

COVID 19

WORKING TOGETHER TO SUPPORT OUR COMMUNITIES

A message from the Leader of the council



Cllr Lucille Thompson
Leader of Winchester City Council

Lucille Thompson

I know how important the support given by you; our parish and town councils, is to our communities and I would like firstly to thank all of you for everything you do.

Some of you may be coordinating help and volunteering in your town or village community, some self isolating to keep yourselves and your families safe – and some may be recovering from the virus. Whatever your personal circumstance, I hope this update helps you feel connected to what is going on across the district and wish you all a safe return to a new normality when this extraordinary time is over.

The Government has asked us to stay home, except for essential trips, for another three weeks. This has already had a significant impact on how our communities live and interact and we're here to support you as the situation continues. The city council is here providing advice, supporting communities and business and making sure the essential services keep going. We're offering all our residents the practical assistance they need over this period - and we expect to continue this beyond the period of greatest social distancing as people find their feet. Our focus is helping those who need it most, and this includes being there for residents and businesses experiencing unprecedented financial difficulties.

I wanted to create a special update to share the work the council is doing to support all of those who live and work in our district, and ensure you have the best sources of information to answer some frequently asked questions in your own towns and villages. Please do feel free to circulate this information to your local residents.

COVID-19 support

Here's information you can pass on to your residents and use yourself when you need to contact someone.

Hantshelp4vulnerable

Your residents, if in need, can call the central number **0333 370 4000** seven days a week, from 9am-5pm. It's important they use this number as it has direct contact with healthcare, specialised and local responders to make sure that people get the help they need as soon as possible. To date, since the phone lines opened on 1 April 2020, over 3,500 calls have been received.

Local Response Centre

After giving their information to the operator the request may be passed to Winchester City Council's Local Response Centre.

