

## North Somerset Council Update 26 May 2020

### Contact details:

- North Somerset Together has been set up to help residents who have no support from family or friends and who are socially isolated. They can access the support they need during the coronavirus pandemic and beyond by visiting [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/together](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/together) or ringing 01934 427 437.
- For the latest information and support available during the Covid 19 pandemic visit [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/coronavirus)
- For the latest news from North Somerset Council visit [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/news](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/news)
- Sign up to our North Somerset Life online edition at [www.northsomersetlife.co.uk](http://www.northsomersetlife.co.uk)
- For general council enquiries visit [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/connect](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/connect) or call 01934 888 888.
- For all business assistance and employee support please contact North Somerset Council's Economy Team: Email - [Business@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:Business@n-somerset.gov.uk) or Twitter @Innorthsomerset or (01934) 426 266
- Updates will also be posted to the council's Facebook and Twitter feeds.

**Weston General Hospital temporary closure.** We have been working with health colleagues to minimise the impact of the temporary closure of Weston General Hospital following an increase in the number of patients and staff testing positive for Covid-19.

The hospital is not currently taking any new admissions and patients are being redirected to other hospitals in the area.

The A&E department has also been temporarily closed. Minor injuries provision is available at the North Somerset Community Hospital in Clevedon for anyone needing help between 8am and 8.30pm

Read more about the closure in the [press release](#).

**Mobile testing unit (MTU) in Weston.** A mobile testing unit has been established at Locking Road car park in Weston-super-Mare today to enable more Covid-19 tests to be carried out locally. This will make testing more available to the local community – particularly those who might struggle to get to the airport for a test.

The unit, which is available for pre-booked coronavirus tests only, is likely to be in the car park for a few days, and the car park will not be available for public parking during this time.

The unit will operate from 10am until 4pm each day and appointments can be made through <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested> or calling 119.

MTUs have an integrated one-way system that allows those with an appointment to attend for either walk-in or drive through testing.

The eligibility criteria for tests has been extended to include:

- Anyone aged five-years-old and over with symptoms
- Any essential worker with symptoms
- Members of the household of essential workers who are symptomatic.

More guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested#who-can-be-tested>

Essential workers will be given priority.

For tests to be effective you must be symptomatic. More on the symptoms of covid-19 can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/check-if-you-have-coronavirus-symptoms/>

**Easing of lockdown arrangements.** Following the Prime Minister's announcement around the easing of some of the lockdown restrictions and moving towards the next phase in managing the coronavirus pandemic we have issued a [news release discouraging visitors](#) to come to our area. We also produced a video to reinforce this message ahead of the bank holiday weekend.

Our focus is on protecting the community here in North Somerset who have worked so hard to do the right thing in staying at home.

Our stay away message has received extensive coverage on broadcast and social media. Here's a snap shot..

#### **Broadcast media coverage**

Cllr Mike Bell, deputy leader of the council has done nine interviews:

- four radio interviews (Heart, Radio Bristol) two recorded and two live
- five TV interviews across a range of local, regional and national media – two live national (Sky News; BBC Breakfast); three recorded (Points West; ITV Central; ITV West).

Cllr Mark Canniford, executive member with responsibility for Business, Economy and Employment has done five interviews:

- two radio interviews (BBC Radio Bristol; BBC Somerset)
- three TV interviews across a range of local, regional and national media – two live (ITV Good Morning; BBC West Midlands) and one recorded (ITV West).

#### **Social media**

- Last week's stay away message on Facebook and Twitter achieved a reach of 100,000 (at no cost to the council other than the staff time creating the posts)
- This weekend we had a video featuring council and seafront representatives going out emphasising the shared 'stay away' message
- We have also asked our health colleagues to support us with a social media video message from a local clinician (GP) extolling the same message from a health perspective.

**Key workers honoured in high street mural.** A large-scale mural featuring key workers who have served their communities and kept services going during the coronavirus pandemic receives its finishing touches this week.

The mural, at the former M&S store on Weston-super-Mare's high street, includes depictions of 27 different key workers and is set against the backdrop of Weston's beautiful bay with the town's piers, Steepholm Island, Brean Down and the Red Arrows all featuring too.



The work has been the brainchild of local artist Martin D'Arcy and North Somerset councillor Mike Solomon, who were both keen to ensure a fitting tribute to the many local workers who have supported residents through the pandemic.

It has taken three weeks to complete and Martin has been supported by other local artists who have helped with the mural's development and local businesses who have provided funding for the project.

**Parking enforcement.** We are stepping up our enforcement activity to tackle illegal and inconsiderate parking.

In addition to clamping down on people parking on double yellow lines, we are reinforcing the message that the seafront and beach at Weston-super-Mare are closed to vehicles and are directing people to car parks away from the seafront.

Despite the council's message to visitors continuing to be "please don't come to North Somerset", high numbers have visited the area during the past week, particularly on Wednesday, causing traffic disruption and inconvenience to residents.

As a result, the council is now taking further steps to stop people from parking where they shouldn't, to make sure they can park safely and reduce pressure on residential streets.

