



Councillor's weekly bulletin - March 27 2020

As you will all be aware, I ordinarily prepare a monthly newsletter for all Town and Parish Councils, updating you on activity in the East Suffolk District. However, during this unprecedented and rapidly evolving situation, I think it is important that I communicate with you more regularly - and so, from today, I will be putting together a weekly bulletin, bringing you up to speed with developments relating to the COVID-19 epidemic.

It will be a mixture of useful information about what we can all do to support people, communities and each other during this situation, updates on council activities and wider advice from the Government and Public Health England.

As things stand, there is a well-structured approach to dealing with this crisis and our Leadership team are linked into the wider decision-making process. An East Suffolk Tactical Management Group meets (remotely) three times a week and feeds into the County's Local Resilience Forum and Strategic Co-ordination Group. We are also participating in regular dial-in meetings with the MCLHG, Local Government Association and District Councils Network.

This bulletin contains a wealth of information as well as links to useful websites. Everything you need should be here.

Thank you for all you are doing - never before has the role of the Town and Parish Councillor been more important. You are the very local Community Leaders and as such, you can do much to guide and encourage residents to follow the advice being given, to offer reassurance that we will do all we can to look after and protect them - and to be that portal to answer questions and raise concerns.

If you have any questions, ideas or comments, please do let me know - I am always here to support you.

Regards,
Maurice

Maurice Cook
Councillor for Framlingham Ward, East Suffolk Council



Remember **STAY AT HOME, PROTECT OUR NHS, SAVE LIVES**

Where to find the latest information and guidance

Latest information on coronavirus: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

NHS information on coronavirus: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Q&A from Public Health England on coronavirus: <https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/01/23/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-what-you-need-to-know/>

Some additional links which you may find useful are:

Public Health England's guidance about coronavirus (COVID-19) for health professionals and other organisations:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>

Residential care, supported living and home care guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-residential-care-supported-living-and-home-care-guidance>

Guidance for educational settings: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19>

The latest travel advice can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>

Volunteering

Local councils are facing a massive logistical challenge to ensure that essential supplies such as food and medicines continue to get through to our most vulnerable residents and those who are shielding or self-isolating at home and have no immediate support from family or friends.

Nicole Rickard is leading on a county-wide working group for East Suffolk which has been tasked with setting up a Suffolk Community Hub which will match requests for help with volunteers who can assist.

To help with that volunteering effort we have drawn up a list of council staff who are not directly involved in delivering essential council services and who have said that they want to help in the community. Volunteering will take many forms from helping with the delivery of essential supplies to keeping in regular contact by telephone or email with those who are on their own, feeling isolated and would welcome a friendly voice on the end of the telephone.



If you would like to be added to the list of our volunteers please email phil.gore@eastsoffolk.gov.uk and let him know how you would like to help.

Home But Not Alone

Suffolk County Council have launched the 'Home, but not alone' service to help connect people who want to volunteer in their communities with neighbours who are most in need. Volunteers can download the free app, called Tribe Volunteer from Apple App Store and Google Play Store. Meanwhile, the telephone number for those in genuine need of help (and which will be managed by our staff for East Suffolk enquiries) is freephone **0800 876 6926**

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-news/show/home-but-not-alone>

NHS call for volunteers

The Government and NHS have had a massive response of over 400,000 volunteers to help up to 1.5 million people who have been asked to shield themselves from coronavirus because of underlying health conditions. Members of the public can sign up to become NHS Volunteer Responders and can be called on to do simple but vital tasks such as:

- delivering medicines from pharmacies
- driving patients to appointments
- bringing them home from hospital
- making regular phone calls to check on people isolating at home.

Members of the public can sign up to become an NHS Volunteer Responder here:

<https://www.goodsamapp.org/NHS>

NHS Volunteer Responders is not intended to replace local groups helping their vulnerable neighbours but is an additional service provided by the NHS.

A summary of East Suffolk Council teams

East Suffolk Council will continue to deliver essential services to those who need us most and I would like to pay tribute to the hard work of our staff and partners who are putting the needs of other people first during this emergency.

The Council's Customer Services team is responding to urgent enquiries, however customers are encouraged wherever possible to seek information about services on www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk. If anyone has an enquiry which cannot be resolved online, they should email us at customerservices@eastsoffolk.gov.uk. Customers can also call us on 03330 162 000 but please do bear in mind that our phone lines are likely to be very busy and calls should only be made if absolutely necessary.



