

2nd November 2020



Chief Executive

West Berkshire Council
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Good afternoon,

As announced over the weekend, the Government is set to bring in new national restrictions in England to help control the spread of COVID-19 and ease the burden on the NHS. The new restrictions will come into force on Thursday, 5 November until Wednesday, 2 December following a Parliamentary decision this Wednesday. At the end of this period, the Government will look to return to a regional approach, based on the latest data.

The Government's underlying message behind these new restrictions is to "stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives."

What we know today is that people will be required to stay at home and only leave for certain exceptions. These include being allowed to leave home for food, medical reasons, exercise (with certain restrictions), education, work if you cannot work from home, or to escape physical injury or harm. Travel must be avoided unless absolutely essential and schools and essential shops will remain open. Please however, continue to go to any medical appointments and please seek support if you are in a dangerous situation at home.

Detailed guidance on the new restrictions has been published on the Government website: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/new-national-restrictions-from-5-november>. This page will be kept updated over the coming days to reflect any new information that arises. The NHS Covid-19 App will also keep you informed of the latest guidance from Thursday 5 November. To download the App, please visit: <https://www.covid19.nhs.uk/>. The Government will write to everybody who is clinically extremely vulnerable to set out detailed advice while the new restrictions are in place.

Although the Government's new rules are not set to be as restrictive as the national lockdown we've had earlier this year, we understand that this will still be very disappointing news for many residents and businesses, especially as certain businesses and venues will be required to temporarily close.

We are fully committed to supporting our residents and businesses who are, or will be, adversely impacted. As before, we are working closely with our partners, including Volunteer Centre West Berkshire and Greenham Trust, to support the community throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are ensuring that there are sufficient resources in our Community Support Hub to help residents in financial hardship and/or who are clinically extremely vulnerable to get the support

that they need. Anyone who needs help should contact the Community Support Hub on: 01635 503579, by email: westberksbct@westberks.gov.uk or via our online form: www.westberks.gov.uk/SupportHub. The Community Support Hub is open during office hours; call between 8.30am and 5pm Monday to Thursday, or between 8.30am and 4.30pm on Friday.

The Government has announced that the Coronavirus Job Retention (Furlough) Scheme has been extended for a month with employees receiving 80% of their current salary for hours not worked up to £2,500. In addition the Government is bringing in further economic support measures, including two new grants. As soon as we have finalised how these grants will be administered, we will work quickly to get them out to those who need them, as we did earlier in the year.

We would also encourage any firm experiencing difficulty in paying their business rates to get in touch with us on businessrates@westberks.gov.uk and we will exercise flexibility with payments where we can.

Our community as a whole – residents, businesses, town and parish councils, community and volunteers and our partners - have all already worked very hard with us to ensure we are as safe as we can possibly be during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. We call upon this amazing community resilience to stay strong, continue to follow the rules and work together to get through these challenging and difficult times ahead.

We will keep you posted on any further updates in our regular Weeknotes edition this Friday. This includes any adjustments that need to be made to the restricted events that had been planned for Remembrance Sunday on 8 November.

In the meantime, we would like to thank everyone across West Berkshire once again for their support by following the rules which are imperative to staying safe and saving lives.

Yours sincerely,



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