

# Council news round-up

Your weekly guide to the latest news

Issue 166

1 May 2020



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

- **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/>

- **BMG Residents' Panel Survey**

The latest Council Residents' Survey for 2020 is now available - click [here](#) to view a summary of the key findings.

- We're proud that you're proud - **91%** of South Staffordshire residents said that they would recommend the district as a good place to live.
- South Staffordshire is a safe place to live, and **93%** of our residents agree that they feel safe in the district.
- Thank you to all our volunteers - currently **12%** of residents surveyed stated that they volunteer, and this will have increased massively during the COVID-19 lockdown.

- **Staffordshire Day - Friday 1 May 2020**

Despite the Coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown restrictions, Staffordshire Day is still going ahead with a series of activities live-streamed and broadcast on social media with Signal Radio broadcasting specially created messages throughout the day from tourism businesses, attractions, pubs and restaurants.

The day features live music performances and poetry readings, history talks, quizzes, family fun sessions, arts and crafts classes and demonstrations - all delivered online allowing you to get involved from your living room. As well as the online programme, all of Staffordshire is invited

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to pay tribute to our heroic frontline staff, health and care professionals, keyworkers and volunteers by sending in special messages throughout the day, and which will culminate with a mass online singalong of Robbie Williams' iconic 'Angels' hit song.

Get involved at [www.enjoystaffordshire.com/staffordshireday](http://www.enjoystaffordshire.com/staffordshireday)

- **Fly-tipping on the rise**

Fly tipping is on the increase with over 230 reported cases in South Staffordshire during April. The Council's Street Scene team is working hard to ensure this illegal tipping is quickly removed and if you see anything, please report it on the Council website. Click [here](#) to see more.

- **South Staffordshire Connect service**

As a result of the coronavirus pandemic and the decrease in the number of regular bus services, the South Staffordshire Connect dial-a-ride service is now being used to help support local communities in the district and focusing on shopping services for vulnerable residents.



For more information, please call **01902 910263**.

[www.sstaffs.gov.uk/connectbus](http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/connectbus)

- **Leaflets and ID cards prove a hit with residents**

A big thank you to the Brewood Community Helpers Network, which has delivered leaflets highlighting the help available for self-isolators along with contact numbers of volunteer helpers to every road in Brewood. South Staffordshire Council was delighted to help with the artwork, production and financing of the leaflets as well as creating ID cards for the volunteer helpers.

For many residents, it has become increasingly difficult to shop or collect prescriptions and the leaflets and help of the volunteers has been invaluable to local communities. In particular, the ID cards have proved invaluable, giving the volunteers a form of identification that assists them when shopping as well as reassuring users that they are part of an official network of helpers. Volunteer groups in Brewood, Bishops Wood, Coven, Coven Heath and Wheaton Aston have also benefited from these resources too.

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- **Cheslyn Hay Leisure Centre members spreading some happiness during lockdown**

Click [here](#) to see a pic of Rob Caddick, who plays badminton at Cheslyn Hay Leisure Centre, dressed up as St George. Every year, Rob usually dresses up for the annual parade in Great Wyrley but even though this didn't go ahead this year, he decided to go ahead anyway and bring some cheer to residents by dressing up and raising money for the Air Ambulance. So far he has raised £350 so well done! Click [here](#) to see a pic of Rob and Michelle Bates from leisure services.

- **Free fares for NHS Staff**

Across South Staffordshire, National Express and Dimond Travel are currently offering free fares to all NHS staff. Arriva, which covers the northern end of the district, is not doing this at present but is reviewing this so please keep an eye on their website for any updates.

- **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.

- Over 1,000 applications for Business Grant payments have now been processed, providing over £11 million of welcome 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. The Council's bulky waste collection service is also available and can help you get rid of your bulky waste items including sofas, beds, wardrobes and white goods such as fridges, freezers and washing machines. Click [here](#) to book online 24/7.
- 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 up gas or electricity meters, dog walking, or if you're feeling anxious or lonely and need to talk to someone.

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The helpline is open daily, including weekdays, 9am to 5pm.

Tel: **01902 696499**

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

- Our Environmental Health and Licensing team continues to monitor businesses and compliance with COVID-19 regulations. Over 300 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](mailto:info@sstaffs.gov.uk) or telephone **01902 696000**.
- **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.

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- 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).

- **Every Mind Matters**

For expert tips and advice about how deal with stress and feel more on top of things, visit: [www.everymindmatters.co.uk](http://www.everymindmatters.co.uk).

- **#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>

Find support at [www.gov.uk/domestic-abuse](http://www.gov.uk/domestic-abuse)

Useful apps include **Hollie Guard**, which turns your smartphone into an advanced personal safety device, and **Bright Sky**, which provides support and information to anyone who may be in an abusive relationship or those concerned about someone they know.

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- **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 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.

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