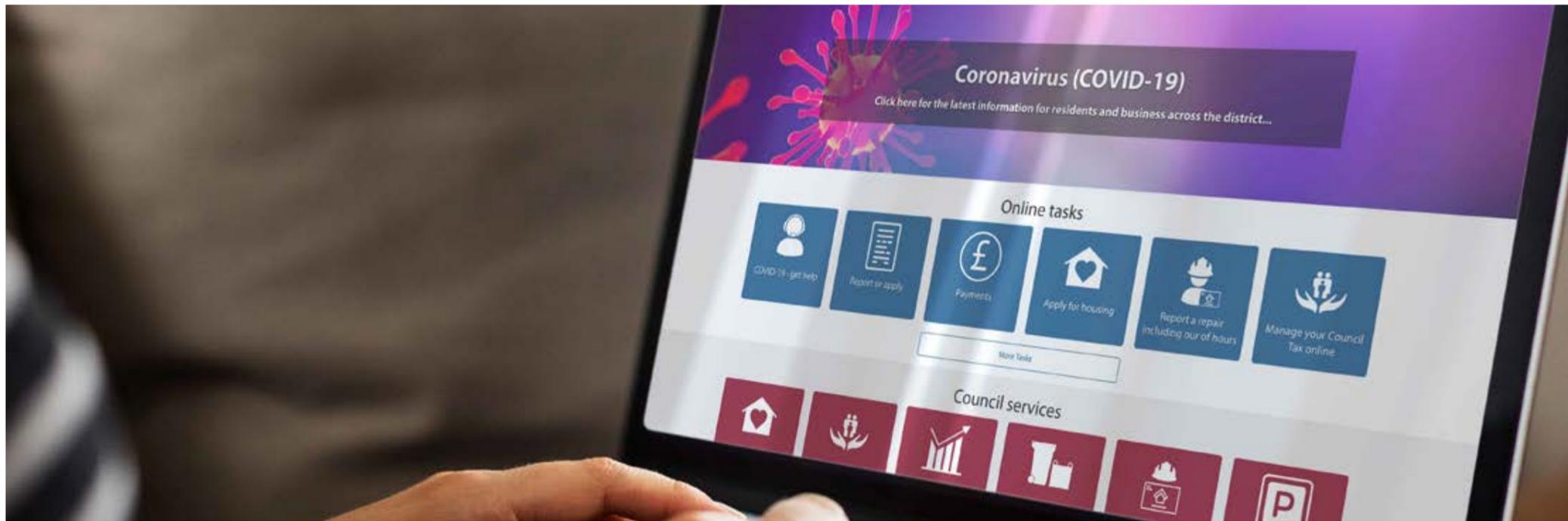
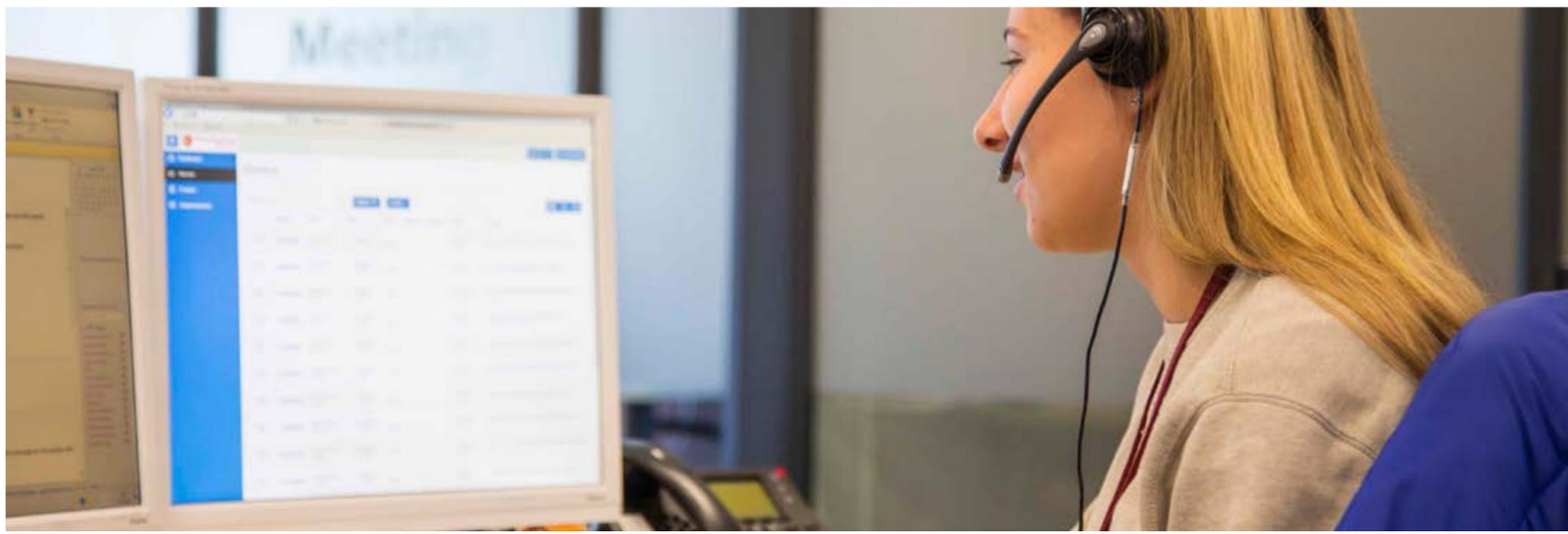
If you or a member of your local council team would like to speak to Winchester Local Resource Centre direct please call **01962 848 060**, between 9am to 5pm seven days a week. Our team are coordinating delivery of shopping, collection of prescriptions offering a friendly voice on the end of a phone for a wide range of referred callers.

Online advice

The council has dedicated website pages for all current COVID-19 information [here](#) and we're setting out overleaf the information that may be most useful to you as local councils as you look to help your own community.

