

Update for borough and parish councillors

Stay at home, save lives, protect our NHS

We are enormously grateful to everyone who stayed home over the Easter weekend. For the most part, residents across west Norfolk observed the 'stay at home' direction. It's vital though that we continue to remind people that it is essential that they follow the lockdown guidelines and wherever possible, please help us by sharing the message '**stay home, protect the NHS, save lives.**'

The Coronavirus lockdown guidelines are that you must not leave your house except to:

- Shop for essentials, as infrequently as possible
- Receive medical treatment or provide care
- Travel to and from work, if it's impossible to work from home
- Exercise outdoors once per day, alone or with household members.

DEFRA have added to this message to remind people to only go to local parks, and to shop locally, to avoid any unnecessary travel

Remember when out of your house, stay 2m away from other people and wash your hands as soon as you get home

Everyone must comply with these measures.

Latest updates

Here are this week's latest updates:

Bins

Food caddies are not being collected until social distancing is over. We are asking everyone to put all food waste into their general waste (black bin).

Due to staff being required to isolate themselves, because of COVID-19, there have been some delays to waste and recycling bin collections. Should any waste or recycling bin not be emptied on the usual day, we are asking people to please leave it out as we will try to collect it within the following few days.

Garden waste (brown bin) has been reinstated. Renewals on the brown bin service will be extended to ensure every subscriber still gets their 25 collections. Please check collection dates by visiting west-norfolk.gov.uk/yourbins.

It will not be possible to collect side waste or garden waste that has been bagged. Any excess garden waste should be fed into the brown bin over the next couple of collections.

And, we are asking people not to put garden waste in the black or green bin. We do not collect extra waste put beside the bin.

Whilst there may be some disruption to the usual waste provisions and recycling centres, there will be no relaxation of laws around waste treatment and disposal or the inappropriate burning of waste. We are asking everyone to please act responsibly and consider those living around them.

Business grants

The Government has announced a package of support including for small businesses, and businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. This support takes the form of two grant funding schemes, **the Small Business Grant Fund** and **the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund**, both of which are administered by the borough council.

The form to verify details for the Small Business Grant or the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant is now available here: <https://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/businessrateshelp> **Please submit verifications forms as soon as possible as we would like to get all the grant money allocated to us, awarded to local businesses by the end of April.**

We are working through the list of eligible ratepayers and paying the grant. Grants paid from 1 April 2020 onwards will show on bank statements as 'NDR Grant' followed by the Business Rates account reference.

As of 17 April 2020 we are working on forms received on 8 April 2020. So far 1991 businesses have received £23.675m in grants since 31 March.

We are aware of a number of firms asking for a fee to apply for these discounts and grants on people's behalf. **There is absolutely no need to pay anyone to apply for these.** The process for getting a grant or discount is simple and anyone needing more information can contact us on 01553 616200.

Further information about support for businesses from the government is available by going to: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19>

Children's safety

A campaign has been launched by Norfolk County Council to help keep children safe during this time. The public is being encouraged to '**see something, hear something, say something**' and to call 0344 800 8020 or 999 in an emergency. More details can be found here: <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/care-support-and-health/health-and-wellbeing/adults-health/coronavirus/staying-safe>

Parents can also seek support during these difficult times here: <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/early-childhood-in-norfolk/parenting>

Council Tax

The Council Tax Support Hardship Fund reduces the Council Tax bill for working age people receiving Council Tax Support by up to £150. We are working on the Council Tax Support Hardship Fund and will update Council Tax accounts as soon as possible. At the moment there is no need for anyone to contact us to claim the hardship reduction.

We are hoping to start updating accounts for people who qualify for the Council Tax Hardship Relief during April. Anyone who appears to qualify and has payment due by Direct Debit before then will not have it taken. We will identify affected accounts and people do not need to contact us directly.

We know that this is a difficult time for many people. Anyone who is struggling to pay their council tax can contact us on 01553 616200, option 2, to discuss further.

Domestic Abuse



A campaign has been launched to support those who may be suffering from domestic abuse during the lockdown. The Government has emphasised that *'the household isolation instruction as a result of coronavirus does not apply if you need to leave your home to escape domestic abuse.'*

Full details, including a comprehensive list of helplines and support can be found on the Government's website: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-abuse-how-to-get-help>
Anyone in immediate danger should call 999. Please do help us to share and promote this message.

Elections

The government has announced that local elections scheduled for Thursday, 7 May 2020 are postponed for 12 months. All council meetings are cancelled until 30 April 2020.

Funerals

We know what a terribly difficult time this is for many families and our thoughts are with everyone who has lost a loved one.

There is now new guidance to ensure that funerals are conducted safely and in line with social distancing rules.

Government guidance explains that, with certain precautions, funerals should continue to take place. To help reduce the risk of the highly infectious disease, funeral directors and faith leaders are advised to restrict the number of mourners who attend. The main rules are:

- Only members of the deceased person's household or close family members should attend.
- A safe distance of at least 2 metres (3 steps) should be maintained between individuals.
- Any individual displaying symptoms of COVID-19 should not attend.
- Those who do attend will need to adhere to social distancing at all times, including travelling to and from the funeral.

In addition, the guidance advises that since there is a small but real risk of transmission from the body of a deceased person, mourners are strongly advised not to take part in any rituals or practices that bring them into close contact with the body of a person who has died from or with symptoms of COVID-19. Practices that involve close personal contact with the deceased should only be carried out using the correct personal protective equipment (PPE).

Whilst coming together is no longer possible, there is currently no fee for live streaming funeral services at Mintylin Crematorium.

