

# Coronavirus Recovery Special Chronicle

Stevenage Borough Council's quarterly residents' magazine

Summer 2020



LEISURE ACTIVITIES



REGENERATING OUR TOWN



THANK YOU CARDS AND GIFTS



GREEN SPACES



COMMUNITY SUPPORT



credit: @CovidTheCobraStevenage



# Leader's column



## Welcome to the Chronicle: Recovery Special Edition.

It's been a tough few months for everyone from NHS staff, keyworkers, supermarket staff, businesses big and small, teachers, children of all ages, parents and grandparents. This issue focuses on how we are helping Stevenage return to 'normal' and become a safe and protected town. We have worked hard to keep you informed and updated on the support available during the pandemic. I'd like to thank our council staff for their commitment to help you all.

Many of you have reached out to us to thank us for continuing our essential services. Our waste, refuse and recycling teams carried on collecting rubbish, our street cleansing team tidied our streets and our grass cutting service maintained our open and green spaces which meant we could make sure Stevenage continued to strive to be Even Better.

As we ease out of lockdown we are continuing to protect frontline staff who care for elderly residents in Supported Housing schemes with PPE. We are safely handling a 23% increase of waste collected from residents. Our specialist support services includes Stevenage Helps has distributed over 500 welfare packs.

Our Rough Sleeper initiative housed 48 homeless people, placed 120 families into emergency accommodation and Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse supported 78 people suffering from domestic abuse situations. We have had to respond swiftly to prepare our town post Covid-19 and it has been a challenging programme to deliver in a very short amount of time to transition to a new normal. Thank you to all our partners who worked co-operatively with us during the lockdown.

If you are going into the old town or town centre, you will see we have marked up pavements in public spaces to help everyone remain socially distanced whilst enjoying retail and food and drink offers. This is important for our town to bring it back to life, after all the 'heart of a town lies in its people'. We want you to feel safe when you visit our local shops, parks and open spaces and enjoy what our wonderful town has to offer. Our council recognises the impact the pandemic has had on people and special arrangements have been made with thousands of you to help manage the pressures you may feel to pay bills.

For now, car parks are open, the indoor market welcomes your custom and many retailers are beginning to open physical shop doors, while some have chosen to continue to trade online to reach customers. Fairlands Valley Park, our open spaces and cycle paths have seen local people exercising and enjoying scenic walks. This issue of the Chronicle explains our steps to help our town, communities, businesses and you, the people of Stevenage to feel safe and well as we set out our recovery plan from this horrendous pandemic.

**Best Wishes,  
Leader of the Council, Cllr Sharon Taylor  
Stevenage Borough Council**

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# CORONAVIRUS

## What am I now allowed to do?

(at time of print)

As restrictions continue to ease...

- you can meet in groups of up to two households (anyone in your support bubble counts as one household) in any location - public or private, indoors or outdoors. You do not always have to meet with the same household - you can meet with different households at different times.
- when you are outside you can continue to meet in groups of up to six people from different households, following social distancing guidelines
- additional businesses and venues, including restaurants, pubs, cinemas, visitor attractions, hotels, and campsites can reopen.
- other public places, such as libraries, community centres, places of worship, outdoor playgrounds and outdoor gyms are open for use.
- you can stay overnight away from your home with your own household or support bubble, or with members of one other household
- it is against the law for gatherings of more than 30 people to take place in private homes (including gardens and other outdoor spaces). This can include weddings and funerals (limited to no more than 30 people), religious ceremonies and services, community activities and support groups.

You should not:

- socialise indoors in groups of

more than two households. This includes when dining out or going to the pub.

- socialise outdoors in a group of more than six people from different households.
- hold or attend celebrations (such as parties) where it is difficult to maintain social distancing.

## What now?

Official Government advice has altered and continues to do so. Lockdown measures are eased, remember messages regarding hygiene, social distancing and travel.

- Keep your distance if you go out exercising, going for a walk or shopping for supplies.
- Wash your hands regularly
- Do not leave home if you or anyone in your household has symptoms.
- If using public transport or visiting the shops, please wear a mask or scarf.

## Wash Your Hands

Still the most effective measure you can take to stop the spread of the virus is to regularly and thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water. By all means use anti-bacterial gel as well, but know that it is a virus and not a bacteria.

The membrane of the virus is more easily destroyed by soap and warm water, so wash your hands thoroughly for 20 seconds at least. This is especially important if you have been outside. Also try to avoid touching your face because it can enter the body through the eyes, mouth, ears and other spaces.

## Symptoms

- a high temperature (above 37.8c)
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss of, or change to, your sense of smell or taste

## Test and Trace

The NHS has launched a test and trace service to help trace recent contacts of anyone who tests positive for coronavirus and, if necessary, notify them by text or email that they must self-isolate at home to help stop the spread of the virus.

## Testing in Herts

### When?

Hertfordshire's mobile test sites are all open between 10am and 4pm.

### Where?

Mondays in Stevenage, off Six Hills Way, SG1 2DF.

Please follow the signs to the test centre, to ensure that you do not join a queue for the Household Waste Recycling Centre. Please bring a phone to the test centre if you have one.

- Thursdays in Watford at the Central Watford leisure centre, WD17 3HA
- Saturdays in Hertford at County Hall, Pegs Lane, SG13 8DQ
- Sundays in Watford at the Central Watford leisure centre, WD17 3HA

If you have had close recent contact with someone who has coronavirus, you must self-isolate if the NHS test and trace service advises you to do so.

