

Happy New Year to you all! We are now very nearly two years since the covid pandemic began and the impact on this country, and the world, has been huge. I don't think there's any doubt that covid will continue to be an issue well into 2022 as well, but with an increasingly triple jabbed population I believe this year will be about us seeing the long-term effects on society after the pandemic itself ends become increasingly apparent. Those are issues such as the effect of people working from home on town and city centres, public transport demand and provision, the ongoing effect on NHS services after what has been an extraordinary tough couple of years and a vast number of other such matters. These are the kinds of issues local government will be facing too this year and like businesses across the country, Councils will have to adapt to the changes that are undoubtedly coming, and in many ways are already here, in order to move forward. As always, I will keep you updated as to what's going on locally in these articles.

Omicron impact – Residents asked to check website for latest information

People are being urged to check online for the latest updates on Leicestershire County Council's services as the omicron surge continues. Currently most services are running as normal, including those that support vulnerable people, though staff shortages are inevitably starting to have impact on some operations.

Residents can find the latest updates at: <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/popular-now/council-service-updates>.

Services affected by staff absence and isolation include:

- **Waste and recycling sites** - where a significant number of front-line workers are off and temporary closures or reduced opening hours may be required
- **Some home to school and special educational needs transport services** – parents will be contacted if their transport is not available
- **A reduced supply of lateral flow tests from the Government** – this means they are not currently being distributed by the council's mobile van testing service.

New omicron grant launched to support leisure and hospitality businesses

Applications for a new business grant which will aim to help the hospitality and leisure sector in Charnwood are now open. The Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant is being administered by Charnwood Borough Council and will support hospitality, leisure, and accommodation businesses in the borough which have been impacted by the Omicron variant.

The scheme will provide eligible businesses with a one-off grant of up to £6,000.

Grants are available to businesses that have a business rates account as of Thursday December 30, 2021. Full eligibility criteria and how to apply can be found on the Council's website at www.charnwood.gov.uk/omicron_grant.

Applications will close on Monday February 28, 2022.

Applications for the Local Discretionary Grant Scheme have recently closed after receiving over 170 applications from local businesses. The scheme was open to small and micro-businesses in the leisure, hospitality, personal care, and travel sectors plus some suppliers to the hospitality sector.

It is anticipated more funding will be made available from Government and the application process will re-open to eligible businesses once additional funding is provided.

For more information on the business grant schemes, please visit www.charnwood.gov.uk/cvbusiness.

I hope you all stay safe and if you need my help with anything please do get in touch.

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