

Report to Stradishall Parish Council 7 February 2022

Joint report from Nick Clarke, Karen Richardson and Marion Rushbrook, West Suffolk Councillors.

Update from West Suffolk Council (WSC) regarding the pandemic

WSC has been working to support residents and businesses throughout this pandemic, and to date have administered more than £120m in business grants and rate relief.

Omicron variant of COVID-19 is now having an impact on our businesses, WSC will once again be working to administer further Government support to businesses, through grants and rate relief, over the next couple of months.

Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant (OHLG)

Launched on 17 January 2022, this is one-off grant of up to £6,000 for hospitality, leisure and accommodation businesses in the business rates system, whose trade has been impacted by the rise of the Omicron variant of COVID-19.

The grant is subject to Government criteria, referenced in the guidelines at www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support/upload/COVID19-Omicron-Hospitality-and-Leisure-Grant-Scheme-Eligibility-Criteria.pdf

Due to fraud prevention and Government pre-payment checks that WSC have to adhere to, they are unable to make automatic grant payments to previous grant recipients on this occasion. Businesses will instead need to make a new application for this payment.

Businesses should apply at www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/c19business. The closing date for applications is 18 February 2022. Grants will be paid out once pre-payment checks have taken place. All OHLG grants are to be paid out no later than 31 March 2022.

Omicron Additional Restrictions Grant (Omicron ARG)

The Government has given WSC £310,000 to offer discretionary grants to West Suffolk businesses. They are currently working through the detail given by Government and are aiming to launch a local discretionary scheme early in the week of 24 January 2022.

Due to the limited level of funding available WSC will invite applications to be made by 20 February, after which they will decide on grant amounts based on evidence of the scale of impact on trade and other criteria. This does mean that no ARG grants can be paid until March 2022 and based on modelling of numbers from previous applications they expect the levels of payment may be relatively small compared to those paid previously.

Businesses should look on the www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/c19business webpage as well as the Council's social media for updates nearer the time.

In line with Government advice, all the previous ARG money allocated to the Council by the Government in late 2020 and early 2021, has already been paid out to help businesses survive last winter, reopen in a COVID-secure manner and to support business recovery.

COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF)

The Government has announced the above to help businesses that have not previously been eligible for rate relief during the pandemic.

The fund will support councils in delivering a local discretionary scheme. WSC will be going through the Government guidance and modelling a scheme to distribute the rate relief to those businesses that need it the most and who have not already been helped.

WSC aim is to implement this rate relief to businesses ahead of their annual billing in March. Please see www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/c19business webpage where the council will have more detail to share.

Police Survey

Tim Passmore, Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk, would like to hear your thoughts on his proposal for the policing element of your council tax for the next financial year.

[Council tax precept survey 2022/23 \(surveymonkey.co.uk\)](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk)

The survey will close at 9am on Thursday 27th January 2022.

WSC collect the council tax on behalf of all the bodies mentioned below. In 2021-22 West Suffolk residents paid £104.91 million in Council Tax. The money was distributed as follows:

Suffolk County Council gets £77.32 million (73.7 per cent of the total)
Suffolk Police Authority gets £13.15 million (12.5 per cent of the total)
West Suffolk Council gets £10.08 million (9.6 per cent of the total)
Parish and Town Councils get £4.36 million (4.1 per cent of the total).

Under regulations introduced from 1 April 2013, the council collects business rates locally and retains a proportion to spend on local services

Consultation

Transport Strategy for the East have launched a consultation (closing on 30 January 2022). They still keen to hear from anyone who is interested in improving the transport networks across the region.

All the materials are available on their website – www.transporeast.org.uk/public-consultation, an [animation video](#) to explain their approach.

Through this strategy, they aim to overcome some of the transport challenges the region experiences, while also delivering a fit for purpose, high quality, inclusive and sustainable transport network that will be able to accommodate future growth.

Highpoint Planning Application

Nick will keep you up to date on this due to the planning being more complex than usual.

Best wishes for 2022 and we look forward to working with you.

Apologies for any articles on here that are already on Bobby Bennett's report – this is due to where the work overlaps.