

Members Coronavirus Response Briefing

25 March 2020

The way in which we work during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) response is changing on a daily basis and within this uncertain climate we continue to monitor the situation and adapt in line with government advice. This is my latest update to keep you aware of Hambleton District Council's response - how we are operating and how we are supporting businesses and residents.

We continue to focus on delivering the priority services that are relied upon by residents and businesses whilst keeping our staff safe and healthy.

What we are doing?

- Management Team continue to review the situation and respond to government advice on a daily basis.
- Further facilities have been provided to enable home working and we now have an absolute minimum of staff located in the Council's offices. We will, of course, continue to reduce this as we are able to amend operational delivery.
- There may be a future requirement for staff to be redeployed to deliver government initiatives to support vulnerable members of our communities and we are liaising with partner organisations to understand how we can best respond. This includes identifying vulnerable residents who may need further support.

Business Support

- The Council has received detailed guidelines on 100% Business Rates Relief and Pub Relief on 19 March, which was previously announced by the Chancellor on 11 March and 17 March 2020. We have now started sending 'zero' Business Rates Demand Notices to those eligible.
 - 240 'zero' business rate bills have been sent out to retail businesses with a rateable value of less than £51k
 - 'zero' bills for businesses with a rateable value in excess of £51k have also started to be sent out and this process will be completed by Friday 27th March.

However, HM Treasury has expanded the rate relief today and announced that Estate Agents, Lettings Agencies and Bingo Halls that have closed as a result of Coronavirus measures to restrict the spread of the virus will now also be exempted from business rates in 2020/21. We await the guidance around this.

- The discount that was announced for nurseries provides for 100% rate relief with certain criteria. That criteria requires that the nursery is occupied and has an OFSTED Early Years registration, we continue to work with our colleagues at NYCC to identify all eligible businesses.
 - The Council received the detailed guidance on the 'Small Business Grant Fund and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund' on Monday evening and from the end of today an electronic form will be online for businesses to complete to obtain this grant. We will endeavour to pay grants as we receive requests. This will start before the Council receives the payment from Government which is not expected to be with us until the beginning of April.
 - Other ways we are supporting businesses:
 - 450 letters have been sent to food businesses (restaurants, bars, pubs, cafes etc.) in the District and individual businesses are being called directly, providing advice about how to operate in line with government advice and particularly how they can trade as a takeaway/delivery service.
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- We are developing the support we can offer to our tenants in our business centres and workspaces including introducing a rent free period for those businesses that need it.
- We will continue to use our web pages and social media channels (@HambletonDC and @HambletonBiz) and share information through our business networks to keep businesses up to date. We are also signposting businesses to information from the LEP, FSB and NYCC.
- We have offered a 50% reduction in market stall fees to those essential grocery and food stalls that are able to safely trade in line with government guidance.
- We are working with partner organisations to ensure that the Government is kept informed of the issues that our businesses are facing.
- As a reminder from my previous updates, if a business contacts you for advice or with a query please signpost them to the Business and Economy team at: Business.Economy@hambleton.gov.uk where we will respond to them and include them in any future communications

Service Updates

- Waste & Street Scene
 - Waste collections are remaining a priority, however, there are some service changes which are being made to allow us to operate with reductions in staffing:
 - Missed Bins – we are unable to return for bins once the collection vehicle as moved passed the property.
 - Schedule 2 customers (e.g. Schools) – those that we are not currently collecting from will have their collections postponed and rolled forward to the following year, in essence a 'collection credit'.
 - Fly Tipping – will only be collected if there is a potential health and safety risk i.e. on the public highway or it is comprised of dangerous materials (e.g. suspected asbestos).
 - Requests for Bins – we are delivering bins to new properties. We will endeavour to respond to any requests for replacement bins and boxes when we are in the vicinity; there is therefore a backlog of these requests currently.
 - Special Collections Bookings – these have ceased and any collections that were booked and paid for in advance have been reimbursed by Customer Services.
Please note: North Yorkshire County Council Household Waste Centres are closed to the public. If residents contact you please ask them to store such waste at home until the situation changes.
 - Street Cleaning – street bins are being emptied by refuse vehicles as part of their normal rounds, any issues can be reported via the Report It app.
Large vehicle sweepers are limited to critical areas of clearing waste, any requests for sweeping should be made via the Report It app. Response to requests will be linked to available resources so may face a delay, priority is being given to the market town centres.
 - Dog Warden – is currently responding to reports of found stray dogs only but information relating to both lost and found dogs can still be sent through the usual channels.
Dog Fouling – this should be logged via the Report It app. Reduced capacity means this will not be dealt with at the present time.
 - Pest Control – we are suspending all pest control work and limiting this work to health critical only.
 - Litter Picking Kit – this equipment is not currently being loaned out and community litter picks should cease.

- Environmental Health

- We have received and investigated six complaints about businesses trading or having gatherings within their premises contrary to recent government instructions for pubs and restaurants to close; and have established that four of those premises were not trading and officers will be visiting 2 pubs tonight to do general monitoring and confirm compliance.

We are working closely with NYCC Trading Standards and North Yorkshire Police prior to doing any monitoring checks.

- If you see any similar suspicious activity then please email the details to Paul Staines, Director of Environment (paul.staines@hambleton.gov.uk).