27 March 2020

Dear Colleague

**North Norfolk Coronavirus Community Support programme**

We are writing to advise you of the local arrangements which North Norfolk District Council has put in place to support shielded and vulnerable individuals in our communities in response to the national effort to protect such groups during the current Coronavirus situation.

The District Council recognises that many town and parish councils have already developed plans to deliver support to the vulnerable in their communities through community volunteer structures over the past few days, for which we thank you. We very much wish to build upon these arrangements and harness that resource through acting as a supportive strategic partner at a district level.

This would ensure that individuals who are following Government advice and self-isolating and who request assistance through the Norfolk helpline 0344 8008020, or the North Norfolk helpline 01263 516000, can be assisted through messages being passed to local community volunteers at the parish and neighbourhood level. We recognise that with our elderly demographic there will be many people in North Norfolk who might need support at this time.

We have therefore spent the last few days considering how the District Council can best deploy resource and support frontline delivery at a community level and believe a hub and spoke approach will provide the greatest resilience and support to individuals and communities on the ground.

We have established a co-ordination “hub” at the Council’s Cromer offices where requests for assistance will be received via the County Council helpline, direct to the District Council, or through our established contacts with vulnerable groups and individuals through our Social Prescribing work, Assisted Bin collections etc. Requests for support will be passed to Community Response Co-ordinators who will be based in ten Local Co-ordination Centres established across the District - covering the areas as detailed on the attached schedule and map.

These Community Response Co-ordinators will initially be “on the ground” between 10:00am and 4:00pm, Monday to Friday. These working hours will be kept under review, with the option to extend dependent on the volume and nature of requests for assistance received and the length of time the system needs to be operated.

Our initial planning is that we will operate this arrangement over a least a twelve-week period – this being the period which Government has advised, to date, that vulnerable individuals should “self-isolate” to protect themselves from the virus.

These arrangements will be operational from Monday 30th March, when it is anticipated that letters to all households in the County will be delivered advising our residents of the support which the County and district councils across Norfolk will be providing to support our residents through this unprecedented situation.

We recognise that the arrangements will take a little while to establish on the ground and believe, from the national modelling, that the peak of the virus in terms of numbers of people being taken ill might be three or four weeks away. We therefore hope that we can develop our partnership working arrangements over the next week, so that we have in place the very best systems to provide the necessary support to those who are self-isolating in our communities in the coming weeks, working with local volunteer groups on the ground, where appropriate.

As stated above, we recognise that many communities have already established community volunteer groups and Good Neighbour Schemes, mostly through their Town and Parish Councils, to support self-isolating individuals in their communities at this time. The District Council is not seeking to replace, or duplicate these arrangements, but to work with them and build upon them. We particularly need to plan for a situation where some community volunteers might themselves become ill such that very local support arrangements might fall over. We have already, as a district council, been contacted by a number of GP surgeries and community pharmacies to arrange delivery of prescriptions to people who are self-isolating and will establish arrangements for food and other necessary provisions to be supplied to such people as necessary. At the present time, food supply arrangements nationally are considered to be resilient, but again in the weeks ahead, we need to plan for a situation where perhaps larger numbers of people are unable to access supermarkets or food shops themselves, perhaps because of the need to self-isolate or being taken ill, and therefore arrangements might need to be made at a local level to co-ordinate the distribution of food parcels.

The ten Local Co-ordination Centres build on established communities of interest / geography, particularly local GP surgery areas, and key road corridors. They are further considered to be of a “manageable” scale in terms of our ability as a District Council to support community efforts on the ground.

We would therefore now ask each town and parish council to provide our Cromer “hub” with details of a lead contact so that in the coming days and weeks we have a local point of contact for each of our 121 parishes in terms of us co-ordinating support for vulnerable individuals – these details should be sent in the first instance to:-

**nndccovid19@north-norfolk.gov.uk**

In the days ahead, we will also seek to establish practical links with a lead co-ordinator in the numerous community volunteer groups, which have been established in recent days. We will also establish a separate email point of contact for wider communication between the District Council and town and parish councils for issues other than community support and assistance to individuals at this time.

Currently, it is planned that each Local Co-ordination Centre will be supported by a Community Response Co-ordinator, although the exact range of services and functions to be provided at these locations is yet to be determined and may change and develop over time. Initially the Local Co-ordination Centres will fulfil a local co-ordination / communication function, but might in time be the location from which prescriptions food parcels and other items are distributed. The Local Co-ordination Centres will **not** be open to the public, and should only be accessed by community volunteers. At the Local Co-ordination Centres, consideration will need to be given to guidance around social distancing – to try and minimise any transfer of the virus within the community. It will therefore be necessary for the Community Response Co-ordinators to consider carefully the layout of their Centre and the numbers of people allowed to enter the building at any time. We will develop detailed operational guidance in this respect and share with you in the coming days.

We believe that these arrangements will provide communities and individuals across North Norfolk with support and resilience in responding to the challenges we face in the coming weeks – supporting front line delivery of community volunteer arrangements through a district level co-ordination resource, backed up by an ability to deploy District Council staff to support specific activity – ie food parcel delivery into the Local Co-ordination Centres etc., if the situation requires this.

It is important at this time that we maintain good two-way communication and we would therefore welcome any practical comments you might have on the arrangements outlined above, recognising that at this stage it is not possible for us to amend the geography of the proposed areas to be served by each Local Co-ordination Centre as these areas have been shared with other strategic partners such as the County Council in planning the Norfolk response to the national situation.

For regular updates on the situation and advice in North Norfolk, please visit:-

[**www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/coronavirus**](http://www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/coronavirus)

By working together, we will help our North Norfolk communities get through this.

Please encourage local residents, beyond the community volunteer resource, to follow Government advice and –

**STAY AT HOME, PROTECT THE NHS AND SAVE LIVES**

 

Cllr Sarah Butikofer Steve Blatch

**Leader of the Council Head of Paid Service**