



# Biggleswade Community News

FEBRUARY 2021



Email: [editor@biggleswadecommunitynews.uk](mailto:editor@biggleswadecommunitynews.uk) Tel: 01767 448954

## **SPREADING THE NEWS**

Lockdown will last a bit longer. We are pleased that Biggleswade Good Neighbours has joined us in a trial to deliver a copy of our newsletter to all their clients and we hope some will subscribe on line.

The main newsletter collection points are Howells Newsagents in Hitchin Street and the Shortmead Street Convenience Store. Normally they can also be found at cafes, community centres, and some shops.

The Town Council will be hearing more local voices having set up a new Community Engagement Group. Initially they will be consulted on the forthcoming Neighbourhood Plan as it develops, and for other local issues as they occur. We will keep our readers informed of surveys and community involvement events as they come on stream. Please take part and give your views on how you wish your town to develop in the future.

Inside you will find more information about the local COVID-19 vaccination site at the Weatherley Centre in Biggleswade, which missed our January edition. (see page 6) but we did email our on line subscribers to bring them up to date.

If you prefer to receive your copy online, please contact us or visit our website [www.biggleswadecommunitynews.uk](http://www.biggleswadecommunitynews.uk)



**published by Biggleswade Community Group tel: 01767 310163**



Formed in 1978, **Biggleswade Sandy Lions** are part of Lions Clubs International, the world's largest voluntary service organisation, bringing support to the 23 towns and villages within our area of Central Bedfordshire

One initiative is their Message in a Bottle Scheme which encourages people to keep their personal & medical details on a standard form in a common location - the fridge - in case of an emergency. A green cross sticker is stuck to the inside of your front door to alert the emergency services who are aware of this scheme. They also provide a Message in a Wallet, which records the same information but is carried in case of an emergency away from home.



Both are readily available from doctors' surgeries, many pharmacies, libraries, local care schemes or by contacting the Club on 03458 330749 or phone the newsletter as we can obtain supplies.

The Club provides these and other support services through the community fundraising events and activities that they hold. Visit their website [www.bsliions.org.uk](http://www.bsliions.org.uk) or their Facebook page.

**UPDATE:** Fundraising virtually ceased in March when we had to cancel our Jumble Sale, Logo Quiz, Easter Egg draw and attendance at Summer Fetes etc. Normally in December we would have been fundraising through supermarket collections and our Christmas sleigh float would journey around the towns and villages, with volunteers knocking on doors to raise the funds to provide Food Parcels, Food Banks support, etc.

Covid regrettably stopped us distributing food parcels and Father Christmas wasn't possible. However, we doubled our support to local food banks. We need to rebuild our funds to enable us to continue supporting the Biggleswade / Sandy community until we can resume our normal fund-raising activities. Please if you are able make a donation no matter how small, to the 'Just Giving page' on our website.



## **BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL** **services during covid restrictions**

**MARKET SQUARE BENCHES.** On January 19th the Town Council removed 9 benches for refurbishment from the Market Square. Further benches will also be removed and refurbished in batches of nine. Covid restrictions state that benches should not be used for socialising so this is an ideal time to carry out the work.

**RECYCLING BAGS AND FOOD WASTE BAGS** During covid restrictions Orange recycling bags and Green food waste bags will be available for collection outside the Town Council offices between the hours of 10am-12 noon on Wednesday's and Saturday's

**Town Council Operated Car Parks** will remain open during the lockdown period and charges will not be enforced from the 5th January 2021, up to and including 31st March 2021. Parking permits for these car parks will not need to be obtained or renewed until the parking charges are reinstated. The Council will be writing to each permit holder to advise them of this course of action. Car Park signage will be amended.

**TOWN COUNCIL** Parking Orders regulations will not now come into effect on 1st February 2021. With implementation expected on the 1st April 2021, however, this will be reviewed nearer the time

**PUBLIC CONVENIENCES CENTURY HOUSE** will remain open as usual and will be regularly cleaned

**SPORTS FACILITIES.** Football pitches and changing rooms and tennis courts closed on the 5th January until further notice.

**KENNEL FARM ROAD ALLOTMENTS** will remain open but The Town Council asks that social distancing is observed at all times.