On our [homepage](#) you can find the latest national information in addition to any local changes in council services.







Contacting Winchester City Council

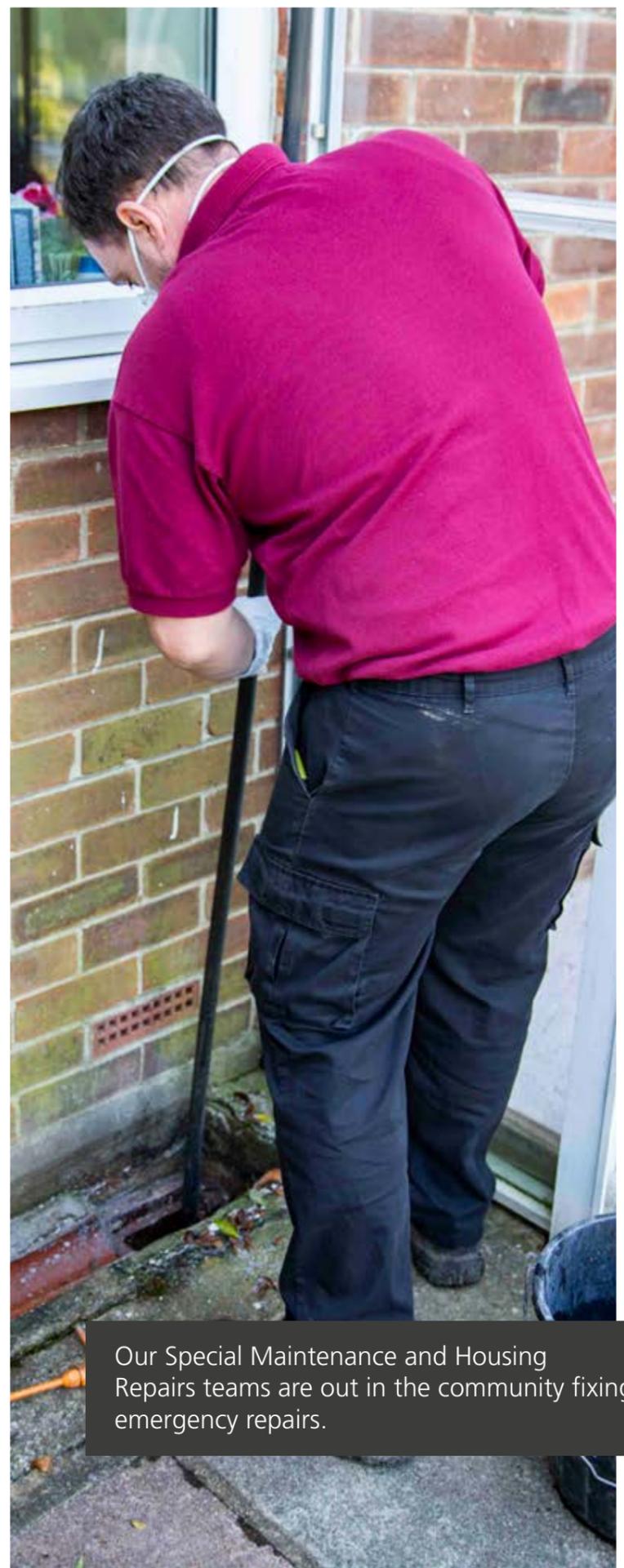
Although our reception is currently closed to visitors, the city council still remains open for business by phone, email or through online digital services.

If anyone needs to contact a Winchester City Council service direct, then the following numbers will take them to someone who can help during normal business hours:

General enquiries	01962 840 222
Housing - General Housing enquiries	01962 848 400
Housing Options - Homelessness	01962 848 163
Sheltered Housing	01962 848 440
Waste	0300 300 0013
Benefits	01962 848 539
Council Tax and Business Rates	01962 848 288
Environmental Health	01962 848 097
Parking	01962 848 346
Planning	01962 848 177
Planning Enforcement	01962 848 480
Trees	01962 848 301
Building Control	01962 848 176
Electoral Registration	01962 848 125
Licensing	01962 848 188
Legal	01962 848 428

Some services have needed to make changes due to the impact of COVID-19 – to find out about service changes click [here](#).

