

## News You Can Use on the Doorstep

### Leader's Monthly E-Newsletter County Council June 2020

#### From the Leader of the Council

Over the last few months many families, communities and businesses across the county have been coming together like never before in response to coronavirus. And while our thoughts and prayers continue to go out to those who have lost loved ones, it is heartening to see the falling numbers of new cases and deaths in Staffordshire. It is essential that we all stay alert and prevent the spread of this terrible virus as the county and the country reopens. Given the sacrifices made by so many people, we must all do everything we can to prevent a second peak of infections.

The County Council staff continue to play a leading role in the response to Covid-19, providing food parcels to the vulnerable; PPE and guidance to care homes; helping our schools to reopen; and supporting high streets and businesses with grants, information and guidance, to bring customers back safely. Our efforts are bolstered by an army of local volunteers, organisations and carers who are all doing their bit. The community spirit and resilience on show across the county has been incredible. A special mention for three organisations, Erasmus Darwin Museum Volunteers in Lichfield; SARAC in Burton upon Trent and the Friends of Hednesford Park, who all received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service this month.

We need that spirit and resilience to continue. It is good news to see our high streets reopening, businesses opening their doors and more people returning to work. We need to encourage people across Staffordshire to support businesses and shop local in the coming weeks, to protect local jobs and livelihoods.



We have also seen an outpouring of community spirit and togetherness in several passionate and peaceful Black Lives Matters protests across the county in the past fortnight. Racism and discrimination of any kind has no place in our society. I hope the terrible events in America are the catalyst to bring communities closer together, for people to listen to one another, and for us all to ensure that everyone in Staffordshire enjoys equality of opportunity, regardless of their race, creed, gender or sexuality.



The county council will play its part in Staffordshire's recovery from Covid-19. It will take time and we need to move cautiously to prevent a second peak of infection. I have every confidence that the spirit and resilience of Staffordshire people that we have all seen in recent months, will help us bounce back strongly.

Kickstarting our economy, supporting employers and inspiring new enterprise will be a cornerstone of our recovery activity and our five-year strategy to help our economy not only recover but to transform, and how we create the best possible conditions to create more and better paid jobs for people in Staffordshire.

I have spoken before about the incredible work that schools and educational settings and their staff have been doing since the start of the pandemic. Their efforts have been humbling and inspiring to us all. Most schools have remained open to support vulnerable children and the children of key workers, which has allowed essential staff to get to work and help keep things going.

We anticipate that most schools will reopen over the next few weeks and we will continue to support them to make sure they have everything they need to operate safely. I trust people will join with me in thanking them on behalf of the children and families of Staffordshire for their response to date, and the work they are planning for the next phase.

I would also urge everyone in Staffordshire to be kind to themselves and one another at this time, and to seek help if they are feeling the strain. Speak to loved ones, friends, or even your GP, or go online to places like our website, where you can find a huge range of online support. While we must all stay alert, the gradual easing of the lockdown does show there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Earlier this month we saw the launch of the Test and Trace service, the next phase in Government efforts to contain the virus. This means people who are known to have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for Covid-19, will be contacted and instructed to self-isolate for 14 days, regardless of whether they have any symptoms.

It's vital that we follow these instructions, so if you are contacted please do as they ask. This is about protecting yourself, your family, and the wider community – and avoiding a second peak and further lock-down restrictions.

The Council is continuing to manage outbreaks in our care homes and preparing to manage outbreaks in our schools and elsewhere.

Our care providers continue to do an amazing job supporting some of the most vulnerable people and we have provided an additional £20m to help them do this along with one million pieces of Personal Protective Equipment.

We have delivered over 2,000 food parcels to vulnerable self-isolators and we will need to think about how this support can be sustained in the longer-term drawing on the voluntary sector and our communities. These deliveries mean vulnerable people can stay at home, self-isolate and reduce the risk of catching the virus. And thank you to all those volunteers who are delivering the parcels from our district hubs to people's homes.

