

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT

Seventh Delegated Legislation Committee

HEALTH PROTECTION (CORONAVIRUS,
RESTRICTIONS) (LEICESTER) REGULATIONS 2020

Thursday 16 July 2020

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Monday 20 July 2020

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The Committee consisted of the following Members:

Chair: †SIR CHRISTOPHER CHOPE

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|---|---|
| † Benton, Scott (<i>Blackpool South</i>) (Con) | † Richardson, Angela (<i>Guildford</i>) (Con) |
| † Brereton, Jack (<i>Stoke-on-Trent South</i>) (Con) | † Russell, Dean (<i>Watford</i>) (Con) |
| Buck, Ms Karen (<i>Westminster North</i>) (Lab) | † Sambrook, Gary (<i>Birmingham, Northfield</i>) (Con) |
| † Coutinho, Claire (<i>East Surrey</i>) (Con) | † Saxby, Selaine (<i>North Devon</i>) (Con) |
| † Dorries, Ms Nadine (<i>Minister for Patient Safety, Mental Health and Suicide Prevention</i>) | † Smith, Jeff (<i>Manchester, Withington</i>) (Lab) |
| † Double, Steve (<i>St Austell and Newquay</i>) (Con) | Sultana, Zarah (<i>Coventry South</i>) (Lab) |
| Harman, Ms Harriet (<i>Camberwell and Peckham</i>) (Lab) | † Throup, Maggie (<i>Lord Commissioner of Her Majesty's Treasury</i>) |
| Hillier, Meg (<i>Hackney South and Shoreditch</i>) (Lab/Co-op) | Whittome, Nadia (<i>Nottingham East</i>) (Lab) |
| † Kendall, Liz (<i>Leicester West</i>) (Lab) | Bradley Albrow, <i>Committee Clerk</i> |
| | † attended the Committee |

Seventh Delegated Legislation Committee

Thursday 16 July 2020

[SIR CHRISTOPHER CHOPE *in the Chair*]

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Leicester) Regulations 2020

11.30 am

The Minister for Patient Safety, Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (Ms Nadine Dorries): I beg to move,

That the Committee has considered the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Leicester) Regulations 2020 (S.I., 2020, No.685)

It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Christopher. I have sat in your Chair many times over the past 10 years, but this is the first time I have been here in my role as a Minister, so now I know how it feels.

The regulations were made on 3 July and came into effect the following day. They have not yet been formally cleared by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. This debate has been listed as quickly as possible to address Parliament's concerns about delays between making regulations and scheduling debates. The regulations were necessary to give effect to the announcement made a few days earlier on 29 June by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care that targeted measures needed to be taken to tackle the outbreak of coronavirus in Leicester.

The concern about the outbreak in Leicester was significant and was shared by local leaders, including the local authorities and the local resilience forum; by national organisations, including Public Health England; by the local directors of public health, Ivan Browne at Leicester City Council and Mike Sandys at Leicestershire County Council; and by the Joint Biosecurity Centre, Ministers and the chief medical officer.

Of course, the decision to take action was not driven by one number. It was a judgment about the overall situation, but some of the figures we had in front of us when the targeted lockdown was imposed bear repeating, because they are stark. At that stage, the seven-day infection rate in Leicester was 135 cases per 100,000 people, which was three times higher than the next highest area. Admissions to hospital were between six and 10 per day in Leicester, rather than around the one per day at other trusts.

Action had already been taken to protect people in Leicester by deploying mobile testing units and providing extra capacity at the regional test site. Extra public health capacity had been deployed to boost the local team. Additional financial support was provided to the local authorities to provide business grants, including £70 million to Leicester City Council. We hoped that the interventions and the work of the local public health teams would get the infection rate down without our having to take more drastic action.

By the end of June, however, it was clear that the high rate of infection was continuing. The cross-Government covid-19 operations committee, chaired by the Prime

Minister, therefore decided on 29 June to take further measures to tackle the outbreak. The Secretary of State set out the measures in his statement.

Most of the measures taken did not require legislation. We increased testing capacity further: there are now 10 mobile test units deployed across the city, a regional test site and three local test sites. Four of the mobile units operate on a hyper-local basis, enabling teams of NHS and council volunteers to go door to door across the communities with the highest positivity rates.