The out of hours Housing Repairs telephone number is **01962 865 405**. For out of hours help for all other council services, **01962 865 407** is the number to call.



Our Special Maintenance and Housing Repairs teams are out in the community fixing emergency repairs.

Help nearer to home

If you know of a neighbour who needs a hand, you may wish to refer them directly to one of the fabulous community voluntary organisations who have sprung into action across the district. We've collated all the information for known voluntary groups on our website – see groups across the district [here](#) and for wards in the city the information is [here](#). Or as a member of the local council team, you may also wish to call **01962 848 060** and we can help you over the phone.

If you know of a group that would like to be publicised then email us at support@winchester.gov.uk and we'll make sure that a single point of contact is included in these listings.

Community support grants

We've also pulled together a helpful summary with information on community support grants that are currently available for not-for profit & voluntary organisations [here](#).

Citizens Advice Bureau

The team at Citizens Advice Bureau have been busy adapting their service so their 100-strong group of volunteers can continue to support local people by phone, email, webchat and a new Call Back service which allows local residents to call a new phone number and leave a message. Callers are being asked to provide their name, phone number and brief description of their query and a trained adviser will call them back as soon as possible. Here's how to get in touch:



General advice:

- Local Call Back Service: **01489 890 940** or **01962 848 003** (Mon to Fri)
- Regional Adviceline: **03444 111 306** Operating: Mon-Fri 9.30am-5pm, and Sat 10am-12pm)
- Universal Credit Help to Claim: **0800 144 8 444** (Operating Mon – Fri 8.00am – 6.00pm)
- Consumer Issues: **0808 2231133** (operating 9am to 5pm)
- Email: advice@winchesterdistrictcab.org.uk
- Websites: click [here](#) for the website and [here](#) for specialised support from Hampshire MacMillan Citizens Advice Service for people living with cancer and looking for information on benefits, finance, housing and employment.

Data protection for community groups

Whilst we are all helping our communities, we need to make sure we are keeping all that personal information about residents safe. If people have just formed a community group, this may be the first time they've had to think about data protection so they will need to bear in mind that they may need to handle sensitive personal information and share it with others – which means taking account of data protection law.

The law is simply a set of standards that will help us all handle people's information responsibly. This means taking proper care of:

- names
- addresses
- personal information (date of birth, marital status, religion etc)
- contact details
- sensitive details about their health

The Information Commissioner's website [here](#) has lots more relevant information and a blog which explains very clearly what the important areas are.

Please remember that data protection law does not prevent you sharing personal information where it is appropriate to do so and it does not stop you from helping those in need.

Housing

Council Tax, Benefits and Housing Rent payment issues

We are providing support and advice on payment plans to help residents who are concerned about paying their Council Tax or need some help relating to benefits.

Residents can call **01962 848 288** or email **counciltax@winchester.gov.uk** to access helpful assistance based on individual circumstances.

If a resident currently pays their Council Tax over 10 months we can spread those instalments over 12 months or alter the timing of their payments. Please refer them to the back of their Council Tax bill for details or our website pages [here](#).

Landlords shouldn't be evicting their tenants at this time but some may be trying to, or at least making life difficult to tenants. If someone is struggling financially click [here](#). If they think their landlord is not maintaining their property safely they can contact the Private Sector Housing team on **01962 848 381** and they will investigate. If they think they are threatened with homelessness, they can contact the Housing Options team on **01962 848 163**.

If residents live in a council house and are concerned about paying rent please contact our housing team on **01962 848 205**.

