

Parish Councils update from South Hams Cllrs. Pannell & Smerdon

May 2020

- **SHDC.** Council has been in emergency mode, with urgent decisions being taken by senior officers in consultation with the Leader. As with Parish Councils, SHDC has now received guidance that meetings may be held remotely using video conferencing. The advice is that this should only be used for decisions on Coronavirus-related issues and matters of the utmost urgency. SHDC had so far held two Full Council Meetings. There will also be some remote meetings of the Executive. One of the first decisions was to confirm the appointment of the new Chief Executive for South Hams and West Devon, following the move of Sophie Hosking to Cornwall. He is Andy Bates, who comes to us from the Local Government Association, where he is Principal Adviser for the South West. He has already been working with South Hams in that role.
- **Finance.** There could be significant financial implications from the emergency for SHDC – loss of income and emergency expenditure – but it will depend on whether the Government is able to recompense local authorities in full. The council is facing a shortfall of several million pounds from the crisis – for example due to the Business Rate and Council Tax reliefs, and the loss of income from car parking etc. The Government has declared that it will recompense councils for their losses but there is concern that this should be in full or local authorities will face a very difficult financial situation. In the first round of additional Government funding SHDC was awarded £33,962. After strong lobbying this was increased in the second round, announced on 29th April, to £866,545.
- **Planning. FOR THOSE NOT IN DNPA AREA.** New applications are once again being accepted. Less controversial plans are being decided, as in the past, by officer delegation, with local Ward Member consent. It is possible that Development Management meetings will be held by video conferencing. If not, major planning applications and those which cannot be decided by Ward Member approval are likely to be held over until normal meetings resume.
- **Waste services.** Household recycling centres open again on Monday 11th May – but only for private cars and for materials which present a hazard if they remain in homes, for example toxic materials or broken glass in a home where there are young children. Refuse collections continue as normal at present, although collection days are changing in May because of the two Bank Holidays, please check. The introduction of the new recycling system with plastic boxes replacing bags has been delayed until February, because the crisis has halted construction of the specialised lorries needed, in Ireland, and the building of the new waste transfer station at Ivybridge.

- **Public areas.** Public toilets remain closed for reasons of public health, as are children's play areas. Parks and open spaces should be kept open for exercise, so long as people respect distancing
- **Council tax reduction.** Help is available for people who already receive help with their Council Tax because of low incomes, and may be extended
- **Small Businesses.** By 1st May SHDC had paid out £34million in business support grants to 2,936 businesses in the South Hams – 96% of those who had applied. Help is available to businesses which have had to cease operations because of Government regulations. Business Rate holiday for the current year – nothing to pay. Those eligible for this have been informed by letter sent to their business address. Cash grants of up to £25,000 from the Government for those in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. There is also the Government assistance available to pay 80% of staff wages up to £2,500 per month.
- **Small business grants of £10,000** are available for businesses with a Rateable Value of less than £15,000. This also applies to Village Halls, Recreation Associations etc.
- **Discretionary grants** for businesses which haven't previously qualified were announced on 1st May. SHDC will have £2.4million to administer for businesses in shared spaces, bed and breakfasts, charities etc. Details of how this scheme will operate are still being worked out and will be announced later this month.
- **Help for self-employed and small businesses** is available from the Government. Go to the Gov.uk website for details.
- **Emergency Welfare Fund** has been set up together with Devon County Council to help people such as those waiting to receive Universal Credit and the self-employed. Food and essential travel to a hospital appointment are the types of need which will be helped. Secondary schools are also being given allocations to award directly to students suffering hardship.
- **Grants for local community groups and Town and Parish Councils.** Quick grants of £500 from Devon County Council and also £500 from DNPA (for those in the National Park) are available to community groups/parish councils who are supporting people with food banks, shopping, emergency financial assistance etc. Bigger grants of up to £6,000 also available from Devon CC. SHDC has funding of up to £250 per parish for virus-related work in the community, but the size of depends on the number of applications in each area.
- **Food parcels.** The Government has identified a small number of people 'shielding' at home because they are vulnerable with health conditions. SHDC arranged the delivery of 25 food parcels to those who needed them but this is now being handed to a food distribution company to manage.

- **Working with Community Groups.** Devon CC and SHDC have identified and published lists and maps of community groups who are helping those in need. They are liaising with these groups so assistance can be co-ordinated and to avoid duplication. Groups are being issued with a short guide covering issues such as selection and registration of volunteers, safeguarding, risk assessments etc.
- **Food banks.** Morrisons have said they will supply surplus food to groups running food banks
- **Domestic abuse.** There is an increased risk of domestic abuse. Help is available from Devon and Cornwall Victim Support. Email victimservices@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk Tel: 0300 303 0554

SEE HELPFUL LINKS BELOW

Here are some links which may prove useful, if you don't already know them:

- **Covid 19 related Helpline for South Hams** [01803 861297](tel:01803861297)

Advice is still available for other matters through the South Hams DC website, but responses may take longer as some staff have been switched to virus-related activities.

- **Local Action Support Fund** <https://southhams.gov.uk/LASFund>
- **Post Office support for getting access to cash** <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-52229698>
- **Info on grants and funding for individuals, groups and businesses.** <https://www.devon.gov.uk/document/grant-and-funding-support/>
- **The Silver Line** - FREE confidential helpline providing information, friendship and advice to older people, open 24 hours a day, every day 0800 470 8090
- <https://www.thesilverline.org.uk>
- **The Mix.** Online support Webchat for 10-18 year olds, online counselling for up to 28. Group chat, general chat, helpline, email and text support and webchat 0808 808 4994
www.themix.org.uk
- **Victim Care Unit** on 01392 475900 <https://www.victimcaredevonandcornwall.org.uk/Help-and-Support/> This link is more local support and covers a wide range of topics which is useful.
- **National Domestic Abuse** free phone helpline 24 hours is 0808 2000 247 - the web link <https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/>