We also gave additional funding to the two upper-tier local authorities involved. In addition to the £70 million, Leicester City Council was provided with approximately £2.5 million, and Leicestershire County Council approximately £2.3 million—that is £4.8 million between the two upper-tier authorities. That enabled them to enhance communications, including in locally relevant languages. Public messages on the virus in Leicester were translated into 12 different languages, and a wide range of locally relevant formats were used to communicate those messages, including various social media platforms, posters, and videos by GPs who speak different languages and by Ivan Browne, the local director of public health. Messages were also broadcast from local radio stations in different languages as well as through community leaders and volunteers on the ground.

We also concluded, however, in discussion with the local team, that the restrictions in Leicester would need to be tightened, even as the restrictions were being eased elsewhere in the country. People in Leicester were advised to stay at home as much as they could. We recommended against all but essential travel to, from and within Leicester. Shielding measures could not be relaxed, as they were in the rest of the country the following week. Schools in Leicester would close, except for vulnerable children and children of critical workers.

It would not be proportionate or practicable to ban travel altogether, but we concluded that it was necessary and proportionate for people living in Leicester not to be allowed to stay overnight away from home without a reasonable excuse. It was not safe to allow the easing of social contact measures, including those on gatherings, that the rest of the country benefited from on 4 July.

We also concluded that non-essential retail in Leicester would have to close again. We recognise how difficult and disappointing that was for citizens and businesses in Leicester, but it was the only way we could bring the outbreak in the city under control. We must keep people in Leicester, as elsewhere in the country, safe from this terrible virus.

I shall now move on to the regulations themselves. Given the concern about the situation in Leicester, we used the emergency procedure to make the present set of regulations as soon as we could. They give effect to the decisions set out by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. In particular, they require the closure of non-essential retail; limit overnight stays away from the place where individuals live, or a linked household, without reasonable excuse; restrict gatherings to six or fewer outdoors and to no more than two indoors; and enable households containing only one adult, or one adult and one or more people under the age of 18, to link with another household.

The people of Leicester have responded well to these restrictions over the past two weeks, and I would like to thank them for that—as, I am sure, everybody would—and

to recognise the impact that they are having on their daily lives. We are required to review the regulations every two weeks, and we will announce the outcomes of the first review shortly.

Coronavirus is the biggest challenge that the UK has faced in decades. The resilience and fortitude of the British people in complying with the national lockdown that we introduced in March has been a true national effort and something of which we can all be proud. It is of course welcome that we have been able to start easing the national restrictions in line with our road map. That reflects the continued decline in the daily death rates and the downgrade in our covid alert level from level 4 to level 3.

We always knew, however, that the path out of lockdown would not be entirely smooth. It was always likely that infections would rise in particular areas or workplaces, and we knew that we would need to be able to respond quickly and flexibly to those outbreaks. We are now working with local authorities, and at national level, to ensure that we have the data and analytical capability to spot potential outbreaks quickly. We have, and will continue to develop, a range of tools and powers that will allow us to respond effectively and proportionately.

We will be saying more in the coming days about our plans for responding to local lockdowns and the powers that will be available. The Leicester lockdown has demonstrated our willingness and ability to take action where we need to. We will of course use the experience of the lockdown in Leicester to inform and help us to develop our responses to any future local outbreaks.

I shall now talk through what the Leicester regulations are designed to achieve. I will not go into detail about the national regulations that sit alongside them, because they are being debated in another Committee Room along the corridor. In general, these regulations return Leicester to where the national lockdown was in the first half of June, before non-essential retail could be opened.

Part 1 of schedule 1 to the regulations lists the postcode districts covered by the regulations. In discussion with the directors of public health at Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council, it was agreed that the restricted area for the purpose of a lockdown needed to go beyond the boundaries of Leicester City Council into a number of suburbs of Leicester to the south, west and north of the city that are the responsibility of the county council. The boundary makes sense geographically, as can be seen from the map that was widely circulated, but the simplest and most certain way to describe the areas covered by the restrictions was to list all the affected postcodes. This means that people and businesses could be in no doubt about whether they were covered by the restrictions.

