

## **April 2020 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks**

### **Home, But Not Alone**

A new Suffolk-focused community service was set up on 24 March to support people who need help during the COVID-19 pandemic. Called '**Home, But Not Alone**', the service has been launched to help connect people who want to volunteer in their communities with neighbours who are most in need. The service will mean willing volunteers, charities, town and parish councils, community and religious groups can all log their details and offers of support on an app, while people who need help can phone to request support. As the number of offers and requests grows, they will be matched so that the right help can be given where it's most needed. This support could include delivering groceries, medication or essential household goods, in line with Government social distancing guidelines. Download the free **app**, called **Tribe Volunteer** from the [\*\*Apple App Store\*\*](#) and [\*\*Google Play Store\*\*](#). The telephone number for those in genuine need of help is freephone **0800 876 6926** and will be staffed from **9am to 5pm**, seven days a week. The telephone line is not a general information line for COVID-19 queries, but those in need can seek information on support with care needs, loneliness, and connecting with community support. This is a new service and will adapted to demand over the coming weeks. People are still being urged to check [\*\*GOV.UK\*\*](#) for the latest guidance on a wide range of issues and changes caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.

### **Suffolk Highways COVID-19 statement - 26 March 2020**

SCC and our contractor, Kier, are working together with our suppliers and sub-contractors as one team to ensure Suffolk's roads can continue to be maintained and accessible; whilst keeping our workforce and members of the public safe from the threat of COVID-19. Our service is critical to ensuring safe travel for our emergency and health services, and for those carrying out essential tasks. We want to reassure residents that we, as a highways authority, are taking the Government's advice very seriously and working hard to continue delivering our services for you. To enable us to do this effectively, we must keep our colleagues safe and healthy by ensuring they follow the two-metre social distancing rule, clean down equipment more frequently, and regularly clean hands. These are amongst a range of precautions we are following for the benefit of our staff and the travelling public. Unfortunately, we have had incidents where our colleagues have had people approach them and not keep a safe two-metre distance. I must ask, that if you spot any of our teams inspecting, or working out on the highway, for your safety and theirs please keep your distance to allow them to do their work safely. Thank you to the dedicated teams of people who are working around the clock to keep this county moving. What you are doing in these unprecedented times is remarkable. I also thank residents for your patience.

### **£60,000 for foodbanks across Suffolk**

On 25 March, it was announced that food banks across Suffolk will be given a share of £60,000 to keep their supplies well stocked during the Coronavirus pandemic. This money has been donated by Suffolk County Council and will allow the food banks to restock directly with supermarkets and wholesalers. It is now more important than ever to look after those most in need in our neighbourhoods. This donation is one small part of the extremely valuable work that is being done in our communities with our partners across Suffolk.

### **All Suffolk recycling centres close until further notice due to COVID-19**

On 23 March, Suffolk recycling centres closed until further notice. The safety of customers and staff is very important. Therefore, in accordance with current government coronavirus guidelines of avoiding non-essential contact and preventing a risk of infection to others, the sites will close. It is essential that we do all we can to slow down the spread of the virus. Much of the waste that goes through the Recycling Centres is bulky waste (large items such as furniture, wood and metals) and garden waste. People should hold onto these items until the sites reopen. Do not put any electrical items in any of your bins at home. Where possible people should compost grass cuttings and hedge

trimmings and if you can't do that, keep your garden waste until the sites reopen. You can find more information on how to compost at home on our website. Please do not leave waste outside the centres as this is classed as fly tipping and is a criminal offence for which people will be prosecuted. For further information you can also visit the Suffolk Recycling website.

### **Suffolk school closures**

SCC is working with partners across the sector to coordinate a response to the government's announcement on 18 March to close schools for the majority of pupils while remaining open for vulnerable children and those whose parents are key workers. The current definition of a key worker can be found on GOV.UK. The government has advised that parents should keep their children at home and schools should remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend. Even if you are classed as a key worker, if you are in a position to keep your child at home then SCC would ask that you do so. This will enable schools to free up their resources and provides them with the opportunity to focus on the key children who need their help. The fewer children making the journey to school, and the fewer children in educational settings, the lower the risk that the virus can spread and infect vulnerable individuals in wider society. Schools that are able to open should continue to follow Public Health England Advice with regards to cleanliness and infection control. SCC have launched a helpline for parents which will assist them if their usual school is not open or has been unable to make alternate arrangements for pupils. If parents are classed as a key worker or have a child that is classed as vulnerable, they can call this line and SCC will liaise with schools to find them a place. The helpline number is: 01473 263985 You can find more information on school closures on [suffolk.gov.uk](https://suffolk.gov.uk).

### **Elderly and disabled residents can use their concessionary bus passes earlier**

As of 19 March, SCC is allowing concessionary travel for those with elderly and disabled bus passes before 9.30am, as the coronavirus epidemic continues. The Council, working alongside its partners and bus companies, has revealed that it is extending its concessionary travel for those with elderly and disabled bus passes, as supermarkets make special arrangements for exclusive early morning shopping times for these people. This move has been introduced in response to panic buying in the shops which saw shelves emptied. Previously, concessionary travel did not kick in until 9:30, after the morning rush-hour, but in response to coronavirus the local authority is allowing those who have the passes to travel earlier so they can get to the shops to buy food.

### **Changes to care services for customers**

On 18 March it was announced that, in light of the current COVID-19 crisis, customers are likely to experience changes to the care they receive. Customers will receive a phone call or a visit from their current care provider or SCC's Home First team when their services are affected. The county council's adult care team are closely monitoring the safety and wellbeing of all their service users and supporting their most vulnerable customers, who remain a priority. Those currently receiving care and support will start to see a difference in their service in the coming weeks, or it may be that their care is provided by a different provider. The council is working across the health and social care system to ensure the safety and wellbeing of everyone in Suffolk and will continue to keep customers updated of any changes as they arise. We understand that this is a very worrying and difficult time for many of our customers receiving care services. We want to reassure people that although they may start to see changes to their care, we are prioritising their safety, health and wellbeing. It may be that people are not be able to attend day care activities or that their care provider changes, but we will be doing what is necessary to keep them healthy, safe and well. I would like to say thank you to everyone we are supporting and working with for their resilience and understanding during these unprecedented times.

**Matthew Hicks - County Councillor for the Thredling Division**

**Tel : 01728 628176   Mob : 07824 474741   E-mail : [matthew.hicks@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.hicks@suffolk.gov.uk)**