Meanwhile, the Revenues & Benefits team and ARP Partnership are continuing to react to customer enquiries, processing work across the five partner councils.

Otherwise, the majority of East Suffolk's office-based staff are now working from home and are undertaking no face-to-face meetings. However teams which retain a public health & safety responsibility remain operational, albeit with a reduced capacity.

The Housing Team continues to manage a homelessness function and will carry out emergency repairs on council properties if the issue is urgent. Full social distancing procedures are being followed throughout. We are also working closely with residents in our sheltered housing schemes to ensure they have everything they need.

East Suffolk's Environmental Protection and Food & Safety teams will only respond to emergencies for the foreseeable future and our Building Control team will also deal with structural emergencies only where this is a safety risk to the public.

Payment of housing rent during COVID-19 emergency

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 virus we understand that some tenants may face financial difficulties. Tenants with specific worries should contact the council as soon as possible and our teams will discuss the options that are available.

However, we would ask, where possible, that tenants with rent concerns please email estates@eastsoffolk.gov.uk rather than call, to help keep our phone lines free for urgent repair enquiries.

Private tenants, those with another social landlord, or homeowners who would like advice about financial concerns, should contact their landlord/mortgage provider directly or go to the advice pages on www.shelter.org.uk for further information.

Waste collections

In the interests of crew safety and to ensure that waste and recycling collections are prioritised, East Suffolk Council and East Suffolk Norse have taken the decision to temporarily suspend the collection of household garden waste.

The final round of garden waste collections will take place today, Friday 27 March. The Council is also temporarily suspending its food waste collection services which is ordinarily provided in parts of Lowestoft. Residents who have a separate food collection are advised to place this waste in the black bin for the time being.



When garden waste collections recommence, subscriptions will be ‘rolled forward’, which means that a new annual payment will only be required once each subscriber has received their full quota of 12 monthly collections.

Fewer collections ensure that our crews will spend less time in close proximity to each other, which then reduces the risk of spreading the virus and creating further disruption to our teams.

Waste disposal

Guidance on disposing of waste is available for people with coronavirus symptoms who must remain at home until they are well, and for those living in households with someone who shows symptoms: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection#cleaning-and-disposal-of-waste>

Businesses

We know that businesses, large and small, will be affected by the current situation. East Suffolk’s Economic Development Team are providing a range of useful information for businesses during the COVID-10 outbreak including details of how to claim support and additional funding.

They keep this information up to date and relevant on the ‘East Suffolk Means Business’ website: <https://www.eastsuffolkmeansbusiness.co.uk/business-support/resources/covid-19/>.

Financial hardship fund

As advised earlier today, all East Suffolk Councillors have agreed to allocate £1,000 from each of our 2020/21 Enabling Communities Budgets towards a hardship fund.

Managed by the East Suffolk Communities Team, the fund will help to relieve the financial hardship of residents during these uncertain times. Funding can be used in many ways, including the support of pop-up food banks, buying essential goods or services for individuals, supporting telephone befriending services or providing funding for fuel to enable Good Neighbour Scheme volunteers to deliver medicines across the district. Other East Suffolk staff will be redeployed to support to the Communities Team in allocating this funding.

Anyone wishing to highlight a resident or group in need of support is asked to contact the Communities Team by emailing communities@eastsuffolk.gov.uk.



Social media - how you can help

If you use social media, can you please follow the East Suffolk Council pages and share/retweet our posts about the virus and the council's response. This is critically important to ensure that good and reliable information goes as far and wide as possible.

Watch out for scammers

Unscrupulous criminals are exploiting fears about COVID-19 to prey on members of the public, particularly older and vulnerable people who are isolated from family and friends.

Friends Against Scams (www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk) is a National Trading Standards Scams Team initiative, which aims to protect and prevent people from becoming victims of scams by empowering people to take a stand against scams. Anybody can join Friends Against Scams and make a difference in their own way. You can even complete the online training and raise awareness throughout your community.

As this fast moving situation evolves, I will keep you informed of further developments. Of the utmost importance is for you all to stay safe and well:

STAY AT HOME, PROTECT OUR NHS, SAVE LIVES.