Regulation 2 requires the Secretary of State to review the need for restrictions and requirements by 18 July—this coming Saturday—and thereafter at least once every 14 days, if necessary. In any case, under regulation 12, the regulations will expire six months after they commenced on 4 July, if they are not amended or revoked before then.

Regulations 3 and 4 set out the requirements on non-essential retailers to close. The types of business that need to close are set out in schedule 3. In line with the national regulations on closure of non-essential

retail, there are some detailed provisions to clarify how these regulations will operate in particular circumstances, and some necessary exceptions. The requirements will be familiar to businesses from the national lockdown.

Regulation 5 sets out the restrictions on movement. The restrictions prevent people living in the protected area from staying overnight away from their home without a reasonable excuse. They can stay in a linked household. A non-exhaustive list of reasonable excuses is specified. For example, it would be reasonable to stay overnight in order to attend a funeral of a close family member, for work purposes, or to attend a birth.

Regulation 6 restricts gatherings of more than six people outdoors, or of two or more people indoors. There are some necessary exceptions to the restrictions on gatherings—for example, if the person is attending a funeral, or if the gathering is reasonably necessary for work or educational purposes.

Regulation 7 sets out the implications of the lockdown in Leicester for linked households. Households in Leicester may be linked with households outside Leicester.

Regulations 8 to 10 set out how the provisions will be enforced. As with the national regulations, there is the possibility of fixed penalty notices. We have published guidance for people living in Leicester, to help them understand what they can and cannot do under the restrictions.

As I said earlier, we will be saying more in the coming days about the outcome of the initial review of the Leicester regulations, and whether the impact of the lockdown so far allows us to ease them. We will also be saying more about how we plan to deal with future localised outbreaks. I am grateful to all Members for their continued engagement with this challenging process, and their scrutiny of the regulations. We will, of course, reflect on this debate as we consider our response to any future local outbreaks. I commend the regulations to the Committee.

11.43 am

Liz Kendall (Leicester West) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Christopher, and I will begin by saying that Members on the Labour Benches support these regulations. As one of the three Members of Parliament for Leicester, I am extremely concerned about the impact of this extended lockdown on children who are missing out on school, on local businesses and jobs, and on our universities and voluntary groups, as well as the mental health and other long-term health consequences for people in our city. However, keeping people safe and getting on top of this virus must be our top priority, so we will not be opposing the regulations.

I do, however, want to put on record my concerns about how these regulations and Leicester's lockdown as a whole have been handled, and to ask the Minister some serious questions about where we go from here. This is because I want Leicester to get out of this lockdown as quickly as it is safe to do so, and because I hope the Government will learn lessons from what has happened in Leicester so that they do not make the same mistakes in any further local lockdowns.

In summary, I think Ministers were too slow to act; have been too centralised in their approach; and have so far failed to provide the additional support Leicester's businesses and public services need. That is not only

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unfair; it makes no economic sense, because if more businesses close and more people lose their jobs and our public services struggle to cope, it will cost not just Leicester but our whole country far more in the longer term.

I want to start with the failure to act quickly enough and share vital information with Leicester at an early stage. I am told that since the launch of the NHS test and trace system at the beginning of May, Leicester's director of public health repeatedly asked Public Health England for the results data from pillar 2 tests—essentially, all testing outside of hospitals—preferably at postcode or what is called lower-super-output areas of below 2,000 people. That data was not forthcoming to Leicester or any other council, apparently because it,

“wasn't in a fit state”.

That was the data from a test and trace system that, you will recall, Sir Christopher, the Prime Minister launched as “world-beating”. Can the Minister explain why the information was not available from the start? Even if it was not perfect, how could local councils possibly know whether they had a problem without that vital data, especially as the pillar 2 testing was a growing part of the overall test numbers?

The Government finally published the total number of positive tests for pillar 2 data at the beginning of June. I am told that our director of public health immediately raised concerns that Leicester's rates were higher than in other parts of the country. He asked for more detail, especially at the postcode level—at this stage we got the total numbers for the whole city, not individual wards or smaller areas—and what action should be taken. I understand he received reassurances from Public Health England that there was no cause for concern, and that it was probably a data collection or small numbers issue. He raised the same issues the following week and received a similar response.