**THE ORCHARD CENTRE** is closed and all activities suspended but if you have any concerns email:

[angela.thomas@biggleswadetowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:angela.thomas@biggleswadetowncouncil.gov.uk)

or the Assistant Town Clerk:

[Philip.tuppin@biggleswadetowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:Philip.tuppin@biggleswadetowncouncil.gov.uk)

**PARKS AND PLAY AREAS** remain open



Our Town's local Good Neighbours group has been running for 6 years providing services that a good neighbour might need, like a trip to the doctor or dentist, help with gardening or hedge cutting. This support is available all over Biggleswade. All its volunteers are DBS checked.

Just telephone to ask for help, or complete a request at: <https://forms.gle/VNWuTg6bcvhKjjs5> Starting with the February edition its chairman, John Robertson, has agreed to trial a delivery of this newsletter to all their client households. John and some of his team can often be seen helping at the Mocha Café, a not-for-profit community café, established in 2008. In normal times you can pick up a newsletter from there, have a coffee or meal, or look at the notice board displaying a huge amount of local information. To join the Good Neighbours band of dedicated helpers visit <https://forms.gle/VNWuTg6bcvhKjjs5>

### **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COMMUNITY MATTERS**

0300 300 9300 email: [customers@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:customers@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Over the past 4 weeks covid cases have reduced across Central Bedfordshire, (larger in population than Peterborough and Milton Keynes) from 1484 down to 964 cases a week over the past 4 weeks. But the death rates have risen significantly from 8 to 40 at the 24<sup>th</sup> January. Case figures for Biggleswade's two wards are only slowly decreasing down from a high of 126 weekly cases to 95 over past 4 weeks with Potton ward decreasing from a high of 44 weekly cases down to 25.

It has become quicker and easier to report a pothole or problems with street lighting or other highway matters. Just visit [www.cb-report-it.co.uk](http://www.cb-report-it.co.uk) and follow the instructions. For those not connected to the internet phone the above number and ask for Highways Faults. Please don't wait for others to report it, or a highways officer to see it.

As part of their Environmental Pledge there is still time to apply for a tree planting grant for organisations, parish councils, schools, etc. for a match funding grant for as little as 5 trees to a whole woodland!

The offer ends on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021. To apply go to [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/42/stronger\\_communities/678/community\\_grants/4](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/42/stronger_communities/678/community_grants/4)

Central Bedfordshire Council is proposing a 1.95% increase in its precept to cover its universal services, with an additional 3% rise, as allowed for by the Government, to go towards the cost of providing social services. This will be voted on later this year.



## **Special Educational Needs and disabilities (SEND) within mainstream schools**

Starting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021 Central Bedfordshire Council launched a consultation about changes to their four special schools, including **Ivel Valley school in Biggleswade**. Also changes to additional places for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) within mainstream schools. This is part of the **Schools for the Future** programme, which is a long-term plan to raise education standards and make sure Central Bedfordshire area has the right schools, in the right places, delivering the best education. For more information and to take part in the consultation visit

[www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/3/schools\\_and\\_education/527/schools\\_for\\_the\\_future](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/3/schools_and_education/527/schools_for_the_future)

Residents will be able to have their say on proposals to **increase places from around 700 to 950** across the special schools These schools would also relocate or expand between 2023 and 2026.

For additional SEND places **in mainstream schools** (known as additional resource provision) the proposals are to **create a further 92 places** between 2023 and 2025, with a greater geographical distribution across Central Bedfordshire. These will cater for future need in their area including Biggleswade and Sandy.

Central Bedfordshire Council have collaborated with head teachers from special schools as well as the 14 mainstream schools with additional resource provision. **Wherever possible the Council supports children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities in their mainstream schools.** For those with more complex needs the Council wants to ensure there are sufficient special school places for their needs.

(If you are not connected to the internet but wish to take part in the consultation phone Central Beds Council on 0300 300 9300)

## **WEATHERLEY COVID-19 VACCINATION CENTRE**

The new vaccination site at the **Weatherley Centre, situated at the rear of Stratton School**, opened on the 21st January to provide the Oxford-Astra Zeneca vaccine, to the Biggleswade Potton Gamlingay and Sandy areas. Over 80's have had their NHS letters inviting them to book two appointments on line or via the 119 call centre. Bookings can only be made once letters are received and local over 75's are now getting theirs.

