

Leader's Statement

19 January 2021

Community Hub

The Community Hub is continuing to offer help and practical assistance to residents affected by Covid-19 and the current restrictions.

Shielding for Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) people was reintroduced on 31 December and we continue to provide help and support to CEV and other groups to access help with shopping, prescriptions and isolation as well as offering practical support to help with food, fuel costs and other financial hardship.

The link to the referral form is here: <https://www.blaby.gov.uk/leisure-health-and-community/community/coronavirus-community-hub/>

Befriending Service

7 volunteers have been trained to become telephone Befrienders as part of Blaby District Council's new Befriending Service.

Befrienders were matched up with beneficiaries throughout December and the scheme is proving to be positive to those receiving the service and for those who are making the calls. One beneficiary described 'feeling on a high' following conversations with their befriender and in turn the befriender stated 'It is nice to know the weekly contact has brought him so much comfort'.

Our volunteer befrienders are providing much needed support on a regular basis to residents who are often lonely and isolated.

We are still open to take more referrals. For more information or to make a referral, please contact vcshub@blaby.gov.uk

Love Blaby Lottery Helping Community Groups

The Love Blaby Lottery is helping to bring in a steady income for local charities, sports clubs and community groups during these challenging times. Many organisations have lost significant revenue or had to cancel their normal fundraising activities and are facing additional financial pressure in order to be able to continue or re-start services when it's safe to do so. Here are just a few ways that the lottery has helped:

'The money raised through the Blaby Lottery has helped with running costs and has enabled for us to remain open. Without Blaby Lottery's support we would be struggling to continue supporting vulnerable people in the Blaby District.' Sharon Wood, Horses for Causes.

'...we have spent some of the money towards making our library COVID 19 safe as the purchase and fitting of screens was more expensive than we had estimated. It has been invaluable to have this steady income when our regular coffee mornings and book sales have not been possible.' Margaret Leach, Huncote Community Library.

'The income from the Love Blaby Lottery has... enabled us to purchase food hampers up front, purchase masks and hand sanitisers for all volunteers, produce newsletters about the scheme to spread the word about what we do and how we can help, purchase a new phone contract to help deal with all the telephone calls which has been a lifeline to many of our services users.' Lou Hathaway, Whetstone GNS

'We have spent a small amount making up and delivering bags of goodies to all our 51 members at roughly monthly intervals over the last few months. These gifts have been well appreciated by all who received them and have let them know they have not been forgotten during the long time we have not been able to meet or go on outings.' Alan Wing, Croft Happy Circle

For more information about the Love Blaby Lottery visit www.blabylottery.co.uk or call the Funding and Awards Officer on 0116 2727566.

The Love Blaby Lottery is open to UK residents aged 16 years and over. All participants are reminded to gamble responsibly. If you need advice about your gambling, please visit www.gambleaware.co.uk

Web Accessibility

The Council is delighted to announce that once again its website blaby.gov.uk is 1st place in the latest league table of council websites for accessibility. The Silktide Index, in association with SOCITM is a public list of websites, graded for accessibility compliance.

Blaby District Council's website has been consistently at the top of the league table since September 2020, dropping momentarily to 2nd place in December 2020.

Exciting Waterways Improvements In The District

In December 2020 extensive works took place at Blue Bank Lock, near Everards Meadows. Further work continues this month as part of a £1 million programme of improvement work to Leicester's waterways.

Works will include:

- New lock gates (already delivered)
- New Moorings so boats can stop and visit
- Bridge repairs and resurfacing
- Resurfacing works to the path connecting Blue Bank Bridge to the Great Central Way
- New signage

The District Council has played an important role in bringing together partners such as the Canal and River Trust, Leicester & Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership and Leicester City Council to make this project happen.

These works will improve access to the Canal, Great Central Way and Everards Meadows. It will have a positive impact for local businesses and residents and increase the number of visitors to the district supporting our Tourism offer.

Test and Trace Support Payment

The Council Tax and Benefits Team are administering the Test and Trace payments on behalf of central government. Residents asked to isolate who lose income and meet certain eligibility criteria will be able to receive a £500 payment to assist with the loss of income during the period of isolation.

Since the launch date of 12th October 2020 the team have received 270 applications from residents for this payment, of which 81 have been successful. Resulting in payments worth £40,500.

Supporting Local Businesses

Since the 5th November 2020 the Council Tax and Benefits Team have received 440 applications for assistance from local businesses. There are a number of different schemes available of which these payments have been made including the Mandatory Closed Scheme and Wet Led Pubs Scheme as just two examples. £436,000 has been paid out by Blaby to support these local businesses since November 2020.

Covid Winter Support Grant Scheme

Leicestershire County Council also launched its Covid Winter Support Grant scheme just before Christmas which can offer assistance to certain households needing fuel or food help this winter.

Information about the scheme can be found here: <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/adult-social-care-and-health/assessment-and-eligibility-for-care-and-support/covid-winter-support-grant>

The application can only be completed by an agency (ie the Council) so anyone wishing to access this service can do so via the community hub using the referral form here: <https://www.blaby.gov.uk/leisure-health-and-community/community/coronavirus-community-hub/>

Leisure Centre Update

Unfortunately, as part of moving into tier 4 and now lockdown both Leisure Centres are closed until restrictions are lifted. Officers continue to work with Everyone Active to reconcile income and expenditure to date and prepare forecasts for 2021/22. A report will be brought back to Council once this has been completed.

I can also update that the government has released, via Sport England, a National Leisure Recovery Fund and officers are currently working on an application with Everyone Active to try and secure additional funds.