

BERA E-NEWSLETTER 24th March 2020 – www.bera.co.uk (printable version of Newsletter is available soon on website if needed)

Dear Member

Please see below today's update.

Keep well,

Regards

Ron

Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

24 March 2020

Purpose

This briefing is to update all daily on the ongoing development and management of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the current situation in the UK, and our local plans and responses.

Latest on Coronavirus

The World Health Organisation (WHO) is warning of the need for governments to act fast to slow the spread of the virus. WHO reports that it took **67 days** from the first reported case to reach the first 100,000 cases of Covid-19, but it took only **11 days** for the second 100,000 cases, and **just four days** for the third 100,000 cases.

- Risk Level – remains at **HIGH**
- UK Tests (as of 18:00, 24th March): **a total of 8,077 (1,430 today) were confirmed positive**. There has been a total of **422 (87 today) COVID-19 related deaths** in the UK.
- In Southend-on-Sea there are 8 positive cases to-date, but we anticipate that this will increase in line with other parts of the UK.

Government action

The Government has confirmed the £500 million Hardship Fund to provide council tax relief for vulnerable people and households to help those affected most by coronavirus.

The guidance to employers and businesses has been updated to include the following:

- employees will need your support to adhere to the recommendation to stay at home to reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) to others;
- if evidence is required by an employer, those with symptoms of coronavirus can get an isolation note from [NHS 111 online](#), and those who live with someone that has symptoms can get a note from the [NHS website](#)

Planning preparedness and response

- We are receiving regular updates from PH England and the Chief Medical Officer. We understand that there has been an increase in testing but are awaiting further information.
- The Essex Resilience Forum (ERF) has now revised the flu pandemic plan and response which will form our local strategy and response. ERF is now co-ordinating the national request to protect people who face the highest risk of being hospitalised by the virus to shield themselves and stay at home.
- We are joining forces with Essex and with the support of members of the Armed Forces, we will have the local support hub ready by this Friday. We are in the process of launching a single point of contact for vulnerable people who have pre-existing medical conditions and who will require food, medicines, etc to be delivered to their homes.
- The majority of staff are now working from home, with strict infection control procedures in place in Council offices still in operation.
- Working with the NHS to further develop our local modelling for acute hospital services and workforce planning. We will also be looking at how we support safe hospital discharge planning.

Other local actions:

- The dedicated public facing link at www.southend.gov.uk/coronavirus is being regularly updated.
- The supply and distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) is being reviewed and further representation has been made to regional leaders.
- Health Visiting service for new births - Due to the lack of PPE, we are exploring the possibility of offering dedicated clinics in some specified settings, with residents attending on invitation and waiting at a safe distance.

Decisions agreed to be actioned:

- From this morning, and following a regular reduction in staffing numbers, we have asked **all** staff to work from home unless they are considered business critical. The Civic Centre will therefore close to the public with immediate effect, apart from registration services which is still required. Silver are working on clear signage and messaging for the public and systems in place to ensure critical issues (such as presenting as homeless) can still operate.
- Parks remain open but we are asking parks staff to go home whilst we undertake a review of how they could operate in the context of the national measures announced last night and the fact that at the current time people can still go out to exercise.
- We will be writing to local businesses reinforcing the message delivered by the Prime Minister last night.
- Waste and recycling collections are currently operating as normal. However Stock Road and Two Tree Island recycling centres are closing with immediate effect. This will be kept under review.
- Silver are looking at which car parks can be closed (ensuring those in strategic positions i.e. near supermarkets, remain open)

Actions already taken (in addition to those you will be aware of):

- A Southend Coronavirus action group has been set up here: www.facebook.com/SouthendCoronavirusAction/ - please share with local people and please sign up if you wish to volunteer in any way.
- Community Safety staff visited a number of premises over the weekend to ask them to observe social distancing and pack away tables and chairs. The Council issued a statement asking people to stay away from the sea front and not gather in crowds. We have now received Government guidance on enforcement of the new measures and are discussing with police colleagues how this will work in practice.
- We have found temporary accommodation for 45 rough sleepers and have staff working hard to identify anyone else who might need support. We are working with the voluntary and community sector to ensure that any individuals who need to self-isolate are able to get food.
- One hour parking restrictions in residential areas have been lifted – a media release was issued this morning.

- There is no need for residents and councillors to report potholes at this time – we have two teams going out and fixing them as they go.

- To reflect new measures parking enforcement has been majorly scaled back. It will only be used to maintain safety and we will only be enforcing double yellows (safety), loading bays (keeping clear for vital deliveries), obstruction (safety), and school zig zags (safety). We are suspending enforcement of pay and display bays, car parks and resident parking schemes. We have also lifted one hour yellow restrictions in residential areas. Staff are working on their own where they can, and where not, we have instructed that social distancing be observed. The situation is being constantly reviewed and may change further in coming days.

- A dedicated phone number and email address is being set up for councillor queries. Please ensure this is only used for urgent issues. The number and email will be shared asap.

- We are working to provide safety guidance for staff who require to travel in Council vehicles