



BAT

Benenden Action Team

PC UPDATE REPORT – 17th APRIL 2020

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview to the Parish Council on the activities of the Benenden Action Team (BAT) over the past few weeks during the Coronavirus lockdown.

- 1) Having divided the Parish into 8 areas and assigned an Area Co-ordinator to each we are best placed to maintain constant communication with all our residents.
- 2) Our initial Good Neighbour approach to assist anyone in need has worked fantastically well and we have seen an amazing uptake in volunteer numbers now set at 171 people.
- 3) We have released two separate leaflets to cover the Parish and promote services we can offer. This has ensured we have reached all those in the Parish included those without computer access.
- 4) We have just launched a food voucher Scheme funded primarily by the Church and Community Shop. These vouchers are available for anyone in urgent need of essential food from the community shop or local butcher. We can also supply third party food boxes of fresh fruit and vegetables. Although the scheme is very new, it is now perfectly placed to assist those in need as the lockdown extension has been confirmed.
- 5) We have seen a huge take up on the prescription collection service and although we have helped many get online there is still a consistent demand every week for this service. This regularly involves our volunteers standing in line for 1-2hrs to complete their task. I have personally tried to get to the bottom of why our local pharmacies cannot adjust their systems and inefficient processes, to meet the demand of the community at this vital time. I fear Lloyds Cranbrook will never change and having received word from Sean Holden, a line seems to have drawn under this now. No change can be made, which is frustrating! Especially when other pharmacies have worked the increased in demand so well.
- 6) Mental well-being is now a key concern after the lockdown extension, and we remain focussed on this as a priority. One resident has encouraged our locals to send through poems which was lovely. We are looking to run a photography competition to provide a new cover shot for the Parish Magazine. We have maintained a great connection with each other by way of comfort calls to ensure people are ok. The world is getting used to online video calls and this has been great for so many to stay in touch with loved ones and fight isolation.

- 7) I have been trying to compile statistics for employed vs self employed people in the Parish. As a self employed person, I am concerned about local small businesses weathering the storm this virus has brought on us. If you have any stats available from the NDP or anywhere else, I would be most grateful. The idea that our elderly or retired parishioners are the only potentially “vulnerable” people is a misconception. The 40-60 yr olds with children now at home for the foreseeable future and no income are very vulnerable right now.
- 8) We have launched and managed a new Website www.benendenaction.co.uk which has proved to be a fantastic addition to get word out to the locals and we have a flow of information from various sources constantly updating on there.
- 9) I had a socially distant meeting with Rev David Commander this morning and went through the food items, books and DVD’s being left in the church porch. This has proven to be a useful stop off for those in need and we will continue to support the DVD exchange through the extension.
- 10) There have been negative moments in the parish where frustration is taking hold and I completely understand this. BAT is now aiming to work on longer term issues in building relationships with local residents who are elderly and vulnerable and who’s needs are not being met as well as they could be. Harmsworth Court being one such place under the microscope. These are not quick fix problems, but changes must be sought over time to improve the lives of the residents.