

Report for Sellindge Parish Council 25 January 2021 from your County Councillor

Covid continues to dominate our lives and KCC is involved in many of the initiatives to combat the pandemic including a local test and trace system, testing for Covid for those without symptoms and ensuring as many of our services as possible continue despite the increasing challenge of staff sickness and self-isolating.

Covid rates and transmission in Kent remain high so despite the good news about the vaccines the need for measures to limit transmission also remains high. Nothing brings this home more than the news that on 30 December KCC was asked to put in place a temporary mortuary for the rising number of bodies. Our plans for this had been made in April and this temporary storage in Aylesford with space for up to 825 is now operating 24 hours a day.

If you need to be out and about for your work then it's a good idea to have a regular test to make sure you aren't inadvertently spreading Covid as 1 in 3 of those who have Covid show no symptoms. KCC has now set up several testing sites for those without symptoms including Folkestone Library in Grace Hill, the Community Centre in Hawkinge, the Ashford North Youth Centre and at Eurogate Business Park in Ashford .

You do need to book in advance not just turn up, but there's plenty of capacity and you will get your result within a couple of hours. You can see all 22 sites and book online at www.kent.gov.uk/symptomfreetest

The NHS is dealing with tests for those who have symptoms of Covid at www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test The NHS is also in the lead in dealing with the vaccination programme (see the District Council report).

The work done to prepare for a No Deal Brexit was needed instead for the border closure by France just before Christmas. There has never been a full border closure before – there have been delays or the port has been closed but not the Tunnel or

vice versa. The Covid testing that the French authorities now require was set up in double quick time at both Manston and Sevington and 0.02% of HGV drivers tested positive. Once the border reopened and Dover was unjammed, the backlog cleared quickly leaving a mountain of litter on our roads which is now being cleared. HGVs are now also required to have a Kent Access Permit to cross the border (rather more notice was given about this) and the new system appears to be working well though efforts are being made to get more drivers to get their paperwork in order and their Covid tests done before they enter Kent. The latest information I have is from Friday when 4,356 Kent Access Passes were issued for outbound travel and 4,737 inbound vehicles arrived from the continent. 116 HGVs were turned back at the Port of Dover and 42 from Eurotunnel, mostly for not having their EU paperwork.

The Kent Resilience Forum continues to co-ordinate work across the public sector – Kent Highways, Kent Police, Highways England etc and I know many KCC staff have worked exceptionally hard over the Christmas and New Year period to deal with both the crisis caused by the border closure and its fall out.

KCC distributed vouchers to families with children eligible for Free School Meals for the Christmas holiday period and KentTogether continues to offer help for those in need. kent.gov.uk/kenttogether or [03000 41 92 92](tel:03000419292) (this is a [24/7](#) service).

There's lots more going on which you can see on the website and there's also a regular e-newsletter which you can sign up for here: <https://mailchi.mp/kent.gov.uk/subscribe>

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