

PR 4352

For Immediate Release

18 March 2020

Newark and Sherwood District Council: Support for businesses and residents

Newark and Sherwood District Council is keen to support its business community and their employees in these unprecedented and difficult times as a result of the outbreak of Coronavirus (Covid-19). Given recent central Government announcements, and to assist in understanding the raft of support available we have collated the key measures, including how the Council will be responding. We remain committed to being as flexible as possible in administering relief for qualifying business and people affected.

Financial support for businesses:

- A **statutory sick pay relief** package for SMEs.
- **Nil Business Rates for 2020/21 for all businesses in the retail, hospitality, and leisure sectors.** If you are a business in this sector there is no need to do anything more. Council staff are working to issue all £nil bills to confirm this position within the next 14 days.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/business-rates-retail-discount-guidance>
- A **Small Business Grant of £10,000** will be awarded to around **2,000 qualifying businesses** within the district. Again, if you are a qualifying business there is no need to do anything more. The Council will be making contact with you and making payments within the next 14 days.
- An ability to access a **cash grant of up to £25,000** for businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors with rateable values of less than £51,000. The detail on how this is administered is expected within the coming days and the Council's website will be updated as soon as we are in receipt.
- An **ability for businesses to claim against insurance policies** which covers a pandemic following confirmation from the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the government advice is "clear enough to claim".
- Temporary **suspension of planning regulations** to allow all pubs and restaurants to operate as takeaways.

In order to ensure we meet these commitments we will borrow if required while waiting for central Government funding. We expect more to follow in the coming days on the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, which is part of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's £330billion package announced yesterday. For further information please visit:

<https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/ourpartners/coronavirus-business-interruption-loan-scheme-cbils/>

There is also information on additional support at the Local Enterprise Partnership Growth Hub at <https://www.d2n2growthhub.co.uk/news/latest-news/covid-19-support-for-businesses/>

Financial Support for residents

Council Tax – all residents

The Council already operates a **Council Tax Hardship Fund** which can assist in covering the cost of up to 80 per cent of the Council Tax. The Council will **expand this fund** such that qualifying cases can secure up to 100 per cent relief. If your ability to pay Council Tax is impacted by Covid-19 please review the guidance and make contact. We will be as flexible as possible regarding payment arrangements for those whose income or circumstances are affected by the virus.

Homeowners

Following the Chancellor's announcements residents are reminded of the ability, if you are struggling to meet mortgage payments, to request an up to a three-month mortgage payment holiday from your mortgage lender.

Council tenants

If any council tenants are affected financially by Covid-19 they should contact the Council at the earliest opportunity. We will work with tenants to be as flexible as possible to deal with issues relating to Covid-19. Tenants may be able to obtain support to meet their rent and Council Tax through claiming Housing Benefit or Universal Credit (Housing Element), Council Tax Relief Scheme or Discretionary Housing Payment.

The Council remains committed to helping its residents and businesses cope through this challenging period. We are equally keen to foster an ability for residents to inform us of any vulnerable people who may not seek help themselves. Nottinghamshire County Council has advised that it will be launching as soon as practicable a dedicated phone line that will offer an ability to coordinate and seek advice at a local level, including the co-ordination of any humanitarian effort.

Ends