

## **Coronavirus (Covid-19) Leader Statement: Thank you to our residents**

Following the government's change to their Coronavirus guidance this week, Leader of the Council, Cllr Caroline Reeves made the following statement:

We are now nearly two months into staying home to stay safe in order to protect our brilliant NHS workers and save lives and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank our residents who continue to diligently follow the government guidance. Even though the rules are being slightly relaxed we must stay alert, continue to stay at home as much as possible and take time to look after ourselves. Please work from home if you can, limit your contact with other people and if you go outside please maintain social distancing by keeping two metres apart. It is also still vital to keep washing your hands to minimise the spread of the virus and do not leave your home if you or anyone in your household has symptoms.

Some of our services have now changed in light of the new guidance. To support those who can't work from home and must travel to work, our town centre parking is open and remains free for now. For those of us who have been Spring cleaning and gardening during lockdown you can now take black bag and garden waste to one of Surrey County Council's Community Recycling Centres. Please ensure you visit the website before you travel as measures are in place. Our bulky waste service is still operating for those bigger items. Please keep up to date with all service changes on our website.

One of the biggest changes to the guidance is that we can spend more time outdoors while making sure we stay two metres away from others. This is because scientific evidence shows the risk of infection outside is significantly lower than inside. Fresh air and exercise are so important for our physical and mental wellbeing, more so now than ever. We have now re-opened our countryside car parks and look forward to welcoming you back. Please enjoy visiting them whilst making sure you keep your distance from others, take your rubbish home and follow the Countryside Code.

Our Tourist Information Centre: Visit Guildford have some great walking maps for you to follow or you can download the app and find some new routes. Our wonderful wildflowers are currently blossoming so please keep to paths and don't damage them. Skylarks are currently nesting on the ground too, so be mindful and careful where you tread.

You can also return to ball sports and our courts are now open. Tennis bookings will start on Monday. In line with the guidance, our playgrounds, mini-golf, trim trails, skate parks and paddling pool remain closed. If you prefer to exercise indoors, our Leisure Team recommend Active Surrey's #StayInWorkOut for fun free daily video home workout sessions. Surrey's Virtual Wellbeing hub offers support from the comfort of your home with a variety of different sessions from Coffee Mornings to Creative Writing.

For those of us who continue to work at home in this 'new normal' please do keep thinking of your neighbours and remember we are more sensitive to noise and odours being safe at home. Please carry on being considerate to each other when thinking about DIY or noisy activities around the house and do check washing on lines before having BBQ's. We recommend you do not have bonfires.

We continue to offer new food and support services for our borough's vulnerable groups through our community helpline, where we have made over 11,000 phone calls over the past seven weeks offering help with food, prescriptions and someone to talk to. We've delivered nearly 1,100 meals-on-wheels and over 1,300 food parcels. We are working with so many fantastic community groups across the borough – thank you to you all. We are currently also welcoming donations of children's clothes and toys to The Hive at our Park Barn Centre and we can distribute to those who need them.

If you or someone you know needs this help, please register on behalf of them here. If you have recently left hospital to come home and need help to manage your household, we can help with urgent repairs and advice from landlords on potential issues. Please call our Safe and Settled team on 01483 444476.

It's also been an extremely uncertain and difficult period for local businesses. We have provided business support through business grants where we have currently paid over £17.5 million to 1,300 local companies. We still have £4.5 million of unallocated government funding for our businesses and we are doing everything we can to contact them. If you think you may be eligible please get in touch. Many of the fantastic restaurants in Guildford have been able to adapt and are now offering takeaway food. Our town centre Business Improvement District, Experience Guildford have a full list of restaurants offering this service. The North Street market still operates at weekends, where you can buy local fresh produce. The market follows government guidance with social distancing and other measures.

The community spirit you have shown has been incredible and the recent Guildford Live free variety show that we supported was to thank all of our NHS staff, key workers and carers in our borough. Taking time to relax, keep smiling and enjoy ourselves is so important. Thanks to Nick Wyschna and the Guildford Fringe Theatre Company for this event which is being repeated with some new faces on Thursday 28 May at 6.30pm – please do join us again and perhaps virtually bring a friend. Donations from the event will go to Guildford Philanthropy, which the Council set up in 2014 to support our vulnerable groups. They have already raised £100,000 since the start of the outbreak and our thanks goes to them.

Please remember we are here to help. You, our residents and our businesses, will always remain our top priority and we will do all we can to continue to support you. We will get through this together.