

Council news round-up

Your weekly guide to the latest news

Issue 165

24 April 2020



This week's news from around the Council.

- **i54 South Staffordshire thanks the NHS**

The Amey team working on the i54 Western Extension turned their big machines to good use to do an extra job to help us all pay a huge tribute to our NHS staff. Click [here](#) to see a pic of the tribute which now sits proudly near the Jaguar Land Rover site as a message from everyone in South Staffordshire and from the i54 partners South Staffordshire Council, the City of Wolverhampton Council and Staffordshire County Council.

- **1,000 emergency food parcels now delivered**

This week, Staffordshire County Council delivered its 1,000th emergency food parcel. Click [here](#) to find out more.

- **Every Mind Matters**

Now more than ever, Every Mind Matters and a new campaign has been launched to promote expert tips and advice to help everyone deal with stress and feel more on top of things. For more information, visit www.everymindmatters.co.uk.

- **Online security campaign launches**

This week, the National Cyber Security Centre launched a new 'cyber aware' campaign to combat cyber security threats. For more information, visit www.ncsc.gov.uk.

- **New food bank set up in Huntington**

A new food bank has been established at Huntington Schools thanks to partnership working between the local community, the Council and a local business. Penkridge Co-op has donated £500 and this has been matched by South Staffordshire Council with another £1,000 being given by a District Councillor from his Member budget.

- **Community safety - watch out for bogus callers**

Staffordshire Police are warning people to be extra vigilant if they get an unexpected caller to their home during the current government lockdown. A distraction burglary is where someone calls at your home posing to be someone they're not, normally an official or council worker. They then make up a story to get into your home.

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To prevent yourself from falling victim to these criminals, Staffordshire Police has provided the following advice:

- Make sure your front and back doors are locked at all times, even when you're at home. If you're answering the front door then make extra sure your back door is locked as criminals could be working in pairs or groups.
 - Before you answer the door it's worth taking a second to think about whether you're expecting anyone and if you can see who's there before answering make sure you do.
 - Don't let anyone pressure you into letting themselves inside your house. Even during lockdown, call a neighbour or the police to help if you're uncomfortable.
 - Public service employees and officials are required to show identification when they come to your home. Make sure you take time to look at it carefully and check that it isn't fake. If in doubt, call the number on a utility bill or an official site and ask for confirmation. Any genuine worker will not mind waiting.
 - If you have a chain on your door then use it and don't remove it unless you're absolutely certain the person is genuine.
 - Never agree to have work done by someone passing by, even if they seem legitimate.
 - Put signs up to reduce the number of unexpected callers at your door.
 - Tighten up your security and make it harder for anyone trying to break in.
 - Keep all valuable items out of sight and, if possible, in a safe.
- **#YouAreNotAlone**

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.

Call **999** if in immediate danger. If you can't speak, listen to the operator and, when prompted, dial **55** to connect to the police, who will help.

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

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>

www.gov.uk/domestic-abuse

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- **Stay home to help save lives**

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

- 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/>

- **Update on Council services**

Here's an update on council services along with an overview of some of the important work being carried out by our teams.

- This week, the Council's first virtual committee meetings, streamed live to the public, took place on Tuesday 21 April 2020. The meetings included the Audit and Risk Committee and the Planning Committee. Nearly 30 Councillors took part in the meetings, which were watched by 36 public attendees.
- Over 900 applications for Business Grant payments have now been processed, providing over £10 million of welcomed relief for businesses in the district. For more information about business support and how to apply for a small business grant, click [here](#).
- 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 is now open seven days a week, from 9am to 5pm. 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

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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 daily, including weekdays, 9am to 5pm.

Tel: **01902 696499**

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

- **South Staffordshire Connect service available**

The South Staffordshire Connect dial-a-ride bus service is also available. This local, bookable bus service is 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 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](#).



- 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.
- 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 or telephone **01902 696000**.

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○ **And introducing... our Customer Services team**

Click [here](#) to see a pic of the Customer Services team. Like everyone the Customer Services team has had to adapt to a new way of working from home. Since lockdown began on 23 March 2020, the team of 14 advisors and five team members working behind the scenes has:

- Taken over 5,000 phone calls.
- Handled over 1,600 emails.
- Set up over 300 Council Tax deferrals.
- Answered calls on average in under 30 secs so residents are not kept waiting.

Health advice

● **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.

● **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

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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 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.

- **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.

Everyone is encouraged to submit news items, please email: comms@sstaffs.gov.uk