Council house repairs service

We are still carrying out essential repairs to our council houses, so if something urgent needs fixing, tenants can call us on **01962 848 400**.

But we have rescheduled all routine maintenance for a later date and our Customer Liaison team are responding to everyone who requests a repair individually. We are contacting everyone with an existing appointment date for a non-urgent repair to reschedule the date.

Support for homeless people

If you become aware of someone without a home in your local area, please contact us on **01962 848 163**. Local rough sleepers have been offered accommodation and specialised support teams are monitoring the situation daily to ensure any new rough sleepers arriving in Winchester are also safely supported off the streets.





Council services update

Waste and recycling collections

Household waste and recycling collections are running to schedule with around 95,000 collections still happening every week. We're collecting more waste at the moment as households are continually at home - this means the crews are having to empty the lorries more frequently during a round. Therefore we've asked householders to help crews by putting bins by 6.15am to ensure crews extra time to do their rounds safely.

Although our crews wear gloves, it would be helpful if you could encourage your residents to disinfect their bin handles when they put the bin out to help keep the teams safe and well. With over 19,000 bins collected a day, that's a lot of contact with other people's handprints.

We really want to keep our waste collections running to schedule for as long as possible so we have temporarily paused our bulky waste service to move staff across to support the essential household rounds. We know that residents are concerned about this, but in this unusual time we are asking people to store any bulky items until we can collect them.

The latest advice relating to reducing waste from Hampshire County Council is [here](#).

We have, however, sadly seen an increase in fly tips and our teams continue to respond to these with an eye to prosecution. Please continue to report flytipping [here](#).

The textile banks operated by the Salvation Army are temporarily closed so we are asking people to store any textiles for recycling in their home for now.

All the latest information on waste collection service is [here](#) and this is updated regularly. We're continually updating the rest of the website to reflect these changes.



Our Neighbourhood and Community Safety team inspecting a fly tip.

Be a good neighbour

We've had some complaints this week and last about noise and bonfires and have put some messages on social media asking residents to be considerate of others as we are all at home.

Bonfires, BBQs and DIY on the back burner

With everyone at home at that moment we ask you not to burn garden or household waste and check wind direction prior to lighting a BBQ.

With more people at home susceptible to the side effects of inhaling smoke due to respiratory illnesses like COVID-19, it's more likely you or your neighbours will be adversely affected by bonfires. Our advice is either to compost garden waste or keep it in a safe place until these restrictions are lifted.

If you're affected by smoke caused from bonfires or BBQs, please do speak to your neighbour first (and be mindful of social distancing) as they might be unaware of the impact it is having on you.

If using power tools or gardening we're asking householders to respect their neighbours by avoiding noisy work early in the morning or late at night. Similarly please be considerate about the noise level of any music being played.

If it gets out of hand, our Environmental Health team will respond to the most serious complaints as usual, contact them on **01962 848 097** or email **EH@winchester.gov.uk**.



Support for businesses

Latest information

There has been a huge amount of information released by Government relating to support available to businesses at this time. We've pulled it all together in one place in our business newsletter, Entrepreneur – you can see this [here](#). We've also written to 2,700 businesses to ensure they are aware of business rate relief and business grant availability. To date, our Revenues team has received 1,300 grant applications, and already distributed over £13m to businesses.

Your local businesses can call **01962 848 288**, email **businessrates@winchester.gov.uk** for help or click [here](#).

For general support they can visit these pages [here](#).

Free mentoring for small businesses

In addition, we have been working with local business support service IncuHive to provide free online mentoring and e-learning for small businesses and home workers dealing with the impact of COVID-19. Businesses can find out more at www.incuhive.co.uk

Operate from a council commercial property?

Our team is here to help local businesses that operate a business from a commercial unit run by the council. Please call **01962 814 929** for help.

Changing the way your food business works

Winchester City Council is working hard to support local food businesses over this unprecedented period, many have made changes to offer customers a takeaway option.

