

Report by County Councillor Dr Nigel Moor April 8th 2020

Gloucestershire County Council is working remotely during the current health crisis and wherever possible, particularly in protecting our vulnerable children and elderly, council staff are maintaining our services. Video conferencing between council members and officers is helping to provide continuity. I thought it helpful if I provide some notes on various aspects of our service.

Community Health Hub

If you need help or someone you know does please visit the Community Health Hub. People can now register to the county's community help hub by calling 01432 583519 Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 5pm, as well as online at www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/helphub

The hub is intended to supplement those community initiatives already taking place and provide a means by which these can be co-ordinated across the county. Already there has been a huge response to help.



School Enquiries

A dedicated phone line and email address has been set up to help parents with all school related enquiries including questions relating to Free School Meals. Tel 01452 426015 Email : COVIDSchoolenquiries@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Concessionary Bus Passes

Many shops are now allowing elderly people dedicated access before 9.30 am. In order to help the concessionary bus pass is now accepted all day including before the normal 9.30 am cut-off time.

Household Recycling Centres and Waste Collections

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on the evening of Monday 23rd March regarding self-isolation, we decided to close the household recycling centres to protect both visiting residents and our staff. Other councils in the south west have similarly taken this decision. We continue to prioritise our waste transfer and treatment operations in order to support the waste collection services provided by the district councils. Javelin Park our waste to energy plant continues to function as normal.

Libraries

Libraries will soon have a new digital library management system. Members will be sent a web link on 2nd April which can be used to view the online catalogue and download the e-books or magazines. It will also be available via the GCC libraries website. During this period of self-isolation, this provides a great opportunity to catch up on those books you meant to read.

Highways

The Highways safety policy has been amended to only react to reported safety defects. We will continue to inspect these and make them safe. It is our priority to keep the network safe so all the support and emergency services can operate safely.

Where it is safe for our workforce to operate in the open air we will continue to deliver planned works. These will be risk assessed on a job by job basis. This will include cyclical maintenance works, bridge, street lighting and other inspections. We are working with our supply partners to ensure they work safely and in a controlled manner. It is likely that the supply of some materials and equipment may get difficult. We will priorities the work to safety critical first.

The highways customer contact centre will triage emergency works and safety defects. The GCC website is updated to advise customers to only contact GCC to report network emergencies or essential maintenance works.

This is a good moment to thank the Highways staff and our partners for the work they are doing in keeping the highway network safe for our other services to use with confidence.

Community transport operators given £100k funding boost

Six community transport operators have been given a one-off payment of £100,000 by Gloucestershire County Council to ensure vulnerable residents continue to access services.

Some operators had raised concerns that they may not be able to continue trading because of funding pressures.

The county council has stepped in to help these organisations so they can continue to provide rural and isolated residents with transport access to essential services this month and in the year ahead.

The payment is being shared as follows:

- Community Connexions - £35,000
- Cotswold Friends - £24,000
- Lydney Dial A Ride (DAR) - £18,000
- Newent DAR - £18,000
- Villager - £2,500
- Hedgehog - £2,500

The payments are in addition to the £500,000 a year the county council provides in grants to support community transport in the county.

Cllr Nigel Moor, cabinet member for environment and planning, said: “We understand how important community transport is for the more vulnerable and isolated members of our community so we are pleased to be able to help these operators.

“They are facing greater funding pressures than ever before following the coronavirus outbreak so these payments will enable them to continue providing these vital services for our residents.”

Residents asked not to generate extra waste

Gloucestershire County Council is asking residents not to generate extra waste during their time at home due to Corona virus.

To help protect residents and staff, Gloucestershire County Council has closed all household recycling centres (HRCs) until further notice, and district councils cannot collect extra waste at the kerbside.

This means residents thinking of undertaking a DIY project or having a clear out shouldn't do so unless they are able to keep hold of the extra waste to dispose of when the HRCs reopen.

Other things everyone can do to help include:

- Don't overfill your bin or sacks

- Don't put out extra waste
- Recycle as much as possible
- Use your food waste collection service
- Consider home composting

Another way to help reduce the pressure on collection crews is to minimize food waste. Half of the food we throw away could have been eaten and keeping it out of the bin in the first place is a good way to save money and help look after the planet.

For more ideas on how to minimize your food waste, visit:

<https://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/what-to-do>

For more information and updates on changes to collections in your area, check the webpage for your district:

<https://www.recycleforgloucestershire.com/recycling-at-home/>