

Council news round-up

Your weekly guide to the latest news

Issue 168

15 May 2020



This week's news from around the Council.

- **#StayAlert**

Coronavirus lockdown restrictions are beginning to ease in England and new rules came into force on Wednesday 13 May 2020 along with a new slogan 'Stay Alert, Control the virus, Save Lives'. The following documents provide advice on the updated measures:

- Guidance on social distancing and the new information about staying alert and staying safe (click [here](#)). This includes information on protecting different groups of people, staying at home, businesses and venues, visiting public places, public gatherings and going to work. You can now exercise outside as often as you wish and sit and rest outside. Exercise or recreation can be done alone, with members of your household, or with one other person from outside your household, while keeping a safe distance of two metres (six ft) apart at all times. You can also drive to outdoor open spaces irrespective of distance. This guidance applies only in England.
- The Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy (click [here](#)).
- Frequently asked questions: what you can and can't do (click [here](#)). This includes information about accessing public spaces, advice for vulnerable groups including the 'shielded', going to work, public transport, schools and childcare, borders and enforcement.
- Guidance for employers to help them get their businesses back up and running and workplaces operating safely (click [here](#)) as well as guidance to help ensure workplaces are as safe as possible (click [here](#)). This includes eight guides providing tailored advice on different types of workplaces.
- Information on wearing face coverings (click [here](#)), which includes step-by-step guidance outlining how you can make a simple face cloth using either a t-shirt or cotton fabric. People should wear a face covering when social distancing is not possible and where they will come into contact with people they do not normally meet, for instance, on public transport or in some shops.

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- **Household Recycling Centres now open**

This week on Thursday 14 May 2020, the Household Recycling Centres run by Staffordshire County Council re-opened to the public. The centres will be open for essential use only and the numbers of vehicles allowed on a site at any one time will have to be restricted to comply with Government guidance on social distancing. Click [here](#) for more information.

- **Garden waste collection service**

Last week, online registration opened for the Council's new garden waste collection service, which is scheduled to start on Monday 29 June 2020. In its first week, 3,500 residents signed up to the service which is introducing an annual charge for collecting garden waste. Residents can sign up now at www.sstaffs.gov.uk/gardenwaste or from Monday 18 May 2020 by calling **01902 696000**. Click [here](#) to find out more.

- **Wombourne Fish Bar makes the news**

As the lockdown restrictions begin to ease, more and more local businesses are beginning to re-open and the Council has been busy promoting on its Facebook page those food service businesses who are implementing good social distancing measures. One of these is Wombourne Fish Bar, which was featured on Midlands Today. Click [here](#) to view

- **Virtual business support**

The Council is holding a series of free, 30-minute virtual business support sessions to help businesses keep trading through the current COVID-19 pandemic. All sessions last for 30 minutes and will start at 8.30am. Places can be booked through Eventbrite and the sessions will run through Microsoft TEAMS.

- **Trading legally and safely - Wednesday 20 May 2020.**

Delivered by the Council's Environmental Health and Licensing Team, this session will include hints and tips on how to trade legally and safely in line with Public Health England and Government guidelines. Click [here](#) to reserve a place.

- **Maximising social media to generate new business and managing your finances - Wednesday 27 May 2020.**

With Josie Hadley from OMG Marketing. Click [here](#) to reserve a place.

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- **Finances, cashflow and survival budget** - Wednesday 3 June 2020.

For this session, the Council has partnered with Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and their dedicated business advisor Pete Ball, a business banker for over 25 years.

Click [here](#) to reserve a place.

- **Next week's Council Committee/Panel meetings**

You can view these meetings online as a guest and a news item containing the link will be added to the Council website on the morning of each meeting.

- Asset Scrutiny Panel - Monday 18 May 2020 - 4pm - virtual meeting.
- Planning Committee - Tuesday 19 May 2020 - 6.30pm - virtual meeting.

- **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.

- So far, 1,342 applications for Business Grant payments have now been processed, providing £15.325 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 continuing to take 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 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.

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

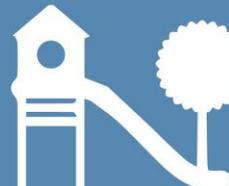
Tel: **01902 696499** Email: **Covid-19@sstaffs.gov.uk**

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- Our Environmental Health and Licensing team continues to monitor businesses and compliance with COVID-19 regulations. Over 300 site visits to premises 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.
- From Monday 18 May 2020, the two car parks on the Railway Walk will re-open, initially between 10am and 4pm (subject to review). The Council owned fishing pools on the Wyrley Essington Canal Local Nature Reserve also re-opened on Wednesday 13 May in line with national guidance and advice from The Angling Trust.
- 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 our team of staff are still helping residents stay active via the internet and social media and sending their best wishes to customers.

- **South Staffordshire Connect service**

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Connect dial-a-ride service is now focusing on providing shopping services for vulnerable residents. This shopping service covers all five localities in the district and is offered to residents registered with Connect as well as other vulnerable residents who are struggling to access essential supplies.

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



- **Financial advice and assistance**

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We appreciate that this is a difficult time for many of our residents. If your income has dropped or ceased due to the coronavirus pandemic, you can apply for Universal Credit and other support options such as our Council Tax Support Scheme.

To claim Universal Credit and other benefits, visit www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit and apply online. The telephone number for the Universal Credit Helpline is **0800 328 5644**.

If changes in your income mean you are struggling to pay your Council Tax, then please contact the Council and ask about our special payment plan and Council Tax Support Scheme. This scheme applies a discount directly to your Council Tax account. The amount of support you can get will depend on your income and your personal circumstances and you can apply for support whether you own your own home, rent from a social or private landlord, are unemployed or are working.

Tel: **01902 696668** Email benefits@sstaffs.gov.uk

- **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.

- **Cyber security awareness training**

The Regional Cyber Crime Unit is hosting weekly live streams to help individuals and businesses keep themselves protected against cyber crime. On Mondays and Fridays from 10am to 10.30am, they will be hosting live cyber security awareness training presentations via YouTube Live. Presentations are suitable for everyone. Click [here](#) to register.

- **Every Mind Matters**

For expert tips and advice about how to deal with stress and feel more on top of things, visit: www.everymindmatters.co.uk.

- **#YouAreNotAlone**

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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

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.

- **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.

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- **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