

Coronavirus: latest update

24 March 2020

Time: 17.00

This briefing is to keep you updated on the evolving situation around coronavirus (COVID-19) and the actions being taken in the district. This information can be shared widely.

Who does it affect?

- Residents and businesses within the district
- Chichester District Council staff
- Chichester District Residents
- Chichester District Councillors
- Parish Councils

In this briefing

- Latest update
- Our response
- Service update
- Free parking
- How to contact us

Latest update

The Prime Minister announced last night (23 March) that the country is now locked down. All non-essential shops are now to close, with only food stores, hardware shops, chemists, petrol stations and newsagents allowed to open.

- People are allowed out once a day to exercise – such as a run, walk or bike ride – but they must do this by themselves or with people from their household.
- They must only shop for essential items and do this as infrequently as possible
- They can leave for any medical need – including going out for medication and medical appointments
- Workers who are unable to work from home are allowed to travel – but the Government is expecting most people to stay at home.
- Gatherings of more than two people in public are banned, unless they are members of your own household.
- Social events, weddings and baptisms cannot go ahead – but funerals can.

Our response – Chichester District Council

We are working around the clock with our public sector partners to support our residents and businesses. Our focus will be on the most vulnerable – those who

can't go out to do their shopping and who don't have family and friends who can help; those who can't afford to pay their bills; and those who do not have a roof over their heads. This is in addition to running vital services, such as collecting household waste and supporting local businesses.

What you can be sure of is that, along with our public sector partners, we are here to help and support you at this really difficult time.

Thank you to all of those who are helping to tackle this massive challenge.

Service changes

Information on the status of our services can be found at www.chichester.gov.uk/coronavirus

Update on council staffing

Most staff are now working from home, and those who are out working in our community have been given clear guidance and support.

A wide range of information and guides has and will continued to be shared with council staff about working from home and maintaining business continuity in these challenging times.

Council Tax help

If anyone is concerned about being able to pay council tax bills due to the impact of the coronavirus, please let us know as soon as possible. The best way is to visit www.chichester.gov.uk/counciltax, or contact by email revenues@chichester.gov.uk If you do not have online access, please call us on 01243 785166. Please note that due to high call volumes we recommend using our online services in the first instance wherever possible.

Support for businesses

The government has announced a package of support for businesses and residents to help them through these difficult times. Our teams have been busy identifying those that are eligible for business rate support and we are in the process of writing to them.

Supporting the vulnerable

We've also been working in partnership with West Sussex County Council, which is setting up a volunteer hub, that will be up and running this week. There will be a dedicated phone line, which will be announced as soon as possible. Alternatively, people can email volunteering@westsussex.gov.uk if they want to offer help; or, communities@westsussex.gov.uk if they want to find out or let us know what

community activity is in place. What's critical at times like this is that we are working together to support our most vulnerable. Please support family members and neighbours by making sure that they have the food and medication they need. This means that we can focus our efforts on supporting those who are alone and don't have anyone. By working together we can make sure that the vulnerable in our communities are safe and supported. What's vital is that we all join together to support one another. Please phone friends and neighbours who live alone and give them access to that vital lifeline that they need. Support family members with food parcels and messages of support. Please encourage older family members who can't get out not to panic.

Chichester Foodbank

We are also working closely with the Chichester Food Bank. They are currently offering an appointment service to those who need their help. This is so that they can make sure that social distancing measures are in place. They can be contacted at info@chichesterdistrict.foodbank.org.uk or on 01243 773687.

Housing, homelessness and rough sleepers

We want to assure you that we are also doing everything we can to help rough sleepers during the current crisis. We are especially conscious that rough sleepers face particular health risks and so we have identified a variety of short term accommodation options for all of the known rough sleepers in Chichester. A very small number of people may refuse this, and in these cases we will provide advice and guidance around the need for self-isolation and signpost to the support that is available. We will continue to support rough sleepers once they are in accommodation by ensuring that they have a phone and are in regular contact with a key worker. Support will also be available through Stonepillow day centres in Chichester and Bognor, which are offering access to food and other services. It is worth noting that in order to meet social distancing guidance, the centres are limited to a certain number of people at any one time. We are supporting this work by providing staff to assist Stonepillow at the Chichester Hub.

Please remember that our teams are also here to support residents if they are at risk of being made homeless, or they are unable to pay their rent.

Waste and recycling collections

We are trying as hard as we can to keep waste and recycling collections running as normal but due to staff shortages, we need to prioritise domestic waste (black bins) and waste that will decompose (garden waste). We will endeavour to collect your recycling on your normal collection day but this is likely to become increasingly difficult.

Please put all of your bins out for collection on your normal day, and place them at the roadside for ease of collection. In all cases, please leave your bin out for collection all day as our crews may be arriving later than usual. If we cannot collect your recycling, please keep hold of this while alternative arrangements are considered. Thank you very much for your co-operation and help with this.

Due to the scale of this unprecedented problem we are unable receive reports of missed bins either online or by phone. If your bin has been missed, please leave it out for collection on your next normal collection day and keep an eye out for updates on this page, and on our website at www.chichester.gov.uk/coronavirus

Free parking for NHS staff

We have also been in touch with our local NHS colleagues to say that their staff can use one of our Chichester car parks for free. We are in awe of them and we hope this helps them in a small way.

Free parking to support essential services for the next three weeks

We will be suspending parking charges for everyone in all of our car parks across the district for three weeks. This is in order to support essential services. This will also mean that our Civil Enforcement Officers will be able to support our staff at the depot. This will be kept under review.

Contacting us and accessing information

As a council, we have dedicated web pages at www.chichester.gov.uk/coronavirus to support residents and businesses with information on our critical services – from council tax, to business support, to volunteering, to homelessness. These pages also provide you with updates on the status of our services, including waste and recycling collections. This information is being updated daily. We are also providing regular updates on our social media pages www.twitter.com/ChichesterDC and www.facebook.com/ChichesterDistrictCouncil

We realise not everyone has access to a computer. If you do not have online access and are struggling to cope with bills; become homeless, or are worried about your business, please call us on 01243 785166.

We ask just one thing of you. Please bear with us. Although it might take some time to get through to us on the phone, or it might take a little longer to pick up your rubbish - we will help you.

Website: www.chichester.gov.uk

Twitter: www.twitter.com/ChichesterDC

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ChichesterDistrictCouncil