

Dear Parish Councils in Orwell Ward

You may have already seen the information below but if you haven't it could be useful to you. It is good to stay in touch and I would like to thank all the parishes for the work you are doing to keep connected with the vulnerable residents you have. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with me if there is any extra support you need and if you haven't already logged your support activities with the "Home, But Not Alone" service could I encourage you to look into it and decide whether or not you think it is for you. There is more information below about the free app called Tribe Volunteer.

Coronavirus update from Babergh and Mid Suffolk

Following the statement by the Prime Minister on 23 March 2020, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have introduced further changes to their services in order to protect the public and staff, and to help prevent the spread of the virus, in line with Government guidance.

These are as follows:

We are closing our play parks. This will be done where possible by locking gates and putting up signage.

Customer Access Points in Ipswich Street, Stowmarket and Sudbury Town Hall have closed for 'face to face' enquiries and visits. Residents with council enquiries are now asked to go online wherever possible at www.midsuffolk.gov.uk or www.babergh.gov.uk.

If customers can't resolve their query online, they should email us at Customer.Services@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk in the first instance.

The customer services team are also available on 0300 123 4000, however, this should only be used by those who do not have access to the internet, as high volumes of calls may mean it takes us longer to respond to individual queries over the phone.

Customers are encouraged to make payments online only, as we are currently unable to process post/scanning.

Repairs to our council housing stock are now absolutely essential items only until further notice.

Garden waste collections have now been suspended. This is to allow the council to prioritise essential collections. The councils will not be invoicing for garden waste, or trade waste during this period.

We have further limited access to our headquarters at Endeavour House, with staff, where possible and if not already, working from home.

We will continue to review the delivery of our priority services and the redeployment of staff to directly support the most vulnerable; who are of course now on greater lockdown, at risk of isolation and not being able to access their vital medication and food.

The councils will continue to regularly communicate about individual issues and changes to services, as required, over the coming days.

Suffolk urged to rally together as new local COVID-19 app and phone line launched to connect volunteers and people who need help.

A new Suffolk-focused community service has been set up to support people who need help during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Called 'Home But Not Alone', the service has been launched to help connect people who want to volunteer in their communities with neighbours who are most in need.

The service will mean willing volunteers, charities, town and parish councils, community and religious groups can all log their details and offers of support on an app, while people who need help can phone to request support. As the number of offers and requests grows, they will be matched so that the right help can be given where it's most needed. This support could include delivering groceries, medication or essential household goods, in line with Government social distancing guidelines.

The free app, called Tribe Volunteer, can be downloaded from the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. The telephone number for those in genuine need of help is freephone 0800 876 6926 and will be staffed

from 09:00 to 17:00, seven days a week.

The Home, But Not Alone service was created by partners from Suffolk's councils, police, health bodies and charitable organisations which come together as the Collaborative Communities Board. Chrissie Geeson, the board chair, said:

"In these challenging times, it has been incredibly heartening to have so many people volunteer to help others. In villages and towns across Suffolk, people have taken it upon themselves to mobilise a small army of volunteers to do what they can for people in need.

"The support service will encompass this work but will bring structure and routine to these offers of help. This is just the start of this new service, so we expect the number of offers and requests to grow; people who want to help, or need help, should let us know and we will do the rest.

"It is testament to the hard work of all Suffolk organisations and sectors that we are able to offer this invaluable help."

The telephone line is not a general information line for COVID-19 queries, but those in need can seek information on support with care needs, loneliness and to connect with community support. This is a new service and will adapted to demand over the coming weeks. People are still being urged to check gov.uk for the latest guidance on a wide range of issues and changes caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.

All the very best to you all
Jane Gould
Babergh District Councillor
Orwell ward