the days to come by the Prime Minister.

This is a temporary measure and will help us develop a clearer picture about whether offering free parking really does have economic benefits or simply moves shopping from other days of the week to the free day and whether it raises any social distancing concerns.

16. Multi-agency information form – Virtual training

We would like to invite you to attend a free virtual training session about the 'Multi-agency information form'. This is the form that should be used to submit information to the police. CBC Members and Town and Parish Councillors are welcome to attend the training as well as Town Clerks and their staff.

The session will cover: the kinds of issues should be shared using the form, the type of information to include, how to submit, how to get support on completing the form if needed, and the importance of submitting the forms even where some contact may have been made with community policing. We will also share some Central Bedfordshire success stories where the information shared has been used to disrupt community safety issues and safeguard vulnerable people.

The training will be delivered by:

Michelle Bellham, Safer Communities & Intelligence Team Leader, Community Safety

Slavica Tobdzic, Exploitation & Missing Co-ordinator, Children's Services

Please email: community.safety@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk to book your place on one of the following sessions:

Tuesday 20th October 2020 10am-12noon

Thursday 29th October 2020 1-3pm

The team will then send you joining instructions on how to access the meeting online.

17. Consultations

Details of current and upcoming consultation activity undertaken by the Council are provided by the Knowledge & Insight Team. For more information about this update please contact Clare Harding, tel: 0300 300 6109 (ext. 76109).

Current consultations

Subject	Description	Start	End	Lead officer
Schools for the Future – Fulbrook Cluster statutory notice (1a)	Statutory notice consultation on the proposals for the 2 lower schools, Aspley Guise and Swallowfield, which, along with Fulbrook Middle School (academy), form the first phase of this cluster.	10 Sept 2020	8 Oct 2020	Sarah Ferguson 0300 300 5978

Upcoming consultations

Subject	Description	Start	End	Lead officer
BT Payphones 2020	Consultation on proposals to remove or retain 29 phoneboxes (as per the list that were identified for removal by BT)	7 th Oct 2020	6 th Nov 2020	Sarah Hughes 0300 300 6166
Leighton Buzzard Day Centre	Consultation on the future of Leighton Buzzard Day Centre	14 Feb 2020	Paused due to covid-19	Tobin Stephenson 0300 300 4098
Short breaks and Personalisation	Consultation on the longer-term options for the development of the funding and delivery offer for non-residential Short Breaks for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) and their families. Consultation was paused in April 2020 due to Covid-19.	Paused due to covid-19	Tbc	Joe Meader 0300 300 5699

