

Councillors Covid-19 Outbreak Briefing

2 April 2020

Service Updates

Revenues and Benefits

We are receiving a higher number than normal of claims for Council Tax Support but we have drafted in additional resource to help us cope. Welfare Support guidance is being given by teams and residents should contact the Council's Benefits Team if they are experiencing difficulties. The DWP has issued 'Trust and Protect' guidance to allow us to relax our rules around signatures and documentary evidence of circumstances.

Customer Services

To cope with the volume of calls, across the council partnership we have redeployed former Customer Service Advisors back into the Customer Service Team for extra support.

ERS

We have redeployed several officers from this area, so are down to emergency response in most areas. Reports of non-compliant businesses have subsided but we continue to monitor this.

Development Management

This service is continuing to operate but with applications down to around 25% of normal demand. Site visits obviously remain a challenge but Government has asked us to do what we can to maintain a service for the sake of the longer-term economic health of the UK.

Waste

All household waste services are operating as normal in our District.

Cemeteries

We had hoped to keep our cemeteries open on a reduced hours basis. However, after confirming the government regulations we have now had to close the cemeteries completely, apart from when funerals and burials are taking place. We

understand that this has caused upset to a number of people but unfortunately we have had to follow government regulations.

Housing/homelessness

Everyone sleeping rough in the District has been offered accommodation. Officers from the housing/homelessness team will continue to work with them. A County-wide Homelessness team has been established to coordinate support and accommodation needs across Gloucestershire.

Community Support/Resilience

We've continued our work seven days a week to look after the most vulnerable in our communities, by supporting the people referred to us through the Gloucestershire County Council portal:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershires-community-help-hub/>

As of yesterday, just over 150 people had been referred to us and an initial contact is made with each new referral within 24 hours and then dealt with based on a triaging system. The majority of cases are related to food, with people flagging that they may need help over the 12-week self-isolation period. Some are for prescription pick ups, which we can refer to the NHS volunteers scheme and others just want a bit of social contact.

Gloucestershire County Council has given each District £50,000 to support local voluntary sector agencies and community groups who are supporting vulnerable people during the Covid-19 crisis to cover additional costs they may incur due to increased activity or functions that they have insufficient resources to meet. We're currently developing a simple process for applying to the fund.

Business information

The Council has announced how it intends to support businesses across the district and you can read all the detail here: <https://www.fdean.gov.uk/news/2020/march-2020/council-announces-its-help-for-local-businesses-affected-by-coronavirus/>

The latest information we have on the support available for business was sent out to our business contacts earlier this week. We are delighted to have seen big increases in sign-up to this publication. We have 344 subscribers, and would encourage businesses to sign-up with this link:

<https://fdean.us19.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=dd696c9cb6fd3a8e52db48aaa&id=16cf0612b9>

Sports Club Support Schemes

A total of £195m of National Lottery funding has been made available to help the sport and physical activity sectors through the ongoing coronavirus (Covid-19) crisis. This will be organised and distributed by Sport England.

<https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/our-funds/community-emergency-fund>

National Coronavirus information Service

The Government has launched a GOV.UK Coronavirus Information service on WhatsApp. The new free to use service aims to provide official, trustworthy and timely information and advice about coronavirus (COVID-19), and will further reduce the burden on NHS services.

To use the free GOV.UK Coronavirus Information Service on WhatsApp, simply add 07860 064422 in your phone contacts and then message the word 'hi' in a WhatsApp message to get started.

A set of menu options is then presented which the user can choose from and then be sent relevant guidance from GOV.UK pages as well as links to GOV.UK for further information.

For more information, please click here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-coronavirus-information-service-on-whatsapp>

The Cabinet Office has published [Coronavirus outbreak FAQs: what you can and can't do](#). This includes answers to questions such as "can I drive to green spaces?" and "can I go to the park?"

National door drop

This week, the Prime Minister will write to every UK household to urge them to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives. The letter and accompanying leaflet are attached for your information.

Renting

Non-statutory guidance for landlords, tenants and local authorities in the private and social rented sectors in the context of coronavirus was published on Gov.uk over last weekend.

This guidance provides advice to landlords and tenants on the provisions in the Coronavirus Act 2020, and further advice for landlords, tenants and local authorities more broadly about their rights and responsibilities during the coronavirus outbreak.

The guidance is available to read at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-and-renting-guidance-for-landlords-tenants-and-local-authorities>

Domestic abuse

The Home Office has published [advice and guidance for those who are experiencing or feel at risk of domestic abuse](#) during the outbreak.

County Council Updates

Gloucestershire County Council has launched a [campaign](#) to recruit to crucial care roles in the county.

A hub for information and advice for [looking after your health and wellbeing](#) is live

A series of FAQs for Parents, Key Workers and Early Years Providers is available via the county Community Hub web page <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershires-community-help-hub/schools-and-key-workers/>

Website Information

Our website and social media channels have all the latest information concerning how we are operating in the midst of this emergency situation. We encourage you to follow them

Website: www.fdean.gov.uk/coronavirus

Twitter: [@FODDC](https://twitter.com/FODDC)

Facebook [@FODDC](https://www.facebook.com/FODDC)

Councillor Contact

If you need to contact the council we have set up two ways to do this and this will ensure your request is managed appropriately. Obviously we are dealing with a major global emergency so we will prioritise service requests.

Tel: FODDC - 01594 812250

Email: councillor.contact@fdean.gov.uk

Our offices remain open to deal with emergency matters only. If a member of the public contacts you please encourage them to contact the council in the first instance by phone on 01594 810000 or email customer.services@fdean.gov.uk

Please note, we are asking members not to come into the council offices.

Role of Councillors

If any member has volunteer groups set up in their area and requires volunteer badges Corporate Support have some available and if you request these through Julie Jones, Democratic Services Manager, then we can arrange to get them posted out to you.

Personal Message:

I'd like to pay tribute to our own team here at the District council who have developed and overseen the implementation and set up of the community hub in response to an online portal established by Glos County Council. This hub will prove a priceless resource to enable the pairing of our established community groups and the much needed volunteers, with those in most need of help, where it hasn't already been met by the various self-help networks that our communities have developed.

The initial work around those most vulnerable shielded people was as fast paced as it was intense and I thank the team for their endeavours. Alongside that are the members of other teams who continue to make sure the day job continues under the most extreme pressures.

While this work was ongoing and in the past weeks we have seen community groups and parish and town councils take the lead in supporting the other members of society who need the most protection from this virus. Each and every community group, parish or town council, volunteer, Councillor and Clerk who has stepped up and offered to be part of this mobilisation are to be applauded. They are making a difference at the very ground levels where it is needed and they will continue to have a huge role to play

in future weeks. From organising and shopping, to prescription collections and driving and even just simply phoning people up for a chat, a huge difference is being made. We should be in no doubt that they will be saving lives while they do these things - it won't be forgotten.

Please stay safe.

Tim Gwilliam

Leader of Council