

News and information from Jane Gould, Babergh District Councillor.

To the residents in Orwell Ward

COVID 19 Newsletter 4

18 May 2020

As you will be aware, a number of changes came into effect last week to lockdown rules, with the Government starting to relax restrictions on people's movements and activities. We can now:

- spend time outdoors – for example sitting and enjoying the fresh air, picnicking, or sunbathing
- meet one other person from a different household outdoors - following social distancing guidelines
- exercise outdoors as often as we wish - following social distancing guidelines
- use outdoor sports courts or facilities, such as a tennis or basketball court, or golf course – with members of our household, or one other person while staying two metres apart
- go to a garden centre

However, there are a number of things that remain unchanged. We must continue to observe social distancing, ensuring we are at least two metres away from anyone outside our household. We should still stay at home as much as possible, continue to regularly wash hands and, as always, self-isolate if we or members of our household show any coronavirus symptoms.

Council meeting arrangements

All full council, cabinet and committee meetings will be held virtually until at least September 2020 in accordance with the existing schedule of meetings. All non-public meetings with councillors (briefings/working groups/panels etc) will be

held virtually. We are working on moving to Micro Soft Teams rather than Skype to conduct formal public meetings.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk Overview and Scrutiny Committees are preparing to resume their regular meetings by holding them virtually. The Chairmen of both committees met last week to review the Committee's work plans, ensuring that the councils continue to have a robust scrutiny process.

Update on business grants

We have distributed £37.1m in grant funding to over 3,000 businesses which accounts for approximately 80% of our allocated grant funds across both districts. We are still working hard to reach all those businesses who have not yet applied to ensure they are aware of the grants which they are entitled to.

Since the announcement of the Discretionary Fund for small businesses, we have been developing criteria for businesses in our districts and liaising with colleagues across the county to ensure that we are all aligned in Suffolk. There are a number of complexities to work through while developing the criteria and application process because it is discretionary and there is a finite amount of funding, however, we are aiming to start sending out grants in early June. Until the application criteria for the Discretionary Fund is confirmed, no grant payments except those for the Small Business Fund or Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Fund can be made.

Car Parks

In line with recent Government guidance, we've re-opened free car parks, the one that is area specific to us is the one at Lower Holbrook.

We are advising the public to continue to apply social distancing and be mindful of others, not to travel unnecessarily if there are alternative places they can explore closer to home, to keep dogs on leads in busier areas and to

clean up after them. Playgrounds and toilets remain closed for everyone's safety.

Suffolk recycling centres re-open for bookings only

A new online booking system created by Suffolk County Council launched last week, which allows residents to book a slot to go to one of Suffolk's Recycling Centres which re-opened on Thursday 14 May. The appointment-only system has been put in place to help reduce traffic disruption and queuing on roads around the sites, and to help manage additional demand on the waste sites. There are also new temporary restrictions and guidelines in place at all sites to support the safety of staff and members of the public.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any issues that you think I can help with and all the very best to you all.

Jane Gould

Babergh District Councillor

Orwell ward

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