

## **District Councillor's Report - June 2020**

### **A Tree For Life.**

A Tree for Life scheme in Babergh and Mid Suffolk which offers a free tree for new parents, is now open for 2020 applications allowing families to apply from home during the coronavirus outbreak. Recognising that new parents may be feeling more isolated than usual, and looking for something to look forward to with their new arrival, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have now opened their Tree for Life applications.

It is open to all families in the districts who welcome a new arrival between 1 January and 31 December 2020, in addition to parents who may have lost a child during the same period to apply for a remembrance tree. It aims to benefit families, communities and the environment by boosting tree coverage across the district.

This year's relaunch follows a bumper 2019 scheme with over 400 trees given away earlier in the year, ahead of the coronavirus outbreak. Open to all including those without a garden, a selection of trees were also planted with families at key locations in the districts including Needham Lake, Shotley Golden Wood, Broom Hill in Hadleigh, Gallowsfield Wood in Haughley and Sproughton Millennium Green.

Mid Suffolk saw a total of 274 successful applications in 2019, a 53% increase in take up compared to 2018. According to the Office for National Statistics, that means around 30% of families with newborns in our districts applied for the scheme, but now the councils are encouraging even more people to claim their free tree this year.

### **New Grant Scheme Opens For Small Businesses**

A new Discretionary Grant is now open for businesses based in shared offices or other flexible workspaces, market traders, bed and breakfasts and small charity properties.

As part of the Government's extended package of COVID-19 support, the grant is for businesses who are not eligible for either the Small Business or Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Funds but still have ongoing fixed property-related costs such as rent, license fees, hire or mortgage payments. To qualify for the Discretionary Grant, businesses must be permanently operating out of either:

- a share of a larger business premises which is rated for business rates purposes (of £15,000 or less or £51,000 or less in the retail, hospitality and leisure sector)
- a regular market stall on the weekly markets in Hadleigh, Stowmarket and Sudbury
- a bed and breakfast premises in a residential property that is subject to council tax and holds a current food safety licence
- a charity premises which is rated for business rates purposes and has a rateable value of £15,000 or less.

Unlike the Small Business Grant Fund and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund, which allocated grants automatically to certain businesses based on their rateable business rates, the Discretionary Grant will take into account certain factors when determining the grant allocation. These factors include fixed costs, number of employees, ability to trade online, whether a business has had to close completely and the scale of losses due to COVID-19.

### **Suffolk Works On Creating Safer Places As Lockdown Measures Ease**

Businesses, towns and spaces in Suffolk are getting extra help to make them safer and reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading as lockdown measures are eased. Support to make this happen comes from the 'Safer Places' group, part of the Suffolk Resilience Forum, which is made up of local authorities including Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils and Suffolk's NHS and Emergency Services.

The Government has announced a phased easing of rules around businesses and other properties opening, starting in June. The group is supporting businesses to meet this national guidance, allowing them to trade safely and keep their customers safe. As well as the retail sector, councils and public services are looking at their own areas and facilities in readiness for changes in national guidelines, such as car parks. The Safer Places group will also be engaging with local organisations, communities and councillors and organisations to look at tailored solutions for their particular areas. Measures are likely to evolve as guidance changes or improvements are made.

### **Stick With It Suffolk.**

Stick With It Suffolk is a campaign launching on Monday 18 May 2020, highlighting what we must all continue doing, to keep each other safe and to defeat the virus.

Recent data shows that around 1 in 600 people in Suffolk have tested positive for COVID-19, which compares favourably to Norfolk, Essex and the national average. However, we are not out of the woods yet. The number is continuing to rise, although more slowly, which is why it is crucial that people keep following the instructions. These are:

- Keep staying at home
- Keep working from home where you can
- Keep 2 metres apart if you go out
- Keep exercising safely
- Keep washing your hands with soap and water
- Keep self-isolating if you or anyone in your household has symptoms
- Keep travelling by car, bike or walking
- Keep staying safe at work
- Keep shielding yourself if you're vulnerable
- Keep supporting local businesses
- Keep looking out for each other

Stick With It Suffolk is being rolled out across the county by the Suffolk Resilience Forum, which includes Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils as well as Suffolk's NHS, Emergency and Public Services. These local authorities and organisations are working together around the clock to keep Suffolk as safe as possible.

### **Parking**

From the 1 Jun 20, MSDC has reintroduced charges in all Council owned carparks. To allow the maximum use of hands free operation, cashless parking solutions are available via the **Mipermit** App at all locations.

### **Public Toilets**

Public toilets are slowly being brought back into operation. Prior to opening electrical checks, deep cleaning and Salmonella testing must be completed.

Stay Safe

Regards

Rick

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