

# Council news round-up

Your weekly guide to the latest news

Issue 164

17 April 2020



## This week's news from around the Council.

- **Update on Council services**

The last few weeks have been a challenging time for everyone and our teams are going above and beyond to keep council services running, although sometimes delivered in a slightly different way to ensure social distancing guidelines are followed. We know it is appreciated by residents and thank you for your support and showing your appreciation. Here's an update on council services along with an overview of some of the important work being carried out by our teams.

- Over 400 applications for Business Grant payments have now been processed, providing almost £5 million of welcomed relief for businesses in the district. Applications are being processed within a couple of days of receipt and the Council has received many compliments from the business community. For more information about business support and how to apply for a small business grant, click [here](#).
- Housing Benefit applications are being processed within 12 calendar days to provide support to those in need in district.
- All Street Scene work and scheduled waste and recycling collections are taking place as normal and if you follow the Council's Facebook and Twitter social media accounts, you'll have seen the fantastic response from our residents thanking the crews.
- The South Staffordshire COVID-19 helpline was manned throughout the Easter break and has received over 100 calls so far. This helpline is available to all residents in the district, providing an essential service for some of our most vulnerable residents and prioritising those over 70 or under 70 with underlying health conditions, self-isolating but with no friends, family or neighbours to help. Please contact the helpline if you need help with collecting prescriptions, shopping, topping up gas or electricity meters, dog walking, or if you're feeling anxious or lonely and need to talk to someone.

The helpline is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

Tel: **01902 696499**

Email: **Covid-19@sstaffs.gov.uk**

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- Our Environmental Health and Licensing team continues to monitor businesses and compliance with COVID-19 regulations. Over 250 site premise visits have taken place since the lockdown and the team has even rehomed a rescue hedgehog although, unfortunately, he's run away already.
- Baggeridge Country Park remains open and we are monitoring it on a daily basis. All amenities on site are closed and visitors are asked to abide by the recommended social distancing guidelines and keep at least two metres (six ft) away from other people. Car parking capacity has been reduced to 30 cars at any one time.
- Strawberry Lane and Sytch Lane Cemeteries remain open on a daily basis from 9am to 8pm. Again, visitors are asked to abide by the recommended social distancing guidelines. If you have any queries relating to our cemeteries and funerals please contact us on **01902 696405**.
- The Leisure Centres in Cheslyn Hay, Codsall, Penkridge and Wombourne are closed but please follow their Facebook pages for information about activities you can participate in via the internet and social media.
- The Council Offices remain closed. If you have any queries, please email [info@sstaffs.gov.uk](mailto:info@sstaffs.gov.uk) or telephone **01902 696000**.

- **Council Plan 2020-2024**

The Council's corporate plan for 2020-2024 has now been approved by Full Council. Entitled 'Shaping South Staffordshire's future', the plan is a very important document as it outlines the strategic direction of the Council and sets out its vision and priorities for the next four years. Its vision will be delivered through two priority areas that are divided into 'Prosperous Communities' and 'Vibrant Communities'. Each priority area has five key objectives and outcomes, and each of these is supported in its delivery by five key themes including financial stability, embracing technology, a flexible and skilled Council, working with our communities, and creating a business and community hub.

Click [here](#) to download a copy.

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- **May PFCC elections postponed**

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner elections scheduled to take place on Thursday 7 May 2020 have now been postponed until next year and will take place on Thursday 6 May 2021. Commissioners elected in 2021 will be in office for three years, not the usual four.

- **Financial advice and assistance**

As a result of the impact of coronavirus, we know some residents may find themselves with reduced levels of income and there are a number of actions we have taken as a council to help residents.

- Council Tax - If you are on a 10-monthly instalment plan, you can amend payments so that they start in June 2020 and end in March 2021. If you are on a 12-monthly instalment plan you can agree a flexible payment arrangement where you can pay a reduced amount in April and May 2020 or you can change your payment plan to a 10-monthly instalment plan and start paying in June 2020.
- Suspension of debt recovery - The Council will not be undertaking any debt recovery between now and the end of April 2020 and will assess the situation then.

