

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL COVID-19 UPDATE – FRIDAY 17TH April 2020

- Public Health – In Somerset we now have 147 recorded Covid-19 infections and 49 deaths. There are currently a total of 41 hospitalised Covid-19 cases, 5 of which are receiving mechanical ventilator interventions. All hospitals are coping well, with plenty of capacity. Compared with 2 weeks ago there is beginning to be evidence of an increase in deaths, when compared with the usual number recorded in previous years.
- Care home cases – have increased to 27 (from 17 earlier this week).
- SCC status – Low rates of staff absenteeism at present and everything is up and running as expected.
- Registration service – some people are struggling with online registration of deaths, but support is being provided. There is currently a large backlog of death registrations, largely due to the change in methods of registration. It is intended that this backlog be cleared over this weekend.
- There is an increased focus on domestic violence, based on anecdotal evidence. I have raised concern in relation to whether or not those experiencing violence, particularly in a confined environment, will be able to access help and support easily.
- The peak of the Covid-19 cases in Somerset is later than planned but are so far lower than had been anticipated.
- Planned new school builds – these are continuing but at a slower pace in order to accommodate social distancing.
- JCT 25 and other highways work – continuing but at a slower pace.
- Public transport – demand has dropped but SCC are working with transport providers to provide financial support and to ensure it is available for key workers.
- Patient transport – especially for renal dialysis patients, SCC has taken out a short-term lease of 22 vehicles to enable safer transport, and to avoid use of volunteers.
- 1254 homes are being visited on a weekly basis for school meal provision.
- Waste collection – parked cars have posed a problem for vehicle access, with more people being at home. There has been a huge increase, particularly of cardboard, and extra vehicles have been provided to collect household cardboard waste weekly.
- Green waste – volume of waste is higher than ever and of concern. The fire service has advised that bonfires are not to be encouraged.
- Household waste re-cycling – 90% of centres are closed across the country. Dept. of Health does not consider this essential travel. There has been concern over the increase in fly tipping across the county. Consideration is being given to re-opening as many of these services as possible as soon as possible, using additional contractors if necessary.
- Economic development team – working with districts to ensure gov't funding is received and to work on a Covid-19 recovery plan for communities and businesses.
- Planning – the highways planning team is still in operation.
- Small Improvement Schemes – the programme has been temporarily paused.
- Contact centres – with multi-agency working and improved IT systems now in place, call volume has increased from 449 calls in March to 4900 in the last week (800+ calls per day). Online security has been improved, and 3k+ staff are now working from home. The IT team are now working 24/7.
- Partnership working with districts – the main focus on is on vulnerable people and carrying out risk assessments, to contact them, and ensure face-to-face calls are made where necessary. At the moment there is no central point for information,

which is being worked on. Plans are in place for an accreditation scheme to ensure that only bona fide people are calling on members of the public. SCC have now been given access to NHS volunteer lists in order to be able harness their help.

- PPE – 650 containers of PPE equipment have now been distributed, and the position is improving. 200k face masks were received this week for social care use alone (GPs, care homes etc.), with more on the way, funded by SCC. The NHS have their own source of supply. Gloves and gowns remain in short supply.
- Testing – a site up and running at Bristol airport, with 300 carried out on key workers so far, and further plans being put in place this coming week.
- Concern has been raised about the risk of involvement with those requiring care at home, and the number of carers/visitors they receive. Steps are in place to ensure that appropriate PPE equipment is available and used.
- Hinckley Point C – concern has been raised about safe access arrangements for site workers from other areas of the country living in local villages, and the intention to persuade them to live within the confines of the site to avoid travel.
- Glastonbury has been identified as an area where it is proving difficult to ensure that people are social distancing, and a number of fixed penalty notices have been issued.