On 15 June, Leicester's director of public health was actually told by Public Health East Midlands,

“We have not identified an obvious geographical hotspot... nor an outbreak to date.”

Yet three days later the Secretary of State said in a press conference that there was an outbreak in Leicester. One would think that in such an urgent situation—I have never denied that it was not an urgent situation—with a dangerous virus that spreads so quickly, we would have immediately been given all the possible data, at the very least broken down by postcode. However, it was not until 25 June, 11 days later, that postcode data for pillar 2 testing were finally sent through to our director of public health.

I am going through all of this in what seems like an awful lot of detail because detailed local data, including on ethnicity and where people live and work, is absolutely essential to identifying the location and cause of any problems and taking action to prevent them from getting any worse. I am afraid we are still not getting all the data that we need in a timely enough fashion. We have only just got the total number of both positive and negative tests. We still need household data, not just postcode data, because not everybody with the same postcode works, eats and worships in the same place. We need data on people's ethnicity and where they

work, which is not mandatory—it says only what is people's occupation. What we really need to know is where people work so that if there is a problem in a food factory or somewhere else, we can go in and sort it out.

We also need contact tracing data so that we know how many people who have been in contact with someone who has tested positive have been followed up for additional tests and possible isolation. All of that is vital to getting on top of the situation, and we need all of that data daily, not weekly. As my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester South (Jonathan Ashworth) said on Tuesday, the virus does not wait a week, so why should our director of public health? I am afraid the problems do not stop there.

The way in which the lockdown and by extension the regulations have been brought in was, I am afraid, badly organised and ill thought through. Over the weekend of 27 and 28 June, it was briefed that Leicester was to be subjected to a further lockdown—a briefing by the Home Secretary in *The Sunday Times*. That announcement was made without warning and without the involvement of the city council, the local police or our NHS. A front-page headline might feed the ego of those responsible, but it does nothing for the people it actually affects, other than cause serious anxiety and confusion. That is no way to treat people who have already made huge sacrifices and are being asked to make them all over again.

As if that were not enough, the official announcement on the lockdown was not made until very late on the evening of Monday 29 June; the map of the lockdown area was not published until 12 hours later; and the regulations to implement the lockdown, which we are now finally voting on, were not published for another four days. I cannot tell you the chaos and confusion that that caused. My inbox was absolutely inundated with messages from worried constituents, as were other hon. Members' inboxes. Given all that, I want to put on record my thanks to our city council and, in particular, Leicestershire police for handling the situation with calm confidence, patience and skill.

I say to hon. Members here that we all know that this pandemic is unprecedented. It is one of the hardest things that any Government have ever had to deal with, and mistakes will inevitably be made, but you do not have to be Einstein to realise that you should not announce a lockdown that will affect hundreds of thousands of people in a national newspaper and until you know exactly where, when and how it will be put in place. That is the very least that our constituents deserve.

People in Leicester also want the Government to acknowledge the additional financial and other consequences of putting us back into this extended lockdown. That is something that Ministers—I should say that this is directed not at this particular Minister but at other Ministers in the Government—have so far failed to do.

After receiving so many emails in the course of Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday as the lockdown was coming into place, I wrote to the Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi), who is responsible for business and industry, to ask whether additional support for businesses and employees would be available as a result of the lockdown. He replied to me on 7 July, saying:

“The Chancellor has already said that there are no plans to change the scope or extend any of the schemes currently available.” I am told that that explicitly contradicts commitments made by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to the Labour leader of Leicester City Council and the Conservative leader of Leicestershire County Council. I ask hon. Members in this Committee just to think for a minute about this happening to their own constituency and what their constituents, local businesses and others would be saying to them.

Local businesses are having to stay shut, or close back down, through no fault of their own. They have spent huge amounts of time and money getting ready to reopen, only to see their efforts go to waste. I am thinking of businesses such as North Bar and Kitchen, a brilliant and highly recommended restaurant in my constituency, which says that

“we are now really struggling being forced to close for a second lockdown...Through no fault we feel isolated and we need additional financial support from government for the extra strain this has put on us and our small business.”

