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Friday 20 November

Weekly Update from the Leader and Chief Executive
Warwick District Council

Dear Friends

We're now hopefully half-way through Lockdown 2, making good progress with an array of local measures to contain the spread of the virus. Thankfully, infection rates began to fall this week from **258.8 to 223.3 Covid cases per 100,000 residents.** While the measures we're taking are having a positive impact, but we must remain focused on driving the infection rate down much further, helping make it safe for us to celebrate Christmas together.

Evidence suggests that the virus is being spread as a result of household visits. So, while it is tough to **hold off visiting our friends and family** during this lockdown period, to catch-up with loved ones now will clearly boosts our infection rates, risking further extensions to the lockdown restrictions.

Let's help each other to get on top of the spread of the virus and to take care of our own wellbeing. Please **stay vigilant** and continue to follow public health guidelines about social distancing and face coverings, and wash your hands regularly, checking the latest Government guidance, here.

- ✓ **Healthy balanced food** will better support our immune system.
- ✓ **Staying active** boosts our mood – we've got award winning parks and gardens open for our daily walks, runs and cycles.
- ✓ **Protecting our mental health** helps us all weather the lockdown challenges – here's some tips to consider.

Our most vulnerable family, friends and neighbours need our support right now and the Covid-19 **Community directory** provides a one-stop shop for information on available local support and services. The clinically extremely vulnerable can access support on 0800 4081447. And a further reminder that our **Community Emergency Recovery Fund** is available for charitable organisations which have adapted or increased their support services.

We're also focusing on what might be in-store on the other side of this lockdown, with good progress made this week on a number of key Recovery Plan projects:

- Our superstar teams have acted swiftly to put in place a new applications process for eligible businesses to claim the National or Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSG) for business rates customers that have been mandated to close, and the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) to support businesses that are ineligible for the LRSG support grant.

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The application deadline for both schemes is 30 December. So far 500 business have applied for the LRG and a further 200 for the AFG - we're pleased to have paid out over £85,000 in just days. Our officers will be working through this weekend and into the evening to ensure support gets to our amazing local businesses just as soon as possible.

This week we welcomed the news that one of the **largest diagnostic labs in UK** history will be located at the former Wolseley site at Tachbrook Park, Leamington Spa. We've been busy behind the scenes assisting with the planning process and sorting out nearby car parking for this exciting new facility.

The Mega Lab will be dedicated to Covid-19 testing initially, processing up to 300,000 tests a day and playing a key role in controlling the spread of the virus. Planned to open in early 2021, 2,000 jobs are expected to be created, details can be found, here; from entry level to specialised positions, providing opportunities for our young people to broaden their skills and knowledge. This is welcome news, giving the recovery of our local economy a major boost.

And in other news, despite 2020 feeling like a very long year indeed, it does not seem like 10 years since our last census was carried out! The **census** is a survey about all of us. It provides a picture of our communities, which helps government to understand how best to plan and fund our public services. You'll be hearing much more about this over the coming months. However, the immediate good news is that conducting the census creates thousands of temporary jobs across the country. More details about these new jobs are here.

To help foster further employment opportunities the Coventry & Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Growth Hub, which we're pleased to fund, has launched Employment Solutions. 2,000 local business have registered to help connect employers with those who are looking for a new job, an apprenticeship or a fresh start following redundancy.

Though we can't be together just now, we can still gather virtually to celebrate an unprecedented year in which we have seen our communities support each other in so many different ways. To applaud this remarkable spirit, please join us as we **Light up the District** next Friday 27 November at 5.45pm. Ideas, a festive quiz plus activities and party games for us all to get involved in, are available here.

Keep smiling and stay safe

Andrew Day
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