You can find out more here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased>

Home visits

All home visits have been cancelled, in particular to protect the elderly and vulnerable. This includes benefits advice, Careline, and services. We will be in touch to reschedule appointments in due course.

Housing Benefit

The government has increased the Local Housing Allowance rates as part of its response to the Covid-19 outbreak. This means that people who receive Housing Benefit based on Local Housing Allowance rates (usually because they live in private rented property) will see the amount of money they receive go up from April.

The changes to Housing Benefit claims have already been made, and those affected will start to receive their letters this week (week commencing 13 April). In total an extra £816,000 a year in Housing Benefit has been awarded to people in the borough, directly increasing the money they receive.

We have also updated eligible claims with the new Earnings Disregard from April 2020. Letters and emails are being sent to customers from 14 April 2020.

Anyone wanting to check the benefit can do so by visiting [MyRevenues](#). Anyone need information about housing benefit because of a low income due to self-isolation can call 01553 616200.

Mental health

We know that Covid-19 may be having a negative impact on people's mental health and Norfolk County Council has launched a resources page to help people to manage and maintain their mental wellbeing during this time. For anyone struggling with housing, finances, job loss, and relationships, help and support can be found here: <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/care-support-and-health/health-and-wellbeing/adults-health/mental-health/mental-wellbeing>

Mental health helpline

'First Response', a freephone 24/7 mental health helpline has also been launched to provide reassurance, self-help advice, and to signpost to support. The service, which is being offered by the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, aims to help people to manage their mental health during Covid-19.

The helpline is being made available to people of all ages, and once people are connected they will be put through to a mental health practitioner who will offer advice and support. Please do promote the helpline: the number is 0808 196 3494.



Neighbours

Everyone is being encouraged to look out for their neighbours during this time, safely and in a way that observes social distancing. Checking in to see if people – especially vulnerable neighbours – need anything, or are struggling, and helping out wherever possible can really make a difference.

If there is someone who needs help because they are unable to leave the house and don't have friends or family to assist, please contact 0344 800 8020 The phone line is available Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm, and for emergencies only at the weekend from 10am-4pm on Saturday and Sunday.

Physical activity

New figures published by Sport England found that the majority of adults are using physical activity to help them manage their health during the coronavirus crisis and Active Norfolk is helping the public to stay active during the lockdown. They have launched a new website section at www.activenorfolk.org/coronavirus-covid-19 where people can find information and resources. This includes:

- Active at Home – a selection of resources for people of all ages and abilities, including:
 - Working adults – helping those who may be juggling work and home learning, for example.
 - Children and young people – they are developing a weekly schedule of physical activity themed content for kids from Monday – Friday.
 - Vulnerable adults – a selection of safe and gentle exercises that can be done at home.
 - People living with disabilities – they will be releasing a specially commissioned On the Move virtual physical activity each week.

- There are also a number of online classes, including from Alive Leisure which can be accessed via their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/AliveLynnsport/>

Tourism

We look forward to welcoming visitors to west Norfolk in the future, but now is not the time. We are asking people – including second homeowners - not to come to west Norfolk while the country endures the pandemic and until it's safe again. Anyone who wants to can share their west Norfolk memories – their pictures and films of west Norfolk – with Love West Norfolk as part of their #virtualwestnorfolk campaign. Twitter: @LoveWestNorfolk Facebook: @LoveWestNorfolk and Instagram: love_west_norfolk

VE Day 75

The formal UK celebration of the 75th anniversary of VE Day, due to take place 8th – 10th May, has now been postponed and will take place with the VJ celebrations in August.

However, we are still keen to mark the occasion and we are coming up with some innovative plans for people to celebrate at home. We'll be able to share more details on this shortly, and it would be great if you could help us to promote these ideas, when we have them available.

Borough Council service impacts

All of our service impacts can be found here: www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/coronavirus

Please remember our council offices are no longer accepting visits from the public. People can contact us through Live Chat on our website, or by calling us on 01553 616200. Anyone needing to provide documents can post and drop these into the letterbox which is emptied daily.

If you require specific information about any of the issues raised in this update, please contact communications@west-norfolk.gov.uk

Useful contacts and information

Business Support

- The government advice for businesses is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19>
- The Growth Hub from the New Anglia LEP offers free, expert advice for any business in Norfolk and Suffolk and the advisers are able to signpost employers and employees to details of the new Government support schemes. They're a valuable additional resource. Please call them on 0300 333 6536 or email growthhub@newanglia.co.uk
- You can follow @newanglialep and @angliahub for tweets with links to the latest Government guidance and updates.

Health advice

The best places for health advice are:

- NHS - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- Public Health England - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

Lily

- Due to exceptional demand there is unfortunately a waiting list for referrals to see an advisor. However, there is a lot of information and advice available on the Lily website. <http://asklily.org.uk/kb5/westnorfolk/cd/home.page>

Norfolk County Council

- A single dedicated web page is being developed and details of this will be shared once it is ready. In the meantime the Norfolk County Council website is a useful and trusted resource: <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/care-support-and-health/health-and-wellbeing/adults-health/coronavirus>

Volunteering

- We know that there are many people keen to help out at this time which is very much welcomed. If you are able to volunteer some of your time to assist others in your community, we really need your help. If you are a business and can help with services, vehicles or other resources, we would love to hear from you, as together we really can make a difference. Individuals who want to volunteer should visit www.voluntarynorfolk.org.uk and businesses should email covidbusinessresponse@voluntarynorfolk.org.uk