

POLICY BRIEF

Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview Scrutiny Committee

17 March 2021



GOVERNMENT POLICY, LEGISLATIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NEWS

Announcements of note to this committee over the last few weeks.

[Budget Speech 2021](#)

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has presented his Budget to Parliament. A briefing summarising key announcements is attached separately. All documents published alongside the budget can be found [here](#).

Covid -19

[New specialised support to help those living with obesity to lose weight](#)

Children, adults and families will be better supported to achieve and maintain a healthier weight through £100m of new government support. Sir Keith Mills has been appointed to advise on a new incentives and reward approach to encourage healthy behaviours. These measures are part of the obesity strategy published by the Prime Minister last July.

[Essential workers prioritised for COVID-19 testing](#) (Updated)

This guidance sets out the list of essential workers prioritised for PCR testing for coronavirus (COVID-19).

[All households with children of school aged to get rapid COVID-19 tests per person per week](#)

Whole families and households with primary school, secondary school and college age children, including childcare and support bubbles, will be able to test themselves twice every week from home as schools return from 08 March. Tests can easily be ordered and collected from local sites, or administered through workplace testing programmes.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Letter to businesses on workplace testing, February 2021](#) (New)

Letter from the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to all businesses registered in England about free COVID-19 tests for staff who cannot work from home.

Community

[£30 million investment to provide Changing Places toilets](#)

Funding will improve access for people who cannot use standard accessible toilets and their carers. Local authorities will soon be invited to “opt in” to receive a proportion of this funding, based on need, to install facilities in their communities.

[Free tablet devices to improve lives of thousands of people with learning disabilities](#) (New)

The government has set up a £2.5 million fund to provide devices, data and digital support to people with learning disabilities who can't afford to get online. The new Digital Lifeline scheme will fund 5,000 internet tablets, preloaded with data and free tech support for those facing digital exclusion.

Community Safety

[New laws to protect victims added to Domestic Abuse Bill](#)

New amendments to the Domestic Abuse Bill will be presented this week, providing greater protections for victims and further clamping down on perpetrators. The proposals include making non-fatal strangulation a specific criminal offence, punishable by up to five years in prison. Controlling or coercive behaviour offence extended to include abuse where perpetrators and victims no longer live together. ‘Revenge porn’ offence widened to cover threats to share intimate images. They form a

series of amendments being tabled to the landmark Domestic Abuse Bill which enters Report Stage next week, with Royal Assent expected in the spring.

Elections


[New measures to allow proxy voting in local elections for those self-isolating with coronavirus](#) (New)

Individuals who need to self-isolate because of coronavirus will still be able to vote in the local elections through new emergency proxy voting measures.

[COVID-secure election campaigning will go ahead](#)

Individual activists will be able to campaign outdoors in a COVID-secure way from 8 March, ahead of the English local elections in May.

OPEN CONSULTATIONS

Date of publication	Committee/Department	 GOV
26 th Feb 2021	Home Office - seeking views on how the Protect Duty can make the public safer at publicly accessible locations . The government has (26 February) set out its proposals on a new Protect Duty; a legal requirement for public places to ensure preparedness for and protection from terrorist attacks.	2 July 2021
8 th Feb 2021	The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is seeking views about their proposals to amend certain food legislation in England. The proposed changes reflect the UK's new trading relationship with the EU and would ensure compliance with World Trade Organisation rules.	22 March 2021
10 Feb 2021	The Department for Education is inviting comments on their review of the high needs national funding formula (NFF) to local authorities for children and young people in England with special educational needs and disability (SEND) or who require alternative provision (AP).	24 March 2021