

BERA E-NEWSLETTER 25th 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

25 March 2020

Purpose

This briefing is to update all our Councillors 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.

- Risk Level – remains at **HIGH**
- UK Tests [not including England](#) (as of 18:00, 25th March): **a total of 8,264 (187 today) were confirmed positive**. There has been a total of **437 (15 today) COVID-19 related deaths** in the UK - [not including England](#).
- 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. We have been advised that there are now 1 confirmed case of mortality directly associated with COVID-19.

Government action

The GOV.UK Coronavirus Information Service on WhatsApp was launched and will allow the British public to get answers to the most common questions, such as signs and symptoms, travel advice and more, about coronavirus direct from government.

This will help combat the spread of coronavirus misinformation in the UK, as well as helping ensure people stay home, protect the NHS and save lives - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-coronavirus-information-service-on-whatsapp>

Although Hotels, hostels and B&Bs are not forbidden from running normal business, the Government has provided clear guidance on exceptionality, such as providing accommodation to key workers and vulnerable people, through arrangements with local authorities and other public bodies.

The Prime Minister today reiterated the need to slow down the spread of the virus with a clear message – ***“Stay at home. Protect the NHS. Save lives”***

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
- Every Mind Matters has now released expert advice and top tips on how to look after your mental wellbeing if you need to stay at home during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. It also includes guidance if you're feeling worried or anxious about the outbreak. Please visit: www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/
- 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 to launch 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. This should be ready to go live by close of play tomorrow.
- The majority of staff are now working from home, with strict infection control procedures in place in Council offices still in operation.
- Given the risk of the serious infections that vaccines protect against, PHE are recommending that the routine primary immunisation and teenagers' immunisation schedules should not be delayed.

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. We

understand that additional PPE will be distributed to the Greater Essex area by Thursday.

- Health Visiting team have been contacting families remotely to carry out the Healthy Child Programme infant development reviews. Clients are being advised that they will be contacted for an appointment in a clinic for a height and weight once it is safe to do so and we will update their personal child health record.

Issues:

- Work is being undertaken to understand the financial implications of both responding to the Coronavirus outbreak and reductions in service income in a number of areas.

Decisions agreed/actions to be taken:

- Communications around support for the voluntary community are to be drafted.
- Parking Team are working with APCOA to understand how their staff could be redeployed, should enforcement be scaled back further.
- HR is coordinating redeployment – lists of key areas where staff are needed and areas where staff can be redeployed is being quickly identified. This is working well, with large numbers of volunteers already putting themselves forward to be flexible in supporting where they can. Additional CCTV operators have been drafted in. Nurses are being relieved on Stop Smoking Services by SBC staff to enable them to cover priority work. Some Wellbeing Service staff are being redeployed to support the community hub. Further areas for redeployment are being considered.

Actions taken:

- The Civic Centre has been closed to the public (apart from Registration Services). There is now a very limited number of staff working in the building, and those not deemed critical are being asked to work from home. Registration Services are open by appointment only to register deaths.
- Parking enforcement has been scaled back to focus on parking causing a danger. [Read more on our website.](#)
- Recycling centres have been closed. [Read more on our website](#)
- Parks are open, but playgrounds and park toilets are closed.
- Outdoor gyms have been written to and told they need to close.

- All events on Council land have been cancelled.
- Teams are working to collect data and understand where 'Category C' vulnerable people live and the networks available to them. This is part of the wider community support and community hubs work.
- Sections within the Coronavirus pages on the Council's website have been created for financial support available to local people and local businesses as

a result of the various Government funding measures announced. Please use these links to signpost if you get enquiries:

[Resident financial support pages](#)

[Business financial support pages](#)

Key messages sent to staff

- A message from the Chief Executive was sent to staff this morning, thanking them for their efforts, encouraging continued innovation and support as we move forwards and reiterating that staff should work from home wherever possible.

Other

- A service update has been issued summarising key closures and continuation of services. [Please see our website for more](#)
- Please continue to visit and promote www.southend.gov.uk/coronavirus to local people.
- Please encourage local people to sign up for [regular e-newsletters on Coronavirus:](#)
- Please follow our social media accounts and share our Coronavirus related content.

STAY AT HOME and PROTECT OUR COMMUNITIES