We have also provided £155,000 for voluntary and community groups, £500,000 for small businesses and support for foster carers and nursery providers. One of the biggest challenges ahead of us is reigniting our economy and helping the many firms big and small who are suffering right now, as well as those workers who have lost their jobs. The sad news of redundancies at JCB, Rolls Royce, Bentley and Aston Martin is a reminder that we need to get our economy moving as soon as it is safe to do so, with the right measures in place to control this terrible virus. This county council stepped up and stepped in 10 years ago after the last recession struck, and we succeeded in growing the economy, attracting investment and creating more jobs. We are ready and willing to revive Staffordshire's economy once more.



We all have a very important role to play in containing the infection and as restrictions start to be lifted, it is as important as ever that we all continue to follow the latest advice. This regular hand washing self isolation for people with symptoms and their household contacts, and everyone limiting their physical interactions with other households and staying two meters apart.

There are still difficult times ahead as we balance easing lock-down with trying to contain the virus, but as always if we pull together, we will get through it.

And finally, I would like to once again pay tribute to and thank our county council staff for their commitment and dedication. They are making a huge difference to people's lives every single day. Thank you also to all of care staff, our NHS workers, the many thousands of volunteers and local businesses who are all continuing to step up and support Staffordshire people and communities through these unprecedented times.

For more regular updates have a look at my Leader's Blog <http://blog.scchost.org.uk/leadersblog/>

**Philip Atkins**

**Leader Staffordshire County Council**

## How has Covid-19 impacted your business?



Many businesses are concerned about their future because of Covid-19. In these unprecedented times, you may well need some sort of business support now or in the future.

Spending just two minutes to fill in this survey means that you're helping to design the services you need.

Now's the time to have your say.

[HELP TO DESIGN YOUR BUSINESS SUPPORT](#)

## Get the support you need



Qualified Growth Hub advisors provide a highly personalised and tailored service to businesses including the very best up to date knowledge on the Covid-19 grants and loans available to all types of business

Call or email [businessenquiries@stokestaffslep.org.uk](mailto:businessenquiries@stokestaffslep.org.uk) or [click here](#) to reserve your 121 session.



## Future Fund now open

The Future Fund is a £250 million fund for innovative companies facing financial difficulties due to Covid-19. The scheme is open for applications until the end of September 2020.

[Find out more](#)

[who can apply](#)

[At a glance summary of funding available and](#)

## Did you know? Sick pay



Are you a business with less than 250 employees? Did you know that the cost of providing 2 weeks of Covid-19 related Statutory Sick Pay per employee can be refunded by the government?

[Find out more about the rebate scheme here](#)

[At a glance summary of funding available and who can apply](#)

## Staffordshire support scheme for county start-ups

A support programme for people with ambitions of starting their own business and whose current employment may be at risk due to the coronavirus crisis has been launched by the county council.