For guidance on how to offer takeaways and deliveries, please see guidance in light of COVID-19 [here](#).

For further guidance on this please contact our Environmental Health team at **EHealth@winchester.gov.uk**

For a wide range of government guidance for food businesses regarding COVID-19 click [here](#).



Parks and open spaces

Just like your local grounds teams, our grounds teams are hard at work keeping our open spaces clean and safe but like you we have had to close play parks and pitches in line with national guidance.

We have not seen the crowds in our open spaces as reported in the bigger cities, which is good news. So our parks and open spaces are being maintained and litter and dog bins are being emptied as usual to enable residents to benefit from their daily exercise. It is essential that the two metre social distancing guidance is followed so do ensure people are reminded to follow these guidelines in your own public open spaces.

Please use the parks and gardens closest to home to avoid unnecessary travel.



Our Natural Environment and Recreation team are out and about making sure parks and green spaces are in good condition and safe for when people exercise.

Only travel for essential trips

It's really important that we all stay at home, but we know that some residents are key workers and have to travel to support the community through this outbreak.

We are now providing free parking to NHS and other key workers in all our car parks. Key workers can email parking@winchester.gov.uk and our team will work with them to sort this out.

Our Park & Ride service continues to run but at a slightly reduced timetable. Please click [here](#) to view.



City council meetings

We have written to local councils to share Government guidance regarding decision-making during this period. The document provides an easy guide to the regulations which sets out the option not to hold annual meeting but does enable you to hold virtual meetings.

We are preparing to hold our meetings in May and June as usual, but these may be virtual meetings. We will send you full details of how local people can have their say at these meetings in due course.

Local elections

We've also sent local councils information from the Government about elections. All local elections are deferred until 2021, or unless further regulations are passed.

We are preparing to hold the county council elections, the Police and Crime Commissioner elections, district council elections and any local council elections in May 2021. We will be contacting all polling station venues in due course.

For local councils, this means that if a local councillor resigns, we may not hold by-elections. You may co-opt as usual or you will have to hold a vacancy.

If have any queries, please contact our elections team on **01962 848 125**.



Planning Matters

Our planning service continues to operate as usual although the team are working at home.

Planning applications

We are registering planning applications as usual and where possible processing applications using on line information. We will carry out a site visit if absolutely essential as long as social distancing requirements can be met.

We appreciate that local councils may find it difficult to respond to consultations within the usual timeframe and, if this is a problem, please let the relevant case officer know and we will try to assist. You may want to consider whether you can make a change to your constitution to allow responses to be sent by a local council representative using delegated powers?

Planning decisions

Delegated decisions will continue as usual and we are planning to hold the June planning committee, but this is likely to be a virtual meeting.

Planning Enforcement

We are responding to most serious enforcement complaints and last week issued a temporary stop notice in Hambledon. The number to call is **01962 848 480** if your residents have a query.

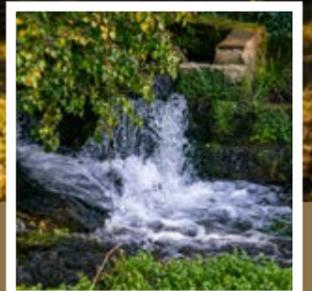
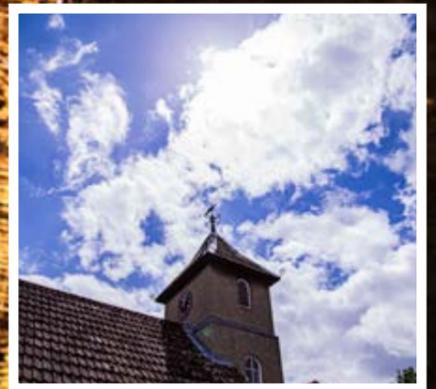
Building Control

Our building control team is working as usual and are carrying out site inspections as required in order to support the construction industry. However, we must ensure our teams are safe and will only carry out a site visit if social distancing can be observed.