- **Beware of fraud and cybercrime**

We're continuing to see an escalation in cybercrime and fraud in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Criminals are experts at impersonating people, organisations and the police and taking a moment to stop and think before parting with your money or information could keep you safe. Please be on your guard and don't click on links or attachments in suspicious email or text messages. Click [here](#) for more information or visit [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk).

- **Domestic abuse - support available**

Domestic abuse can often get worse during times of stress and uncertainty. If you are in an abusive relationship and need help, there are a number of organisations who can help and here are some useful telephone numbers.

National Domestic Violence Helpline: **0808 2000 3778** (24 hours)

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New Era, a domestic violence abuse service offering help to all those affected by domestic abuse in Staffordshire

Tel: **0300 303 3778**

<http://www.new-era.uk>

- **Stay home to help save lives**

Remember to maintain social distancing measures and keep at least two metres away from other people to avoid catching or spreading coronavirus. Right now, the safest place to be is at home. To help reduce the risk of catching or spreading coronavirus, please continue to follow the advice from Public Health England and the NHS.

- Wash your hands more often.
- Use soap and water for 20 seconds.
- Or use hand sanitiser.

Follow official NHS advice at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

- **What to do if you have symptoms?**

COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus that can affect your lungs and airways. Symptoms include a new, continuous cough, a high temperature (37.8 degrees or higher) and shortness of breath. These symptoms do not necessarily mean you have the illness and the symptoms are similar to other illnesses that are much more common such as cold and flu.

If you have symptoms of COVID-19, self-isolate at home immediately and **do not** go directly to your GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. If you live alone, self-isolate for seven days and for those with a family it is 14 days. For most people COVID-19 will be a mild illness but there is a need to protect others in your community while you are infectious as older people and others with weakened immune systems or with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease may experience severe illness.

To relieve your symptoms, doctors are advising stay-at-home COVID-19 patients to take whatever they would for a cold such as paracetamol, eat a balanced diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables and drink lots of fluids. If your symptoms worsen during home isolation or are no

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better after seven days, contact the NHS online coronavirus service at <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19> or call **111** if you cannot get help online.

- **Manage your health and wellbeing at home**

While you are at home it's still easy to get NHS help using your smartphone, tablet or computer and there's a new Health at Home webpage at <https://www.nhs.uk/health-at-home/>

This webpage contains information about how to:

- Contact your GP.
- Order repeat prescriptions.
- Manage long-term conditions.
- Maintain your mental and physical wellbeing.

If you need to contact your GP, click [here](#) to view a useful video..

- **Health and wellbeing in the home**

A dedicated web page has been created on the Council's Leisure website where customers and staff can access free online home workouts. The information contains advice and links signposting to other websites such as the NHS as well as links to YouTube channels including videos showcasing some of our own instructors delivering sessions. For home workouts click [here](#). We will be extending the list as our instructors continue to develop videos of home workouts.

In addition, this section includes additional pages to support people in general at home with advice on mental health and wellbeing, how to keep children active at home and how to work safely from home. Content is being developed and added all the time so please check back regularly. Click [here](#) to view.

- **Wombourne Leisure Centre**

Click [here](#) to view a short video that staff from Wombourne Leisure Centre have created for their customers in attempt to keep everyone smiling.

- **Befriending service**

If you are feeling lonely or would like someone to talk to, a friendly voice on the other end of the phone is now available. More information is available from Wendy Sutton on 01902 851682 or email [w.sutton@sstaffs.gov.uk](mailto:w.sutton@sstaffs.gov.uk).

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- **Songs for you**

Well done to Kenyon Walker who is leading virtual singalongs and bringing music to isolating elderly residents with the support of South Staffordshire Council and Care Plus. Click [here](#) to find out more and click [here](#) for the link to Kenyon's Facebook page where over 200 people are watching him live every day.

- **South Staffordshire Connect service available**

The South Staffordshire Connect dial-a-ride bus service is now available. This local, bookable bus service is once again helping many people who struggle to get out and about and it is aimed at residents who live away from regular bus routes or who find it difficult to use a standard bus. The new Connect service operates between 10am and 3pm to three zones. For more information, please click on the following for more information - [Zone 1](#), [Zone 2](#) and [Zone 3](#).



Everyone is encouraged to submit news items, please email: [comms@sstaffs.gov.uk](mailto:comms@sstaffs.gov.uk)