With beach and Marine Parade car parking closed to deter visitors, new temporary signs have been put up from junction 21 of the M5.

We also re-opened level one of the Sovereign Centre car park for the bank holiday weekend only from 8am to 9pm.

In Portishead Kilkenny Fields has been reopened for car parking. This will relieve the strain around the Lake Grounds, particularly as The Esplanade has now been closed to cars to enable social distancing for walkers and cyclists.

**Remember Me.** St Paul's Cathedral announced the launch of 'Remember Me' on Friday, an online book of remembrance for all those in the UK who have died as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

People of any faith or none are invited to contribute to Remember Me. Family, friends or carers of those who have died can submit, free of charge, the name, photograph and a short message in honour of a deceased person via the Remember Me website ([www.rememberme2020.uk](http://www.rememberme2020.uk)).

The initiative is being supported by HRH The Prince of Wales and it is intended that there will be a physical Remember Me memorial at St Paul's Cathedral.

**Planning and Regulatory meeting last Wednesday.** The Planning and Regulatory Committee took place as a virtual meeting via Teams on Wednesday (20 May) and is available to watch on [our You Tube channel](#).

**Re-opening our recycling centres.** We re-opened Weston's recycling centre last Monday (18 May).

Weston re-opened first because the large site and separate entry and exit points means new arrangements can be put in place more easily. Portishead is due to open tomorrow (Wednesday 27 May) and Backwell this Friday (29 May).

Wherever possible people should continue to use the kerbside collections and store other items if possible until restrictions are lifted. Please don't visit the recycling centre unless you really need to. Please behave responsibly and use the sites fairly so everyone has the opportunity to visit safely.

We've been updating our website and social media channels with guidance on using the centres so please look out for it and share it with your communities.

**Support for re-opening of schools.** We have been working with local schools to try and get children back safely as soon as possible in line with new Government guidance.

The council is supporting all school leaders across the area with their work on arrangements to enable schools to open safely, and recognises the concerns about ensuring strict social distancing measures, particularly with younger and more vulnerable children.

Following the release of a series of new guidance documents, issued by the Department for Education last week, school leaders have been carrying out comprehensive risk assessments to understand what can be achieved in each school or setting.

Cllr Catherine Gibbons, North Somerset Council's executive member for children's services and lifelong learning said: "Heads and teachers are best placed to know whether they can safely open their school and how many children they can keep safe and they also know their local communities. This Government announcement won't be correct for every school or every child. We will treat these decisions on their merits and show trust in our school leaders.

"There are some schools in which the safety guidelines can be met, and we will support those that can open from 1 June. But we also know that many will not be able to achieve that, and we support schools in their decision making.

"We will not issue fines to those parents who choose to keep their child at home during this term.

"We also support calls by the Local Government Association and teaching unions that all the relevant scientific advice on child transmission should be published immediately so that head teachers and families can make informed decisions. It will be important for heads to take time to undertake full risk assessments and only open to more children when it is safe to do so.

"And of course we know that parents and carers know their children best and we support them in making the right decisions - whether to send their children to school or not - according to their own circumstances and the approach taken by their school."

**North Somerset Together.** We have launched this service to link residents in need to the fantastic support being offered by communities.

North Somerset Together is an initiative that is helping residents who have no support from family or friends and who are socially isolated access the support they need during the coronavirus pandemic and beyond.

It is also helping those who want to volunteer to get involved or donate to link up with the right organisations, and signpost businesses to relevant information.

It brings together a wealth of information to help anyone in the community find out what is available, what help is needed, and contact groups and organisations directly.

So far..

**1,500** requests have been received including **352 urgent requests** for help.

Of these calls, over **95%** have been passed onto one of the 27 volunteer response networks now delivering Covid-19 support across North Somerset, with the remainder being passed immediately to Care Connect for assessment as possibly needing adult social care involvement.

In addition, **a further 5,026** residents registered via the .gov.uk process and have been passed down to community response networks for support.

Contact [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/together](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/together) or ring 01934 427 437.

**Business support.** We continue to administer the **business grant schemes** for the estimated 3,500 eligible businesses in North Somerset. So far (as of Monday 26 May) we have processed 3032 grants and paid out £36.5m.

Any eligible businesses who have not yet applied are urged to do so as soon as possible.

The schemes come in the form of a small business grant fund and a retail, hospitality and leisure grant fund. Grants are between £10,000 and £25,000 depending on circumstances.

We are making daily payments but some businesses are still missing out on government money to support their business.

Please encourage anyone you know who may be eligible to take up this offer.

Once their eligibility has been confirmed, payment will be made between seven and 10 days. If they have any further questions on this or other support you can apply [here](#), can contact North Somerset Council's Economic Development Team on 01934 426 266, email [business@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:business@n-somerset.gov.uk) or Twitter: @innorthsomerset

North Somerset Council's Economy Team has collated a range of essential business, third sector and employee resources from government and other trusted sources to support North Somerset residents and businesses with decision making during the pandemic.

Information on grants and other sources of funding, Universal Credit, employment and skills support, business adaptation and government campaigns - Pick for Britain - can be found here: <https://innorthsomerset.co.uk/covid-19-support/>