Arboriculture

Our arboriculture teams are continuing to carry out tree related work whilst operating within the guidelines provided by Government.





We look forward to welcoming you again...

We're looking forward to welcoming visitors to our district soon, when this outbreak has ended. For now we're encouraging people to enjoy our villages, market towns, city and surrounding countryside from the comfort of their own home.

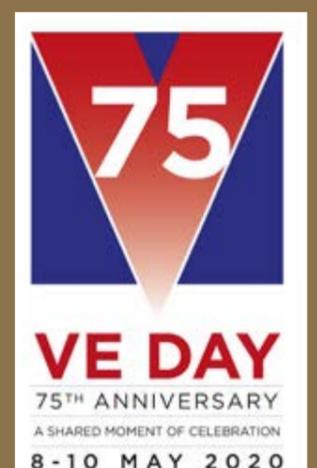
You can encourage your residents to stay connected by following 'King Alf's' Visit Winchester social media accounts so they can enjoy inspirational stories of our local heroes - past and present; offering educational ideas for home schoolers to help keep the kids entertained and educated; and embarking on virtual tours of museums, art galleries and hidden gems – the perfect getaway for those in self-isolation. And when it's time to reopen for business - www.visitwinchester.co.uk is the place to be!



VE Day celebrations

The majority of VE Day 75 community celebrations due to take place on the bank holiday weekend of 8–10 May are being postponed - the weekend of 15–16 August is earmarked to celebrate VE Day and VJ Day together. Any grants given by the council can be retained for future commemorations.

We will of course continue to keep you updated on these revised plans and welcome your continued thoughts and ideas on how we can bring communities together at a later date. Your community can contact communities@winchester.gov.uk if they have any questions - including ideas for 'virtual' commemorations in May.



A note from Jon Turton, District Commander (Winchester) Hampshire Constabulary



HAMPSHIRE
CONSTABULARY

We are in an unprecedented civil emergency and, while we have not experienced anything of this kind before, we have well prepared structures and plans to deal with the issues this pandemic creates for policing.

Although the emergency we are dealing with is a health emergency we all have to play our part to protect others and stay at home to save lives.

The new measures require people to stay at home, except for very limited purposes, to close non-essential shops and community spaces, and to stop all gatherings of more than two people in public.

As an essential public service we are operating in line with HMG policy to reduce the spread of infection within the community of COVID-19.

Our role is different to pre-COVID-19 and we are very now much engaged in trying to reduce the spread of infection within our communities.

Our policing model is built on the foundation of policing by consent and this doesn't change now. The new powers will help, but we will first explain, engage and encourage, before using enforcement should there be a need to do so.

Where there is a need to enforce, we will do this as you would rightly expect us to. However we would prefer that people follow the advice, stay at home and help us to help the national effort.

Our focus is to keep people safe. Please follow the advice that has been given. More details are [here](#).

I know that these measures cause significant disruption to the normal way of life, but I also know without them there will be significant loss of life so we must do everything we can to reduce this.

I know that we are going to see some of our own officers and staff off work because they are either sick or in isolation. We have plans in place to ensure we maintain our core services, not just within the police but across all public sector services.

We are working to business contingency plans which ensure all the services are maintained. We have worked out a number of scenarios where differing percentages of our workforce are absent, in isolation or caring for family members.

From a policing perspective, serious and difficult decisions may have to be made to maintain a level of service to the public. These will see us prioritising what we can (and cannot) attend. This may mean that we would not be able to attend less urgent incidents or may have to deal with them in a different way.

We are very much still out in communities though, and reducing the spread of the virus is very much a policing priority.

I would like to thank you for your understanding and support. I would also encourage you to follow some of the activity that we are sharing on our social media.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jon Turton'.

District Commander
Winchester

 WinchesterCops

 WinchesterPolice