

Councillor Briefing - Friday 1 May

This briefing is issued to:

- Cotswold District Councillors
- Gloucestershire County Councillors who represent areas in the District but who are not also district councillors
- Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, MP
- Town and Parish Councils/Meetings in the District

Service Update

Revenues and Benefits: We have received additional funding to help those working-age customers in receipt of Council Tax Support. Up to £150 will be credited to these customers' Council Tax accounts. These will be applied to customers' Council Tax accounts this week and the early part of next week. The number of qualifying households clearly changes on a daily basis but around 450 CDC Households will benefit by a total of £67,000.

Customer Services: Customer contact is now back to normal levels, so our Customer Service advisors are starting to assist with Covid community support tasks on top of their normal duties.

ERS: We have redeployed several officers from this area, so are down to emergency response in most areas. Reports of non-compliant businesses have now subsided. No prohibition action has been taken. We have managed to maintain Building Control work through the use of electronic inspection methods. This is not possible in all cases, but in around 80% of cases this is working well.

Development Management: We continue to operate the service. Applications are on the increase and we are now receiving around 60% of what we would normally expect to see.

Housing: Homelessness presentations are higher than normal and the situation is being very closely managed by the Housing and Homelessness Teams. We are working closely with Housing Associations to ensure that the newly-accommodated rough sleepers (who would not normally be in priority need) are safely accommodated as we come out of the crisis.

Waste: Garden waste collections are still suspended. All recycling crews are operating, with additional vehicles in use to help collect the increased levels of waste and recycling being presented by residents.

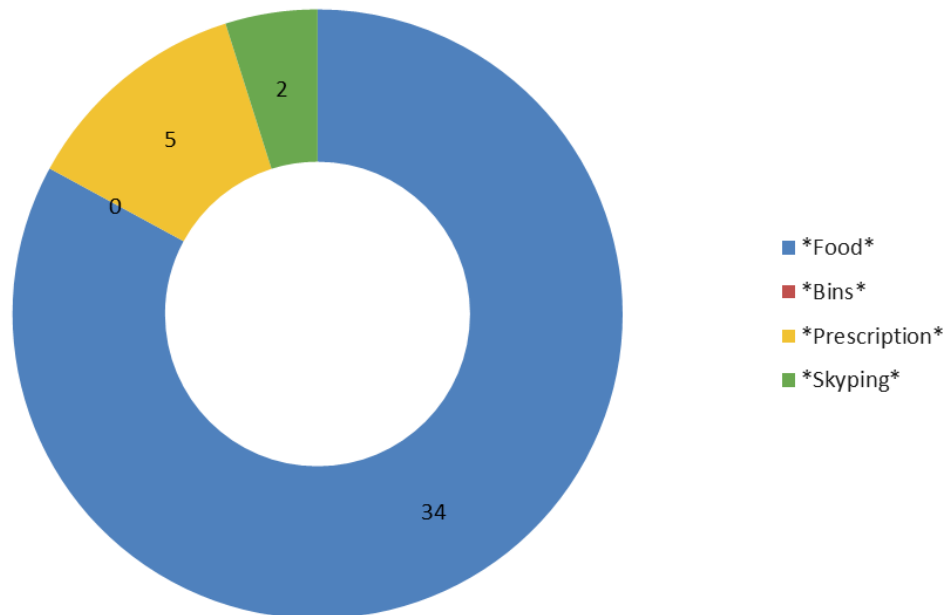
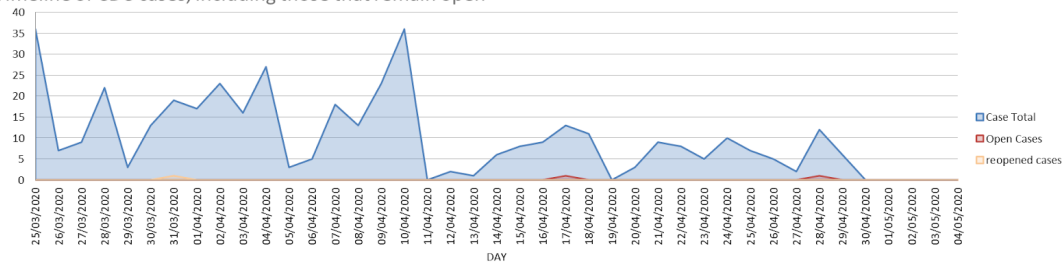
All other services are running and we have one additional refuse round in helping to collect the higher amounts of waste. Street cleaning is still scaled back, with resources being used for container deliveries in support of the new waste and recycling service. 18 staff are currently self-isolating.

Community Support/Resilience

Community Need Breakdown

The number and timeline of cases since 25 March is shown in the first graphic. The breakdown of cases over the last 7 days is shown in the second graphic.

