

West Berkshire Council Update – Services During Covid-19

As we come to the end of a difficult week, both in West Berkshire and across the country, we thought it would be useful to write to you to give you a rundown of the communications activity we have undertaken this week. We hope that this will be useful to you and your communities as we respond to the impact of Covid-19.

Our Community Support Hub is up and running. This is being organised by our excellent Building Communities Together team in partnership with Volunteer Centre West Berkshire and Greenham Trust. The Hub will offer guidance and help coordinate organisations representing their communities. If someone you know needs help or you would like to volunteer, please contact us on: 01635 503579 or:

westberksbct@westberks.gov.uk

Our designated page for residents provides vital updates on our services, of which more below, as well as support that is available, such as assistance for those struggling to pay their council tax. This can be found here:

www.westberks.gov.uk/coronavirus-residents

We are also working hard to support our businesses. We announced this week that on top of the support outlined here by national government:

<https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/coronavirus-business>.

We will also be offering all businesses in West Berkshire a business rates deferral for April 2020. This puts vital cash flow into the pockets of businesses when they need it most, which is key to the economic success of the district. For more, go to:

www.westberks.gov.uk/coronavirus-business

The Council Offices are now closed to public in accordance with Government advice. We will review this as that advice is updated. However, officers are still working where possible, albeit from home in many cases, and are available to assist residents and communities in need of help. Please get in touch if you need us.

Our Household Waste Recycling Centres, Libraries, Leisure Centres and Family Hubs are now closed and bulky waste collections have been suspended in line with national social distancing guidance. We would encourage anyone who comes across workers from our contractor, Veolia, to respect the important job they are doing.

Car parking charges have been suspended in all of our surface car parks. This is to minimise the burden on key workers at this difficult time and will also assist everyone to comply with social distancing guidance.

There have been changes to some bus routes across the district. Local bus services 5, 5a, 5c, 41, 44, 47 and H1 operated by West Berkshire Council are suspended until further notice. As of next Monday, the JetBlack1 will also be reduced to an hourly service, and the 1a/1c will be withdrawn. Keyworkers who require assistance with essential travel can contact us for help on 01635 551111.

The team has been busy producing an advice leaflet that will be going out to every household in the district. This outlines the support available from West Berkshire Council. In line with national guidance, we are encouraging residents to 'Stay at Home'.

This is vital as we seek to mitigate the impact of coronavirus on our community and we are grateful for the cooperation of people across West Berkshire in this. We appreciate that this is a big ask, particularly in terms of mental health and for those who live alone, so the Public Health Team has put together some tips and advice for coping with self-isolation which will be updated as the situation progresses.

These can be found here: <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/publichealth>

We hope you, your families and your communities are staying safe throughout this time. I would emphasise again that West Berkshire Council is here to help and if you are struggling, we will do all we can.

Yours sincerely,

Lynne Doherty

Leader of the Council

Nick Carter

Chief Executive