

## **Coronavirus (COVID-19): Statement From Caroline Reeves, Leader of Guildford Borough Council**

As we move into the 'new normal' of staying home, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank our residents who are diligently following the government guidance. We remain at a critical stage in the fight to stop the spread of the Coronavirus and we all need to continue to play our part to help save lives and ease the pressure on our brilliant NHS staff.

I'm so proud to see Guildford playing its part locally with our hubs at the Park Barn Centre (The Hive) and the Shawfield Centre to the north of the borough with an increased meals on wheels and well being checks services. We have already set aside £50,000 extra funds for our local hubs to ensure we can meet the needs of our vulnerable groups. We are also very pleased to open Spectrum Leisure Centre as the county's hub for distributing food to those who are classed as shielded as they have received a letter from the government. The centre is a collaboration between Surrey County Council and partners and will be run by Red Cross volunteers with support from the military.

We are looking at new ways to support those in need in the community and we will make announcement on Friday about how we do this. Guildford's Business Improvement District, Experience Guildford are currently setting up some really useful contact lists of essential businesses and restaurant takeaways and as soon as they are finished we will help share this helpful information.

Our local foodbanks, North Guildford Foodbank and the Guildford Salvation Army drop-in and food crisis centre, on Woodbridge Road, welcome donations and financial assistance. North Guildford Foodbank has branches at St Clare's, New Hope Centre and Bushy Hill Community Centre.

Sadly we anticipate a rise in domestic violence during this period. South West Surrey Domestic Abuse Services remain available for confidential support and advice on 01483 898884. Similarly, any children under 19 should contact Childline on 0800 1111 if they feel unsafe.

Whilst we are advising residents to avoid burning garden waste at this time, with everybody at home for longer periods, composting is a great way to recycle garden and organic waste that will continue to enrich your garden. It might even be a fun and educational activity for young children to enjoy! Surrey County Council and the Surrey Environment Partnership offer compost bins from just £13 and offer some advice to help you get started – visit <https://www.surreyep.org.uk/reduce-reuse-recycle/garden-waste/composting/buy-a-compost-bin/> for details.

Our waste collection service remains fully operational, but we ask you to take extra precautions if you are self-isolating. Please place all personal waste, such as used tissues or disposable cleaning cloths, in a secure bag or bin liner, which itself is then placed in another plastic bag. Store this for 72 hours before you place it in your general rubbish collection. Please also remember to separate your recycling and regular waste as normal.

As part of our move to go paperless as a Council we said farewell to our borough newspaper and will soon launch our new email newsletter. In these difficult times it will be another way to keep up-to-date about what we are doing to help you and of any necessary changes to our essential services. Please sign-up by emailing [about@guildford.gov.uk](mailto:about@guildford.gov.uk) or visiting [www.guildford.gov.uk/subscribe](http://www.guildford.gov.uk/subscribe).

Our residents and businesses remain our top priority, and we are doing all we can to help everybody face the unique challenges of this pandemic. By working together, we will succeed. For details on all changes to our services please see [www.guildford.gov.uk](http://www.guildford.gov.uk).

Please ensure that you continue to follow all government guidance on staying at home for all but the most essential travel, and practice social distancing, by staying two metres apart, when in contact with other people. We must only leave home for one of three reasons: to buy food and medicines; to go to work if you absolutely cannot work from home; and for one period of exercise each day, either alone or with members of your household. It is also essential that you wash your hands as soon as you return home.

Our parks remain open for exercising not socialising – please enjoy them in accord with the guidance. Driving to beauty spots for essential exercise is unnecessary and causes crowding, so please think of others. Our fantastic Play Ranger team have also created four short 'how to' videos for some fun activities to keep children entertained at home, including home-made ten pin bowling and a wall run – visit <https://www.guildford.gov.uk/playrangers> to get involved.

Most importantly, though, please remember: anyone can contract Coronavirus, and you can still spread the virus even if you do not have symptoms.

**Ends**