Timeline of CDC cases, including those that remain open



Government Food Parcel Scheme for ‘shielded people’

In these unprecedented times, this huge and evolving task is bringing together national and local government, the food industry and other partners from the voluntary sector and beyond. The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government recognises that the scheme does have some teething problems and are working closely with all partners involved to make further improvements. In particular, in rural areas deliveries might be more challenging with some property addresses being difficult to find. In recognition of this, a new regional structure is being created to strengthen existing partnerships and to help address local problems. We would like to assure everyone that where parcels haven’t been delivered we are able to offer support so that nobody will be without food until the issue has been resolved.

Please encourage residents in this situation to contact us via the [Gloucestershire Help Hub](#) or call 01452 583519. Residents can also include details of any special dietary requirements through the help hub. Residents should also use this link or number if they need help with shopping, prescriptions or other essential support. They should **not** register for help:

- if they are already receiving assistance
- if they have enough help for the next 2 weeks
- to request non-essential items.

Those who have been identified as Extremely Vulnerable and require a priority online shopping slot must [register on the Gov.uk website](#) and answer ‘no’ to the question:

“Do you have a way of getting essential supplies delivered at the moment?”

If food parcels are no longer required, they can be rejected at the doorstep when they arrive by speaking to the delivery driver. Alternatively, the deliveries can be cancelled [online](#) and by answering “yes” to the question:

“Do you have a way of getting essential supplies delivered at the moment?”

We would advise residents to speak to the supermarket they have the priority shopping slot with before de-registering online as there is evidence that some people have lost their priority slots when they de-registered.

If in doubt, food parcels can be kept and donated to one of the Foodbanks or someone in need in your neighbourhood.

Database of shops able to provide assistance to vulnerable people

The attached document gives details of shops in the District who are able to provide delivery/collection services for vulnerable people. This information is not for public use, but can be shared with local volunteer groups if necessary - **on a confidential basis**.

Business information

Information and support for businesses relating to the COVID19 outbreak can be found on our [website](#) where individuals and businesses can also sign up for our weekly business newsletter.

Cllr Mike Evemy, Cabinet Member for Finance, makes the following comments regarding Business Grants in this week’s business newsletter:

“The latest league table showing councils’ performance distributing the two coronavirus grant schemes was published this week and Cotswold District Council ranked 60th out of 314 councils, having successfully paid grants to over 77% of eligible businesses. Thanks to the team for their hard work getting these grants out.

However, we are still trying to trace some businesses that we believe might be eligible. The grants apply to either:

- Businesses that receive Small Business Rate Relief or Rural Rate Relief, or
- Retail, hospitality or leisure businesses in a commercial property with rateable value below £51,000

If your business fits one or both of these criteria and you haven’t let us have your details, please complete and return the form using the link below.”

Beware of scams!

We are aware of some very realistic looking scam emails with links asking businesses to **authorise** their bank details to receive the business grants.

The ONLY way to submit a grant application in the Cotswolds is to complete [the form](#) and email it to revenues@cotswold.gov.uk.

We do NOT ask businesses to provide their details in any other way. Any other request you see, however realistic, is not from us. If you have any doubt at all, please contact us at revenues@cotswold.gov.uk or on 01285 623034

Stay safe online

The government has published new advice to help people, particularly children, stay safe online during the coronavirus outbreak.

The [guidance](#) sets out a four-point plan and recommends reviewing security and safety settings, checking facts and guarding against disinformation, being vigilant against fraud and scams, and managing the amount of time spent online.

Extension of statutory audit deadlines

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has [published a letter](#) sent to all local authority chief executives informing them that:

- the publication date for final, audited, accounts will move to 30 November 2020 for all local authority bodies (previously 31 July for Category 1 authorities and 30 September for Category 2 authorities)
- to give local authorities more flexibility, the requirement for the public inspection period to include the first 10 working days of June (for Category 1 authorities) and July (for Category 2 authorities) has been removed. Instead, local authorities must commence the public inspection period on or before the first working day of September 2020.

The regulations implementing these measures were laid on 7 April and are due to come into force on 30 April 2020.

Access to parks and public spaces

Local Government Minister Simon Clarke has written to all English councils urging them to continue allowing access to parks and public spaces while recognising that it is no easy task balancing the need to maintain services alongside wider responsibilities for the health and wellbeing of residents.

In the [letter](#), the Local Government Minister also thanked councils for keeping essential services running and protecting those in their communities who are most at risk and highlighted that the closures [guidance](#) will be updated to make clear that burial grounds and cemeteries may remain open.

Modern slavery

As part of work with homeless and other vulnerable people, you may come across victims of modern slavery during the COVID-19 emergency. There is some useful guidance available online about the signs to spot. Homelessness charity, The Passage, has developed a [handbook](#) for staff working with homeless people; The Children's Society has published a disrupting

exploitation [booklet](#); and the Home Office has published [more general guidance](#) which you may find useful. There are also some useful resources available on [Stop the Traffik's website](#).

High streets

The Government has [announced plans to temporarily ban the use of statutory demands and winding up orders](#) where a company cannot pay their bills due to the outbreak. This is to help ensure high street shops and other firms do not fall into deeper financial strain. The measures will be included in the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Bill, which the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Alok Sharma, set out earlier this month.