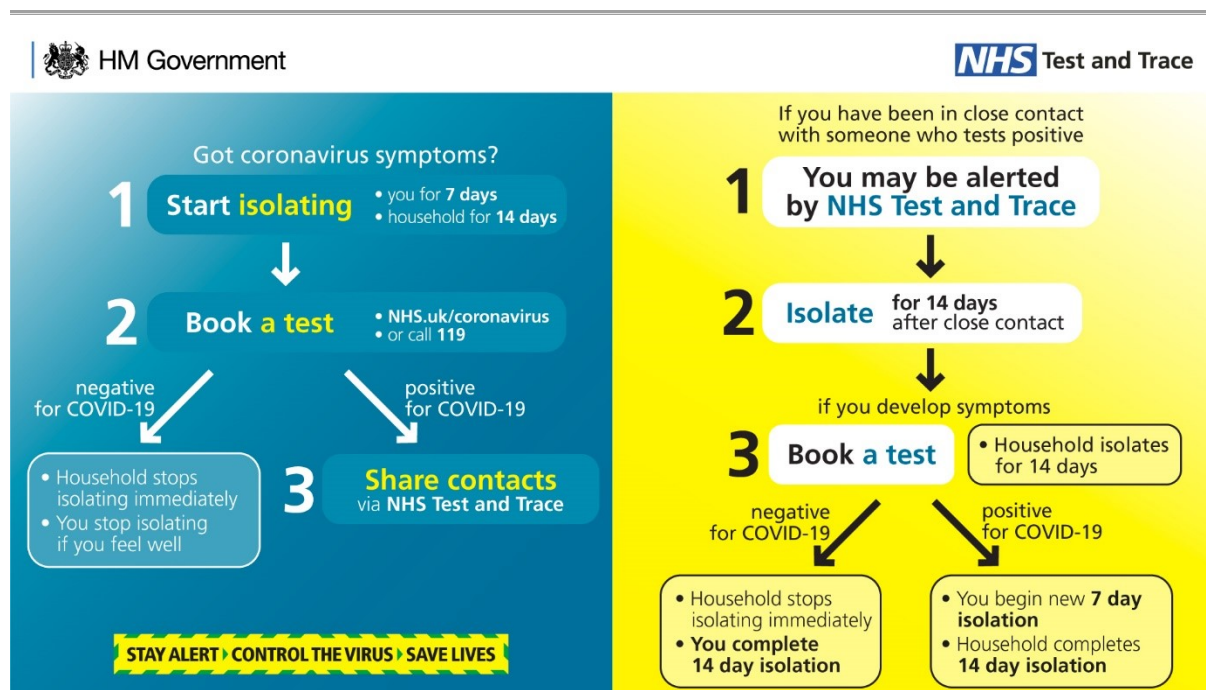
The Staffordshire Start-up Programme aims to build on and complement existing support for new businesses, with a focus on helping them to be robust in overcoming future challenges.

People across the county who have been furloughed, whose job may be at risk, who have already been made redundant or see this period as an opportunity to progress their start-up plans are being urged to get in touch.

It will be delivered by the Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce on behalf of the county council and provide online sessions offering support and advice on a range of issues.

Follow-up support to access finance and on getting through the critical early stages of business operations will also be available.

[Find out more](#)



## Second regional testing site opens

The Government has announced a second regional testing site in Staffordshire.

The drive through centre will open at **Stafford Education and Enterprise Park, Beaconside, ST18 0BF**.

Anyone experiencing Covid-19 symptoms can book an appointment on the [NHS website](#) or by calling 119 to be tested. Residents can also go through national portals to [access the full range of testing sites](#), including mobile sites, home tests etc.

The first regional testing centre opened at Stoke City's bet365 Stadium on Friday 29 May. Regional testing sites can increase capacity from 100 to 1,000 tests per day and are run by the National Testing Programme.



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## NHS Test and Trace

Yesterday, the NHS Test and Trace service launched.

The service is a key part of the Government's plan to keep the virus under control while carefully and safely lifting the lockdown nationally.

In brief, the new service means that:

- If you have symptoms you must self-isolate immediately
- You must book a test – if you test positive you will be contacted within 24 hours. Testing has been extended to the under fives
- People you have been in close contact with will be traced
- They will be instructed to self-isolate for 14 days regardless of whether they have symptoms or not
- If there is a local outbreak, we will work with the Joint Biosecurity Centre and Public Health England to control it

[Learn more](#)

[Learn more about Test and Trace](#)

## Concessionary bus pass arrangements return to normal

Arrangements for older people's concessionary bus pass travel will return to normal from Monday 8 June.

Holders of the older person's pass will be able to travel free after 9.30am and all day on Saturdays and Sundays.

A temporary change was introduced in mid-March to allow pass holders to travel before 9.30am Monday to Friday to visit supermarkets and shops that had introduced reserved shopping for older people.

The Government have announced that if you are travelling on public transport in England, you must wear a face covering from 15 June.



### [More information](#)

## Compost bin offer

The council's waste team are offering Staffordshire residents the opportunity to get compost bins from just £10 (plus £5.99 postage).

Staffordshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Commercial, Mark Deaville said: "Composting is a really easy way to dispose of garden and appropriate food waste.

It helps to significantly reduce carbon emissions which is also good for the planet and the environment."

There are a limited number of bins available.

Order one online by entering your postcode and the reference SWP13L.

### [Order a compost bin](#)

## Considerate parking plea to beauty spot visitors

**People are being reminded to park considerately if visiting popular county beauty spots this weekend.**

Staffordshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, Helen Fisher said: "We're expecting more people to visit locations like Chasewater and The Roaches this weekend because of the fine weather and so we're appealing for everyone to park safely and legally.



It is essential that emergency vehicles can access these locations at all times and are not obstructed by carelessly parked vehicles. We hope everyone has a safe and enjoyable weekend."

Visitors are asked to keep dogs on leads to help observe social distancing rules and not to have barbecues, light fires, or dispose of cigarettes carelessly as there remains a strong risk to people, property and wildlife from fire.

## Road to recovery for Staffordshire



While it is still unclear what the overall impact COVID-19 will have on Staffordshire's economy, the county council is doing all it can to mitigate the impact of the crisis.

Our Emergency Business Grant Scheme to support our smallest businesses received more than 1,600 calls in just five days and, as the scheme was first-come-first served, closed to new applications at that point.

A range of further support is available from the [Staffordshire Growth Hub](#) including a Redundancy and Recruitment Triage Service for businesses, and those at risk of redundancy.

You can also contact their helpline on 0300 111 8002

## Dignity in Care deadline extended



People interested in nominating work colleagues, carers, friends and family members or volunteers for a special award have been given more time to do so.

The [Staffordshire Dignity in Care Awards](#) recognise and celebrate those who care for the most vulnerable amongst us with dignity and compassion.

With many carers and care providers working in the most challenging times in a generation because of the Coronavirus pandemic, the awards will now include recognising those going the extra mile for those they care for.

With many carers and care providers working in the most challenging times in a generation

People now have until 31 July to get their nominations in and [can do so online](#)

## More students back to school



Around three quarters of the county's 313 primary schools in Staffordshire were expected to open to more pupils from June 1 with nearly all primary schools expected to open in the next two weeks.

We have worked with schools to give them the support they need to open safely, including advice and guidance on social distancing, as well as packs of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Social distancing, staggering the start and end of the school day, and reduced pupil numbers in classrooms are just some of the measures being put in place to help keep pupils and staff safe.



## Ten-year walking and cycling plan



A plan to deliver improved cycling and walking networks and increase participation will need over £30million investment in towns across Staffordshire over the next decade.

The local cycling and walking infrastructure plan (LCWIP) sets out recommendations for schemes to improve safety, encourage more people to travel this way and improve town streets.

The plan targets the areas where there is the greatest demand and the largest potential for the transfer of short journeys to walking or cycling

Investment in infrastructure will be targeted within the compact urban areas of Burton, Cannock, Lichfield, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stafford and Tamworth.

People can [read the strategy here](#).

## Beware of warm weather risks



After a prolonged period of dry weather, visitors to our country parks are urged not to have barbecues, light fires, or dispose of cigarettes carelessly as there remains a strong risk to people, property and wildlife from fire.

The devastating damage from recent fires on Cannock Chase [can be seen on this video](#).

People are also urged to avoid open water swimming. No matter how confident a swimmer you are, water can cause cold water shock in

even the strongest swimmers, and strong currents beneath the surface, as well as weeds, branches and other obstructions, could entangle you.

## New digital volunteer platform



Staffordshire is getting a new digital volunteer platform: Do It – Staffordshire

The new Do It – Staffordshire website will enable residents to sign up to be a 'Staffordshire Volunteer' and find local opportunities.

The system also enables local voluntary organisations, mutual aid groups and charities to digitally share their opportunities and manage all the applications they receive.

The Do It – Staffordshire page is still being built, but during Volunteer Week, we want to encourage staff and Staffordshire residents to sign up to ['Do It'](#).