

17.03.20 BRIEFING FOR PARISHES AND TOWNS – CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

We thought it would be helpful to provide you with a summary of the latest guidance and advice with regard to Coronavirus (Covid-19). There is a lot of information being released with guidance changing daily, and we hope this is a helpful brief on the latest position:

Here are the key points from recent Government briefings:

- Everyone should avoid gatherings with friends and family, as well as large gatherings and crowded places, such as pubs, clubs and theatres
- People should avoid non-essential travel and work from home if they can
- All "unnecessary" visits to friends and relatives in care homes should cease
- People should only use the NHS "where we really need to" - and can reduce the burden on workers by getting advice on the NHS website where possible
- By next weekend, those with the most serious health conditions must be "largely shielded from social contact for around 12 weeks"
- If one person in any household has a persistent cough or fever, everyone living there must stay at home for 14 days
- Those people should, if possible, avoid leaving the house "even to buy food or essentials" - but they may leave the house "for exercise and, in that case, at a safe distance from others"
- Schools will not be closed for the moment
- Chancellor Rishi Sunak has unveiled government-backed loans worth £330bn to prop up the UK economy
- All non-urgent operations in England will be postponed from 15 April to free up 30,000 beds to help tackle coronavirus

We have determined that, following this guidance, public meetings should also be postponed at this time for the protection of public safety. You can read more about actions we have taken later in this brief.

For information about the virus and how you can look after your health, visit www.nhs.uk

For the latest information about Coronavirus in the UK, click [here](#)

For the latest information for employers and businesses, click [here](#)



South Somerset District Council

What is the latest advice?

Stay at home if you have either:

- a high temperature – you feel hot to touch on your chest or back
- a new, continuous cough – this means you've started coughing repeatedly

Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. You do not need to contact 111 to tell them you're staying at home. Testing for coronavirus is not needed if you're staying at home.

If you have symptoms, stay at home for 7 days

If you live with other people, they should stay at home for 14 days from the day the first person got symptoms. If you live with someone who is 70 or over, has a long-term condition, is pregnant or has a weakened immune system, try to find somewhere else for them to stay for 14 days.

Read NHS [advice about staying at home](#).

This link will take you to the 111 Coronavirus service - [Use the 111 coronavirus service](#)

What action has South Somerset District Council undertaken?

While we await further guidance and clarification, in the interest of public safety we have:

- Closed the Octagon Theatre, Westlands, alongside Yeovil Recreation Centre (and Galley Café)
- Closed our buildings to the public apart from the Connect hub at Petters Way, Yeovil
- Postponed yesterday's Regulation Committee meeting and today's Area West meeting
- The meeting of Full Council will go ahead on Thursday with a revised agenda – we anticipate this will be our final meeting until further notice and efforts will be made to broadcast the meeting so that members of the public can still see proceedings
- Ninesprings Café will be open normal hours but as a takeaway only with waiting lines marked out on the ground and we ask customers to queue using these guidelines.
- All volunteering activity is suspended from today for Countryside and Heritage. Letters will be issued today by the teams. The same goes for work experience.
- Staff at Ham Hill, Chard Reservoir and Ninesprings are working to keep sites safe and accessible as access to greenspaces is going to be of paramount importance to people's health at this time.

It is important to stress to communities that the delivery of council services continues and our business continuity plans are already being implemented. Please urge residents, where possible, to use our website www.southsomerset.gov.uk

We will be guided by advice from the Government with regard to the continuation of by-elections. If any guidance is issued on this matter, we will circulate this immediately.

We have set up a page for the public on our website to signpost people to relevant information, provide reassurance, and provide key messages to our residents - <https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/your-council/coronavirus-covid-19-information-and-guidance/>

You may also find this link useful to see further official guidance from the Government - <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

FURTHER GUIDANCE (SCRIPTS):

What to say if you are approached by a member of the community concerned about Covid-19 (Coronavirus)?

Please help support the national message and promote the following through your own communities and contacts.

If they are concerned about the risks to their health, advise that they should:

- Wash your hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water
- Avoid touching their face (particularly the nose, mouth and eyes)
- Wipe down surfaces and objects regularly
- Use a tissue when coughing and sneezing, then bin it and wash their hands. If they don't have a tissue, use the crook of your arm rather than your hand. 'Catch it, Bin It, Kill It.'

If they are concerned about symptoms or want more information, visit the NHS site at www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/. If they are unable to access the internet, then 111 is still the point of call.

What to say if you are approached by a member of the community concerned about how South Somerset District will function if affected by Covid-19 (Coronavirus)?

If you receive a call from a member of your community who is worried about our services, please provide reassurance that the Council is still open and extensive planning is in place to ensure the Council is able to continue to provide essential services in the event of disruption caused by Covid-19 (Coronavirus). We will keep residents updated on our website, social media, locality teams and through information on our phonelines.

How is the COVID-19 coronavirus spread?

Because it's a new illness, we do not know exactly how coronavirus spreads from person to person. Similar viruses are spread in cough droplets. It's very unlikely it can be spread through things like packages or food.

How can you avoid catching or spreading coronavirus?

Do

- wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- always wash your hands when you get home or into work
- use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in the bin straight away and wash your hands afterwards
- try to avoid close contact with people who are unwell

Don't

- do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean

Useful links for public facing information

NHS information – the first port of call for the public:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Guidance for households

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

UK Government response:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

Guidance on social distancing:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people>

Travel advice for those travelling and living overseas:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>

Useful links on South Somerset District Council's website:

<https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/news/2020/3/covid-19-guidance-for-employers-businesses/>

<https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/news/2020/3/update-coronavirus-covid-19-actions-taken-by-south-somerset-district-council/>