I am also thinking of hairdressers such as Malcolm Murphy Hair and Jeana Louisa’s Hair Salon, which worked so hard to get everything in place—they were ordering stock, juggling their staff to comply with social distancing and getting all the appointments up—just to see their hopes dashed again.

These businesses are not arguing against the lockdown. They accept that it is necessary to keep people safe and they know that they have to play their part, but they are asking for the Government to acknowledge that they need extra help just to keep the show on the road and their heads above water, and for doing the right thing.

The Government have also failed to offer any reassurance to people on the furlough scheme. Again, I ask hon. Members to consider this. What happens if Leicester’s businesses are still in full lockdown when the Government stop paying national insurance and pension contributions and start reducing furlough payments, because the rest of the country is opening up and businesses are going back and making money, making a profit? My constituents are understandably worried. They are thinking, “If my employer can’t pick up the strain because they’re not allowed to open, I’m going to lose my job.”

The East Midlands chamber of commerce says that the failure to provide Leicester’s economy with extra support is “a massive mistake” that could create “a two-tier recovery” that puts Leicester “at a long-term disadvantage”.

Will the Minister tell me, or ask her colleagues, this: why are Leicester’s businesses being unfairly penalised? I am not denying that the Government have done a huge amount to support businesses during this awful pandemic, but I am asking them to recognise the additional problems that we face. Why will the Government not guarantee that the full furlough scheme will continue for as long as Leicester is in lockdown? Do they recognise that the inevitable increase in unemployment as a result of the pandemic could be even worse in Leicester, a city where 40% of children are already growing up in poverty, with all the awful long-term consequences that that brings? If the Minister recognises that, will she speak to her Treasury colleagues and ask them for a more flexible approach that acknowledges that local lockdowns will have an additional impact on local businesses and jobs that should be recognised and funded?

Our public services and voluntary groups need extra support too. For example, throughout the extended lockdown the city council will have to continue to provide an uplift in fees to care homes to cover their additional costs and higher than normal vacancy levels; help for those who will have to stay shielding; support to keep homeless people off the street; and help to our countless food banks to ensure that thousands of people have enough to eat. That extra work comes with an extra cost. Will the Government meet it?

Do the Government recognise that there is extra work for our police? That was particularly so during the first weekend when the lockdown came in. The media said all sorts of things about whether people would be going out into the county, to the pub where everyone else was going, and what they would be doing. We had more police on that weekend than on a typical new year’s eve. Our two universities are seriously concerned about the impact of the extended lockdown, particularly on whether international students will decide to come to Leicester. Our schools are worried about children falling even further behind and how they will ensure that parents are confident that it is safe for their kids to go back to school in September.

Our vital local community organisations and charities face extra costs because they are being locked down for longer, and cannot rely on their usual sources of income. LOROS, which runs an incredible hospice in my constituency, had just reopened 11 of its 29 shops when the renewed lockdown came in. Six of those shops are in the city. As a result LOROS is losing about £15,000 a week. Its chief executive asked me to find out whether any extra help is available. I wonder whether the Minister can respond, or ask one of her colleagues to do so.

Above all, people in Leicester and Leicestershire want to know when and how we will exit the lockdown. Our businesses want to know when they can go back out and try to get back on their feet. People want to know when they can go out and start earning a living. The Secretary of State originally said that the lockdown would be reviewed on Saturday 18 July. In his statement to the House of Commons on Tuesday he said he would be reviewing the data today. I hope that the Minister will confirm when people in Leicester will hear the news. Will it be today or Saturday? Surely, if there is one thing that we have learned from this whole business it is that leaving people hanging is unfair and a recipe for chaos and confusion.

Will the Minister explain the criteria that will be used to judge whether the lockdown will be lifted? Will it be the total number of positive tests or the proportion of positive results per 100,000 of population? Will it be the rate of increase or decrease in positive tests? Will it be the famous R rate that the Government initially said they would use to determine the exit from lockdown for the country as a whole? Will it be the rate of hospital admissions due to covid-19, care home infection rates or death rates in either or both? I know that it is difficult, but it seems unbelievable to me that we still have no sense of how the Government will judge whether Leicester can exit the lockdown. I hope that the Minister will enlighten us.