The Government also plans to lay secondary legislation to provide tenants with more breathing space to pay rent by preventing landlords using Commercial Rent Arrears Recovery (CRAR) unless they are owed 90 days of unpaid rent. The Government has called on tenants to pay rent where they can afford it, or what they can, in recognition of the strains felt by commercial landlords too.

New free online learning platform to boost workplace skills

A new online learning platform to help boost the nation's skills while people are staying at home has been launched by Education Secretary, Gavin Williamson.

Free courses are available through a new online platform hosted on the GOV.UK website, called 'The Skills Toolkit'. The new platform gives people access to free, high-quality digital and numeracy courses to help build up their skills, progress in work and boost their job prospects.

The announcement can be viewed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-free-online-learning-platform-to-boost-workplace-skills>

The Skills Toolkit is available here: <https://theskillstoolkit.campaign.gov.uk/>

Extra month to claim for farm payments

The government has confirmed that the window to submit applications for the Basic Payment Scheme and make a claim for Countryside Stewardship, Environmental Stewardship and Woodland Legacy revenue payments will be extended by one month.

The announcement can be viewed here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/extra-month-to-claim-for-farm-payments>

Further information is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-farmers-landowners-and-rural-businesses>

EU Settlement Scheme funding

EU citizens living in the UK before the end of the transition period (and their family members) need to apply under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) to obtain their new UK immigration status, following the UK's departure from the EU.

Funding has been set aside for charities and councils to provide face-to-face, online and telephone support to help vulnerable EU citizens apply, including legal support, caseworker services or general advice. In early May the first round of bidding for [a further £8 million of funding for 2020/2021](#) will open, with an extended deadline for submissions due to the current focus on COVID-19.

For more information on the grant funding, please see the [Contract Finder Notice on GOV.UK](#) or email EUSSgrants@homeoffice.gov.uk.

Help keep children safe from abuse and neglect

During the lockdown, we are all spending more time at home self-isolating or social distancing, and you may be coming into contact with children less frequently than before, but some children may be at a greater risk of abuse, neglect and household adversity.

Schools are being kept open for vulnerable children, and Children's Services are in contact with those children who are already known to the council; however, there may be children who are not known to social services that are at risk.

Just because children are out of sight, doesn't mean they are out of harm's way which is why we need your help to share these messages with others and to look out for the children and young people you work with and who live in your community. If you have any concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing, please contact the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) - see details below.

Right now, it is even more difficult to spot the signs of abuse or neglect and it can be difficult to know for sure if something is happening at home.

Some of the signs you may spot include:

- aggressive or repeated shouting
- hearing hitting or things being broken
- children crying for long periods of time
- very young children left alone or are outdoors by themselves
- children looking dirty or not changing their clothes
- children being withdrawn or anxious.

If you spot these signs it doesn't necessarily mean a child is being abused or neglected but by raising your concerns you can make sure that children are safe and families are getting the support they need at the earliest opportunity rather than leaving it too late.

If you are concerned about a child, please contact the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 01452 426565 or complete a [Multi-Agency Referral Form](#).

For more information on reporting concerns and signs of abuse, please go to <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/children-young-people-and-families/covid-19-help-us-keep-children-safe-from-abuse-and-neglect/>

You can also help us by following us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) and sharing our messages.

Libraries

People are benefiting from a vast range of digital resources available while Gloucestershire's libraries are closed - with more than 40,000 items downloaded in March and April:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershire-county-council-news/news-april-2020/online-resources-are-a-hit-for-library-users/>

Letter from Secretary of State to Parish and Town Councils

In a [separate letter to parish councils](#) the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, has written thanking them for the vital work that they are undertaking in their communities in responding to the challenge of coronavirus. We will be considering our response to the letter in the coming days/weeks.

Website Information

Our website and social media channels have all the latest information concerning how we are operating in the midst of this emergency situation. We encourage you to follow them and check the website regularly.

Website: www.cotswold.gov.uk

Twitter: [@CotswoldDC](https://twitter.com/CotswoldDC)

Facebook: [@CotswoldDC](https://www.facebook.com/CotswoldDC)

LinkedIn: [@CotswoldDC](https://www.linkedin.com/company/cotswold-dc)

Contact Reminder For Councillors

If you need to contact the Council we have set up two ways to do this and this will ensure your request is managed appropriately. Obviously we are dealing with a major global emergency so we will prioritise service requests.

Tel: 01285 623005

Email: councillor.contact@cotswold.gov.uk

PLEASE STAY SAFE, STAY HEALTHY AND LOOK AFTER YOURSELVES, YOUR LOVED ONES AND YOUR NEIGHBOURS. AND, AS EVER, PLEASE PRACTICE AND PROMOTE OUR NATION'S KEY MESSAGE OF - STAY AT HOME, PROTECT THE NHS, SAVE LIVES - SO THAT TOGETHER WE BEAT THE CORONAVIRUS.