

Council news round-up

Your weekly guide to the latest news

Issue 169

22 May 2020



This week's news from around the Council.

- **Stay Alert, Control the Virus, Save Lives**

As coronavirus lockdown restrictions start to ease in England, news was issued this week about the expansion of testing to anyone in the UK who is showing coronavirus symptoms and an additional symptom was added to the list of common symptoms - a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia). You can book a test by visiting www.nhs.uk/coronavirus and those unable to access the internet can call **119** in England and Wales to book an appointment for a coronavirus test.

Remember to maintain social distancing measures this bank holiday weekend and keep at least two metres away from other people to avoid catching or spreading coronavirus. Please follow official advice and here's a quick summary of key guidance on the www.gov.uk website.

- The Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy (click [here](#)).
- Guidance on social distancing and information about staying alert and staying safe (click [here](#)). This guidance applies only in England.
- Frequently asked questions: what you can and can't do (click [here](#)).
- 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](#)).
- Additional Covid-19 symptoms (click [here](#)).
- Information on wearing face coverings (click [here](#)).

Disposal of PPE

Discarded face coverings and gloves are becoming a widespread issue so please dispose of these items safely. Please throw away any used PPE (gloves and face masks) in residual 'black bag' waste at home or at work, or in a litter bin. Please do not place in a recycling bin as they cannot be recycled through conventional facilities. Click [here](#) to watch a video by Defra.

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- **Garden waste collection service tops 10,000**

Last Monday, telephone registrations started for the Council's new garden waste collection service, which is scheduled to start on Monday 29 June 2020. So far, 10,000 residents have 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 by calling **01902 696000**. Click [here](#) to find out more.

- **2,000th food parcel delivered**

This week, Staffordshire County Council delivered its 2,000th food parcel. Click [here](#) to view a short video showcasing this work.

- **Introduction of meadow verges**

South Staffordshire Council is trialling the introduction of meadow verges in a couple of key areas within the district, in partnership with Staffordshire County Council, Parish Councils and local community groups. By changing our grounds maintenance approach to these areas, the Council hopes to enhance their environmental value for local wildlife and important pollinators such as bees, butterflies and other insects. Click [here](#) to find out more.

- **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.

- **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.

- **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.

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- **International Learn to Swim Week**

This week has also been International Learn to Swim Week. Although the swimming pools are shut and we can't swim, the Swimming Teachers' Association (STA) has taken the campaign online and has been promoting water safety with a range of activities for children to do at home including word scrambles, word searches, dot to dots and colouring in sheets. To access the resources, click [here](#).

- **24-hour spin cycle**

Well done to Tim from Wombourne Leisure Centre and his 24-hour spin cycle. So far, Tim has raised just over £571. Click [here](#) to donate.

- **Update on Council services**

The last two months have witnessed a fantastic response by Council staff who have repeatedly gone above and beyond to support and help local residents and businesses. Click [here](#) to view a video about the Council's response to coronavirus.

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 and will be open over the Bank Holiday weekend. 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

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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**

- 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. Car parking capacity has been increased to 40 cars at any one time. This will be reviewed after the bank holiday weekend.
- From Monday 18 May 2020, the two car parks on the Railway Walk re-opened, 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 13th May in line with national guidance and advice from The Angling Trust.
- Strawberry Lane and Sytch Lane Cemeteries remain open daily from 9am to 8pm. 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.

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- **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**.

www.sstaffs.gov.uk/connectbus

- **Financial advice and assistance**

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 will depend on your income and personal circumstances and you can apply for support if 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.

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- **#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

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.

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