



UDC briefing note – 27 March 2020

This briefing note is designed to keep our stakeholders updated with what Uttlesford District Council is doing in response to the coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic.

We intend to send this briefing out on a weekly basis but will keep the frequency under review.

For official national advice always visit www.gov.uk/coronavirus and www.nhs.uk/coronavirus.

UDC's role

We are not the lead agency in the fight against this pandemic, but are in regular contact with the lead agencies and are part of the Essex Resilience Forum (ERF). We are supportive of central government, Public Health England (PHE) and Essex County Council's public health teams. The actions we are taking are in line with the national guidance.

We have moved into an emergency planning mode of working and have set up a strategic command and control structure within the organisation to ensure we are responding effectively and appropriately to this constantly-evolving situation.

What we are doing for residents

We:

- continue to review government advice to ensure our services remain prepared and our staff and public have the latest information
- are updating all information about our services on our website, www.uttlesford.gov.uk/coronavirus and on our social media channels
- are sharing PHE and government health and advice messages on all our of communication channels, as well as information from Essex County Council (visit www.essex.gov.uk/news/coronavirus)
- are encouraging residents and businesses to sign up to our e-newsletter service at every opportunity – www.uttlesford.gov.uk/keepmeposted
- have closed all our public buildings to protect staff and residents:
 - customer services/reception desk at our Saffron Walden offices
 - customer service desk at Great Dunmow Library
 - customer information centre at Town Street, Thaxted
 - day centres
 - Saffron Walden Museum
 - In addition, the three leisure centres which are operated by 1Life under the Uttlesford PFI Leisure Centres contract are also closed: www.1Life.co.uk

Council Tax & Benefits

We understand that many residents may be facing financial challenges at this time. Our teams are working as hard as they can to finalise the administration around the workstreams issued by the government to support residents and businesses at this difficult time.

Some of the support available to residents:

- Local Council Tax Support – for help with council tax payments: www.uttlesford.gov.uk/lcts
- Exceptional Hardship Fund – people who are experiencing exceptional financial hardship can apply for help from this fund: www.uttlesford.gov.uk/ehf
- Universal Credit – for residents experiencing difficulties with living costs: www.gov.uk/universal-credit
- Employment Support Allowance – this is for people who cannot work due to sickness or self-isolation: www.gov.uk/employment-support-allowance/how-to-claim

People who need further advice or support in paying their council tax can contact us via revenues@uttlesford.gov.uk or 01799 510510.

What we are doing for our communities

There has been a fantastic reaction in Uttlesford to the coronavirus pandemic, with a number of groups organising their own efforts to support the vulnerable within their communities. In support of this, we:

- have set up a community helpline to direct people to services that can help during this time and to provide advice on where people can register their offer of help to support their community:
 - Call: **03333 408 218** (8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday)
 - Email: communityresponse@uttlesford.gov.uk
- are in contact with the ERF and our voluntary and council partners to assess where our resources might be best used
- are preparing to play our part in the support effort of those vulnerable people who will be 'shielding' under measures recently announced by government. This is a fast-moving operation being led by the Essex County Council – further detail will be available shortly

What we are doing for businesses

We:

- are keeping our business channels up to date so that businesses and employers can find all the latest local and national information quickly – www.uttlesford.gov.uk/business
- are working on implementing all the new financial support that government has put in to place for businesses. Businesses will be notified within the next few days

What we are doing for our staff

We:

- have enabled home working – the majority of staff are now working from home
- are updating staff regularly on the latest government guidance
- have set up a dedicated intranet page to provide the latest information and advice
- are sharing details of support mechanisms so that staff have access to employee support and wellbeing