

Announcement from Martin Tett regarding Coronavirus

Update on the Coronavirus outbreak from Buckinghamshire Councils – a letter from Shadow Executive Leader Martin Tett

I would like to update you on what we are doing across the councils in Buckinghamshire in response to Coronavirus, what you can do to protect yourself and others, and how you can become involved in supporting your community.

Firstly, my thoughts are with all people in Buckinghamshire who have been negatively impacted in any way by this crisis. These are difficult and very challenging times. This makes it even more important that we come together to support each other. We're already seeing so much fantastic work going on across the county.

The current situation will no doubt test and stretch our ability, but the council is committed to providing community leadership and support wherever possible.

What are we doing?

The Coronavirus outbreak is of deep concern to everyone in Buckinghamshire. We are working together, across all the councils in Buckinghamshire, with Public Health England and the Department for Health and Social Care to tackle the Coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak to support our residents, communities, businesses and schools during this difficult time.

We are closely following government guidance to provide accurate and up to date information. We are well-prepared for these situations and have robust plans in place to focus on keeping essential services running to look after our elderly, the most vulnerable, children, and safeguard local communities.

As the impact of Coronavirus increases, we may need to make some temporary changes to some services. This is so we can protect people from infection and use our staff and resources where they are most needed. It is important that we communicate any changes to residents and ongoing engagement with communities will be a priority. Information about any service changes will be released to the press and published on our website www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk

We know that some of you will still want to get in touch face to face so, for now, we are keeping our main libraries and council offices open to answer your questions and provide advice. You can see which libraries are open at www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/libraries

We are also keeping our country parks open with no parking charges so you can get out for some fresh air and stay healthy.

How can you help?

It's crucial at times like this that everyone pulls together. In Bucks we are proud of our local communities and the voluntary and community work they do. I am truly humbled by the number of people and organisations coming forward and volunteering to help others in their towns and villages.

We know people, particularly if they are in isolation, are going to need support with practical things like getting medicines, doing grocery shopping, or caring for beloved pets, as well as dealing with the mental effects. The voluntary and community sectors will have a key role to play in supporting people.

If you are healthy and looking at ways you can help, take a look at our central community hub. This can be found on our new website at www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/coronavirus

We are also looking for people with skills. Visit our website and complete the 'I want to be involved' form at www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/coronavirus

If you are a vulnerable or older person who is self-isolating, or know of someone who needs help get in touch with us; visit www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/coronavirus

What you can do to protect yourself and others

It's everyone's responsibility to make sure we are doing everything we can to protect ourselves, our families and others around us.

1. Try to stay calm – be prepared and plan for the self-isolation of yourself or others but avoid panic buying so that others are not faced with empty shelves. Supermarkets inform us that there are no shortages. I have written today to all the major supermarket companies in Bucks asking them to offer priority personal and online shopping to the elderly and key vulnerable groups.

2. Stay healthy – there are lots of ways to stay healthy. Get outside and go for a walk in one of our country parks or visit National Trust parks for free but do maintain a safe distance from other people.

3. Be alert to the symptoms and follow the government guidance - maintain good hygiene, reduce non-essential contact and stay at home if you have either:

- A high temperature – you feel hot to touch on your chest or back
- A new continuous cough – this means you've started coughing repeatedly

It is particularly important for people who are over 70, have an underlying health condition or are pregnant to follow this advice as much as possible.

Find out more here: www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/coronavirus

Support our NHS

If you are worried about your symptoms it is important that you do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. This could spread the infection and put our doctors and health services at risk.

Go to <https://111.nhs.uk/> or if you cannot go online call 111. This is so we can keep phone lines free for those who need it most.

The government have also advised that testing for Coronavirus is not needed if you are staying at home. You do not need to contact 111 to tell them you are staying at home, but if you are concerned about your symptoms and need urgent medical help call 999.

Keep up to date

Advice is changing all the time. There is a lot of information being shared about Coronavirus. There is a lot of misleading or even 'fake news', particularly online.

Make sure the information you are following is from a trusted source - the government, NHS or Public Health England. For local information follow our social media via the twitter handle @BucksCouncil and keep an eye on our webpage www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/coronavirus .

We are also writing to our vulnerable and older people who use our services to make sure they have the information they need to stay safe and well.

Supporting Bucks businesses

I am aware that Buckinghamshire is a county of many businesses from the very large to the very small. These are very difficult times for companies and the many people who work for them.

We are channelling support through the local Buckinghamshire business 'hub', Bucks Business First (BBF), as details are confirmed.

If you are a company who wants advice on current local or government support, such as that announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, find out more via BBF at www.bbf.uk.com/covid-19 .

The new Buckinghamshire Council

The government's postponement of local elections until May 2021 will not stop the launch of the new Buckinghamshire Council. All five existing councils will be replaced by the one, new Buckinghamshire Council on 1 April. Plans for this are well advanced and we are already working together as one team to respond to the Coronavirus outbreak.

Lastly, I am also immensely proud of the dedication of all the staff in our local councils, NHS, social care, police and other key services who are continuing to work tirelessly to keep people safe and secure. I would like to pass on my thanks for everyone's work in these unprecedented times.

Martin Tett Leader of the Shadow Executive