I will conclude—the Committee will be glad to hear—with some thoughts about the future. I know that my constituents and people across the city are worried

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about the long-term implications of the pandemic and, in particular, Leicester's extended lockdown, on lives and livelihoods and people's perceptions of Leicester as a whole. However, by working together and with the right support and leadership we will, I know, get through and build a brighter future.

Ours is a great, diverse and thriving city. We have amazing businesses, arts, culture, sport and universities. Leicester could and should play a key role in levelling up the midlands economy, particularly in the east midlands. The Space Park in my constituency is a partnership between the University of Leicester and industry that has the potential to create thousands of high-skill, high-value jobs in a global market worth billions. Our financial services sector and IT companies have grown hugely in recent years. We have a burgeoning tourism sector, following the amazing discovery of Richard III. That is not to mention our great restaurants, comedy festival, theatres and vibrant music venues.

In order to fulfil our potential, however, we need a Government who work with us. We need a Government who take their responsibility for helping to crack down on exploitation in the textile industry. Contrary to many reports in the newspapers, we do not have evidence that that is the cause of the outbreak in Leicester. That is not to say it is not, but the local director of public health and Public Health England have found no evidence that that is the cause. However, there are serious problems that need to be addressed. In order to do that, we need a Government who properly fund the bodies responsible for enforcement, such as Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and the Health and Safety Executive, instead of slashing their budgets. We need a Government who actually implement the recommendations to tackle worker exploitation that were made by the Environmental Audit Committee in its report on fast fashion last year, rather than simply ignore them. We need a Government who invest in our infrastructure and people, because today's global economy is utterly unforgiving towards people without skills.

We need a Government who understand that, with the right support, we will emerge from this crisis stronger than before, play a critical role in boosting the lives and livelihoods of people across the east midlands, and contribute towards the success of our country as a whole. I hope the Government listen to our concerns, and I look forward to hearing the Minister's response.

The Chair: If no one else wishes to participate in this important debate, I call the Minister to respond.

12.2 pm

Ms Dorries: I thank the hon. Lady for her—as always—reasonable, intelligent and impassioned response. Some of her points were much wider than the scope of the regulations, so I cannot respond to them, but I will try to respond as well as I can to her substantive points about Leicester.

I want to correct a number of the hon. Lady's points. We both know whom we are talking about: Ivan Browne, the local director of public health in Leicester, who has done a fantastic job. However, he does not need to wait a week for anything; in fact, as a result of the Joint

Biosecurity Centre, all local authorities have daily access to all the data relating to their area. Ivan has an authentication code with which he can log on each day to find out the daily data. No one has to wait a week for anything; if that were the case, we would be in a difficult situation with regards to the epidemiology of the virus.

I do not believe that any announcement was made—this is another one of the hon. Lady's points—about extending Leicester's lockdown. I am not aware of the article that she mentioned, but there have been no statements on extending the lockdown. She asked me when an announcement will be made—will it be today or on Saturday? All I can say is that the decisions regarding Leicester will be made very shortly.

The hon. Lady asked whether the decision to lockdown Leicester was based on the R rate or the number of infections. Actually, the decision to lockdown Leicester was based on a number of factors. They include not just the positivity rate and the R rate—the transmission rate—but the way people live their lives in Leicester and where they travel to and from. I have never been to Market Harborough, but it has been mentioned to me numerous times in the past two weeks that people have been travelling from Leicester to Market Harborough during lockdown. Lots of considerations were pulled into the decision-making process.

I first spoke to Ivan—I believe it was before the lockdown took place—when we were aware that there was a spike and that the rates were rising, and he named a number of his concerns about households, living conditions, working conditions and the movement of people across Leicester. The hospital is on the far west side of Leicester, but one of the areas most affected is in the east, so Ivan was concerned about travel across the city. There were a number of considerations, and the same issues will be considered when easing the lockdown in Leicester. It will not be down to one issue, but a number of issues. We are advised on those issues on the ground in Leicester. It is not a decision that is just taken in Whitehall; it is taken with local leaders, the local director of public health, Public Health England via the Joint Biosecurity Centre, and the chief medical officer. There is a huge number of considerations and people who have input into the decision.

