

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL

Press Release from the Leader of the Council

24 March 2020

Statement from the Leader of Sevenoaks District Council

"The last week has seen unprecedented actions being taken by Government, this culminated in the Prime Minister's address to the nation and the message is clear. We must act now to keep our country safe, to suppress the Coronavirus outbreak and shield the most vulnerable in our society from the virus.

It is without any hesitation that we urge people across our District to follow the advice we are all being given. By staying at home, or working from home, we will help to reduce the spread of Coronavirus. The slower it spreads, the better our incredible NHS staff and public services can cope and the loss of life can be significantly reduced.

Staying at home and self-isolating will be difficult. And some people may worry about how they will get the food and supplies that they need. But, I assure you, if you don't have family, friends or neighbours to help, we will do everything we can to step in and be there for you.

I have been amazed by the public reaction to this crisis across the District, with people showing the very best of humanity, helping and supporting their neighbours and communities.

A small army of volunteers have come forward offering to help. We have asked them to register with us to give you confidence, should you need their help. You will be able to check who they are and they won't ask you for any money. Working with our friends and partners in the voluntary sector and alongside community groups, both established and those set up to help during this emergency, we hope to be able to reach everyone who needs help.

If you or someone you know needs help, let us know. We will do all we can to support you.

There will of course be times when we need to leave our homes. Key workers in pharmacies, supermarkets and our public services will

continue to provide their services across our District. And we need to help and support them too.

We need to shop responsibly. There is enough food for everyone and buying more than you need has to stop. I am sure that we can lead. We can show the rest of the country that our supermarket shelves can be well stocked as we think of others before ourselves.

The Government has made a number of commitments to businesses, many of these are being delivered by the Council. We have now written to every business in the District setting out the help and support that is available. This includes to our smallest business who will be supported by a grant of £10k. We are working relentlessly to get the business rate discounts and grants promised to the businesses that need them.

Events are moving at a great pace, but our Council staff are dedicated and working hard each day to speak with you and get that money out of the door.

We are aware that some people will be unable to work in the weeks and months ahead and regretfully, some will lose their jobs. We hope the measures put in place by the Government will help you. But we will also do our bit. Our HERO Service can help and advise. We will defer Council Tax payments where we can and we will use our discretionary housing payments to help the most in need to stay in their homes. We will do all we can to make sure you can speak to us if there is any help you need.

We must prepare for what will be difficult weeks and months ahead. We are doing all we can to make sure those vital public services upon which we all rely are remain in place to help and support the communities we serve.

We are determined to do all we can. With the help of town and parish councils, partners, community groups and a small army of volunteers, we will work hard to support the most vulnerable in our community, those that need help if they fall ill, our local key workers and the businesses that make our towns and villages great places to live."

Cllr Peter Fleming
Leader of Sevenoaks District Council