A one way system is operating and **car drivers must enter via the school entrance in Eagle Farm Road, SG18 8JH** and leave through the rear car park gate into Orchard Close which is closed to through traffic. **There is a rear pedestrian gate for walkers and mobility scooters.**

**Jardines Pharmacy Group of Milton Keynes has the contract**, and unlike most local sites, **this one is NOT led by GP'S** who have asked patients not to contact them. You may not be able to immediately book both appointments at the Weatherley Centre and have to choose another centre for the 2nd jab, but we are told this can be altered at a later date. Please let us know if you have any problems doing so. **Confusingly the Weatherley Centre site may disappear from the booking site if it has no appointments available**, however, we are fortunate to be relatively close to the Mega centre at **Robertson House, Stevenage**, where you may find it quicker to book an appointment although there is no direct bus route to there.

**Vaccinations are voluntary.** All local care home staff and residents have now been vaccinated. **Everyone over 70 and those on the extremely vulnerable shielding list are due to be vaccinated by the middle of February**, although Eastern Region is running behind other regions.

You may need to revisit the booking website or the 119 NHS call centre several times to book a Weatherley appointment. New sites are continually being added. **Appointments are available when the vaccine is**, so booking slots are being added throughout the day for the Weatherley site

**Local Vaccination Help Line 0300 7900267**

**Wheelchairs are available**, and if you travel by mobility scooter you may find it has been taken round to the exit door of the vaccination room which leads to the car park.

**As this is not a GP led site, it has been difficult for people to seek advice.** Weatherley staff have been answering phone calls from patients experiencing difficulties booking an appointment. Just keep trying. Many older people are not connected to the Internet so can only rely on the 119 call centre. Unfortunately most of the information in the local media tells people not to worry, their GP's will contact them, **but for the Biggleswade / Sandy area that is not the case. For us it is a DIY booking system!** So if you have an older friend or neighbour who cannot go on line, or is finding it difficult to get through to the 119 service, please check with them if they want a vaccination and if they have managed to book one. Please offer to assist them if they need it.

**The NHS in Bedfordshire are looking for volunteers and paid staff at their various vaccination sites.** To apply, email your full name, email address and phone number (preferably mobile) with the regular days/times that you are available to

[bedscg.covid.workforce@nhs.net](mailto:bedscg.covid.workforce@nhs.net)

Many support services are increasingly only accessible on line. We offer readers a land line phone number for help or advice. We hoped to bring you this information last month but did email our on-line subscribers as soon as we had the information. If you want to receive local news regularly, why not add your details to our mailing list and receive a copy in your inbox each month. Please phone, email or sign up on our website at

[www.biggleswadecommunitynews.uk](http://www.biggleswadecommunitynews.uk)

**Network Rail will be undertaking overnight work** on the 21st and 28th February, and again on 21st March, with typical working hours from 01.15-08.30. Equipment will be accessing at Furzenhall and travelling along the railway. For questions or concerns phone 03457 114141 24hrs. or visit [www.networkrail.co.uk](http://www.networkrail.co.uk)

## **NEED A LITTLE HELP?**

**BIGGLESWADE'S COMMUNITY EMERGENCY SUPPORT PLAN** If you are involved with, or are a witness to, an emergency in Biggleswade, please call **07964 111942** 24/7 and ask to speak to the Emergency Duty Officer for Central Bedfordshire Council. The Town Council will work alongside Central Bedfordshire Council in responding to the emergency

### **HAVE YOU SEEN THE COVID MARSHALLS?**

From the 11th January Central Bedfordshire Council have been employing 16 new covid-19 stewards to support businesses and the public, and help with increasing understanding of COVID-19 public health measures such as social distancing, wearing face coverings in appropriate settings and hand washing.

They are employed 8 am to 9 pm each day they will at times patrol in Biggleswade, Sandy, Leighton Buzzard, Dunstable, Amptill, Flitwick, Shefford and Houghton Regis, reporting incidents to Bedfordshire Police. They wear video cameras and high visibility jackets to identify them as COVID-19 Stewards. Councillor Ian Dalgarno, Executive Member for Community Services, said "Now is the time to get tough on businesses and the public who are not taking the pandemic seriously"

Anyone who has concerns about businesses not complying with the measures, should email

[trading.standards@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:trading.standards@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

with the subject 'COVID Business Compliance'. Reports will then be investigated by the appropriate officers.

## **Local Vaccination Help Line 0300 7900267**

If you wish to receive your copy online please telephone or email us, or register on our website

[www.biggleswadecommunitynews.uk](http://www.biggleswadecommunitynews.uk)

to join with people who are receiving our updates online.