On funding, we have assisted 9 million people across the UK with furlough, and the furlough scheme will continue until October, so people will not be out of pocket in terms of salary. Very few would say that the Government are not being generous in their provision to compensate people under threat of losing their livelihoods, businesses or jobs during the epidemic. We stepped up to the plate, and we have supported people throughout so far. The people of Leicester are no different in that consideration, and they will continue to be supported.

The hon. Lady also mentioned the boundaries. I make the point that the Mayor of Leicester set the boundary himself. He drew the map, and I was at the meeting at which he explained where he had put the boundaries and why he had drawn the map as he had, along with Nick Rushton, the leader of Leicestershire County Council. Overnight, between them, with their officials, they drew the boundary plan; we approved it the next day, on the basis of their recommendation. They recommended, "This is where we think the boundary should fall", and we approved it. The hon. Lady made

issue of the postcodes, areas and local geography, but it was the Mayor of Leicester who decided where the lockdown boundaries should fall. If I have missed any other points, I am happy to speak to the hon. Lady afterwards, but this is all very fast moving.

On finance, we have made £4.8 million available, including for the management of the local outbreak plan and support for local businesses. The funding is there for Leicester. We will continue to review Leicester and any area that goes into lockdown as we move forward.

I felt the passion in the hon. Lady's voice when she was talking about Leicester, as I have in the voices of many people who have spoken about it. It is as though some people feel upset and almost embarrassed that Leicester has gone into lockdown, but 153 councils across the country have put in place local management outbreak plans. We have put £300 million into supporting those plans and helping every area—every upper-tier authority, which has responsibility for public health management—to be ready for when an outbreak occurs anywhere. Leicester is not the first and it may not be the last—living with coronavirus will be part of our lives.

In my opening speech, I said that we will learn from Leicester and what has happened there. I do not think that we were too slow in what we did. We worked with the data, which was made available, and I have a timeline of when that was available. It does not concur with the hon. Lady's timeline: on 11 June, the new local dashboards went live and the authentication code was provided to local directors of Public Health England, not just in Leicester, but across the UK; and Leicester accessed its dashboard on 19 June.

Even before we began the enhanced testing—with discussions taking place on the ground a considerable time before that—we were aware at the Joint Biosecurity Centre, as the data was coming in, that a problem was arising. We analysed the data daily, and we could see that a problem was coming in Leicester. Public Health England worked with Leicester long before we announced the lockdown. On 19 June, Leicester used its authentication code to access the Joint Biosecurity Centre to get hold of its data.

I take on board the hon. Lady's points about ethnicity and named households. That is being considered by the JBC. Obviously, a number of considerations have to be gone into to release that information and data. That is

for authorities far higher than here. However, I take on board what she said, and she is not the only person to make the point; the Mayor of Manchester made similar ones. The issues are being discussed.

In conclusion, I thank Members for taking part in the Committee. I emphasise that some of the hon. Lady's questions will be answered shortly—she will be relieved to hear that. The restrictions we debated today are necessary, and they are important for three reasons: first and most important, to protect the people of Leicester and the surrounding area from this terrible virus. The lockdown we have had to impose has been difficult, but I think that people in Leicester recognise that letting the virus spread unchecked would have been far worse for their continued livelihoods, businesses and future.

Secondly, the restrictions are important because they protect those of us who do not live in Leicester. As a result of the lockdown, few people will travel out of or to Leicester, and that greatly reduces the risk of transmission and of the high infection rates in the city spreading elsewhere. We should recognise that the restrictions and difficulties faced by the people of Leicester will benefit the whole country.

Thirdly, the restrictions show our absolute determination to respond to outbreaks of the virus in a focused and effective way. As I said, we will learn from what has happened in Leicester as we work with local authorities and others to develop our response to any future localised outbreaks. We will say more about that in the coming days.

I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her contribution today. I will conclude by placing on the record on behalf of the Government my thanks to the people of Leicester and particularly the NHS and care workers in Leicester—indeed, all key workers across the city—for their ongoing hard work to keep our vital services running and to save lives throughout this difficult crisis.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Committee has considered the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Leicester) Regulations 2020 (S.I., 2020, No. 685).

12.11 pm

Committee rose.

