

FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

PRESS STATEMENT

March 18, 2020

Council committed to operating essential services amid coronavirus concerns

Fenland District Council is assuring residents of its commitment to keeping essential services running, while helping to prevent the spread of Coronavirus in local communities.

The authority is continuing to take a number of steps in line with Government and Public Health England guidance to protect local residents and staff, and support people through this difficult time.

Robust business continuity plans are in place to ensure key services continue to function, with flexible working arrangements allowing a number of officers to work from home.

There are currently 16 out of 303 members of staff self-isolating in line with Government advice (as at 4pm on Wednesday, March 18), with many of those working from home. For some staff home working isn't an option – bin collection crews for example. We are likely to need to make short notice changes to some services in the coming days, weeks and months and we would ask residents to please bear with us while we do our very best.

Councillor Steve Tierney, Fenland District Council's Cabinet member responsible for Emergency Planning, said: "As a Council, we are committed to keeping essential services operating for customers and working with the community to slow the spread of Coronavirus.

"We're in unprecedented times but the Council is still open for business and working actively with our partners, agencies and community groups to support people through it.

"Residents can also get daily updates regarding Coronavirus via the Council's dedicated webpage at www.fenland.gov.uk/coronavirus and through the Council's Facebook and Twitter accounts (@FenlandCouncil). This includes general updates as well as advice and support available to help those undertaking social distancing or self-isolation."

CUSTOMER SERVICES: In order to follow Government guidance on minimising social interaction during the outbreak, the Council is encouraging customers to avoid face-to-face contact wherever possible.

Therefore, customers are being encouraged to use alternative methods to request council services including via the Council's website at www.fenland.gov.uk, the Contact Centre on 01354 654321 or via email at: info@fenland.gov.uk

BUSINESS SUPPORT: The Government has set out measures to support businesses including business grants, Business Rates Relief and a Hardship Fund. The Council will be issuing new business rates bills based on the changes and is awaiting further guidance on the Hardship Fund.

Councillor Chris Boden, Leader of Fenland District Council, said: "We are very mindful of the impact COVID-19 will have on local businesses and so welcome the announcements from

Government to support them. We will be working hard with Government to ensure the funding is distributed to those who need support as quickly as possible.”

EVENTS/ACTIVITIES: In line with Government advice the Council has cancelled its Pride in Fenland Awards ceremony and St George’s Fayre. Its Active Fenland physical activity sessions have also been temporarily suspended until further notice. Over the coming weeks and months, the Council will continue to follow the latest Government advice and monitor the situation with respect to other Council-run events planned across the district.

PERSONAL WASTE: Guidance has been produced to help ensure the Coronavirus is not spread via the disposal of personal waste in the general household collections. Anyone self-isolating due to suspected or confirmed Coronavirus symptoms should:

- Place all personal waste, such as used tissues and disposable cleaning cloths, securely in a plastic bag or bin liner.
- This plastic bag should then be placed in another plastic bag and securely tied.
- These bags must be stored separately to other waste for at least 72 hours before being placed in the general rubbish collection.

After 72 hours outside the body the virus is no longer viable and the double bagged waste can be put in the general rubbish collection as normal. Only waste that is contaminated, such as tissues that have been coughed in and disposable cleaning cloths need to be treated in this way. Regular household recycling and waste should be treated as normal.

ENDS

For more information contact Fenland District Council press office on 01354 622226