

# ***Report to the Council***

**Committee:** Council  
**Date:** 17 December 2020  
**Subject:** Commercial and Regulatory Portfolio – Covid19 Responsibility  
**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Aniket Patel

---

## **Recommending:**

**That the report of the Commercial and Regulatory Portfolio Holder be noted in related to Covid19**

---

The national and local Covid19 response has varied over the last 2 months moving firstly from Tier 1 to Tier 2, then a National lockdown and then back to Tier 2 in this area. The changing rules has meant constant adaptations to the Council's response and a constant change in its focus.

The tightening of rules has also been accompanied by different financial support mechanisms from the Government, which individual councils have been asked to administer. Responding to these quickly, so that support can be provided to those businesses that need it most, has created additional pressure on the Council's Revenues, Benefits and Customer Teams.

The changes in rules has also resulted in uncertainty amongst the public and businesses so our Environmental Health Team has also been particularly busy in providing advice and in ensuring compliance with the changing rules. Where there have been deliberate and repeated breaches, the Council's EHO officers are also taking enforcement action as a last resort.

Community support demands are fewer than last time the Country was in full lockdown, but we continue to support partner agencies and colleagues at the County in a joined up and coordinated response.

The Communication response has been central to getting important messages to the wider community and have been focused on clarifying the rules that are in place at the time and on repeating the basic health advice that will help to reduce the spread of infection. I want to thank the Communications Team for their continued hard work in pushing out these critical messages. I would like to say that we understand the fatigue that residents are feeling right now and frustration and difficulty that the tighter rules cause, but the sooner we have the virus under control, the sooner we can return to normality and everyone's continued vigilance will be vital in achieving this.

Over the last few months, the infection rate in Epping Forest District has remained one of the highest in Essex and so officers and the Leader having been meeting regularly with the County Council's Health leads to make sure that we are taking all necessary actions to reduce the infection rates faster.

Part of this is in supporting partner agencies to increase the supply of community testing and to provide help in the preparation of sites for the community vaccination programme in the very near future.

I continue to hold regular meeting of my cross-party Portfolio Holder Advisory Group (PAG) to share latest information and receive views and advice on the current Council response actions.

Looking beyond the current spike, we are also still working hard on producing recovery plans for the Economy and for the Community. A number of reports relating to these actions have already been considered by Cabinet.

With multiple vaccines either cleared or approaching the point of clearance, I genuinely think that the end is now at least in sight. Alongside this, the temporary Christmas relaxation will give many the chance to visit loved ones and lighten the darkness of this time of year. Together, I hope that these will raise spirits in the festive season.