# Covid-19 and our finances

**You may have read some headlines about the financial strain on the council during this pandemic. Like many councils up and down the country, fulfilling the Government's request to help steer our local community through this crisis has come at a huge cost. Here are the facts about the situation....**

Even before the Covid-19 crisis hit us, the council had been managing a tough financial situation for a number of years.

We have shown resilience and commitment to meet our financial challenges while continuing to provide essential services for the people of Stevenage to enjoy and rely on. This includes a variety of discretionary services which are vital to the quality of life in our town.

Some of those, such as our Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse service, which has seen a huge spike in usage during this crisis, could be viewed not merely as discretionary or optional, but as essential to the people that need it.

Our work also supports the regeneration and house building programmes which are delivering the ambitious future for our town that we all want to see.

Those financial challenges have included the government removing over £5m of grant funding and the council making £10m of "efficiency savings" to help us deal with additional cost pressures. We had a clear programme, budgeting all the way until 2022/23 which would deliver all of this.

When the Covid-19 pandemic began to take effect, we listened to central government's direction to local authorities to take this very seriously. We understood we were to do whatever is necessary to support our community through the crisis.

## **This has been our focus and to date includes:**

- Setting up our Stevenage Helps Hub for residents affected by the pandemic because they are vulnerable. This has delivered 593 food parcels, made over 500 phone calls and 255 referrals to our partners for support.
- Through our partners, Stevenage Community Trust, we have raised over £46,000 and that has enabled us to support residents in financial distress because of Covid-19.
- Housing 48 rough sleepers, supporting their complex needs and planning for their transition into longer term housing.
- We have seen a 90 per cent increase in referrals for domestic abuse as the strains of lock down have taken their toll and we have expanded our 'Safe Space' provision so we can keep everyone safe.
- Our refuse teams have carried on collecting refuse and recycling every week, tackling a 53 per cent increase in recycling and 23 per cent increase in refuse
- Delivered £11 million of government grants to over 800 businesses and provided support to enable them to carry on trading where possible.

We have sent detailed returns to the government setting out the cost of this work and the loss of income we have experienced. This means the

council would have a potential gap in funding of £4.5million by the end of July. So far the government has provided £928,000 of additional funding. That is why;

Town Centre regeneration has continued to be our focus as we have worked with our partners to keep our ambitious programme on track. This will ensure that our residents and businesses are at the centre of the town's regeneration led recovery and that we can offer the very best opportunities and facilities to them.

We are re-starting our ambitious home building programme. The construction industry is developing guidance for safe working with social distancing practices.

If the future additional funding from government is insufficient to meet this promise the council will need to take steps to ensure we can support residents who need our help. That is why we are undertaking an urgent review to see how we would do that. Councils are not permitted to run deficit budgets so we must be able to demonstrate that our books will balance by the end of the year. It won't be easy but it would be irresponsible not to be undertaking the financial planning now.

We have fulfilled our part of the 'deal' with government to do whatever is necessary to support our community. We need them to recognise the financial challenges we face because of Covid-19 and keep their side of that deal.

# IN RESPONSE TO COVID...

# 539

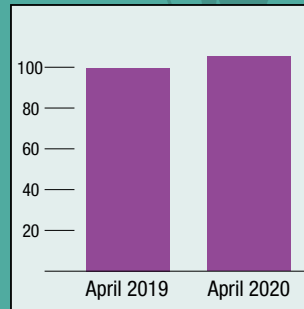
food parcels were delivered through our Stevenage Helps service.



Our Environmental Services team responded to

# 150

fly tipping reports



Supported residents following a **5.6%** increase in ASB reports (compared with April 2019)



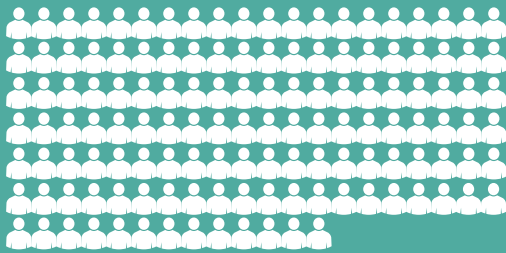
Saw a **23%** increase in refuse and a

# 53%

increase in recycling compared with the month of February.

Over the whole lockdown period we have collected over

# 440,000 bins.



Through SADA (Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse) service we have supported **133** individuals fleeing domestic abuse during lockdown, whilst continuing to provide support to existing clients.

Supported **67** new clients concerned with their alcohol or drug use through our 'No More Service' support service

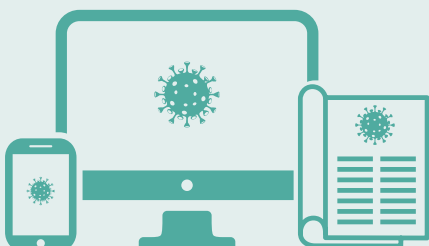


Reached out to over **730** vulnerable and elderly Careline Alarm customers, continued support to more than **90** Stevenage residents over 70, offering advice, support and a friendly ear to those who may be feeling particularly isolated.



Provided emergency accommodation to **48 rough sleepers,**

in addition to those owed a statutory duty under the homeless legislation.



Kept residents updated through social media, a dedicated coronavirus webpage with **7,800 views** and our residents' magazine Chronicle – Coronavirus edition sent to over **36,000 households.**

# The Town Centre is back

**Businesses in the Town Centre have started to reopen again, and while the shops may be familiar there are new guidelines in place which will make your usual shopping trip a different experience whilst the pandemic continues...**

Shoppers and shop-owners alike are excited and relieved to have the Town Centre opening again, but as we navigate our way through this, please expect there to be differences to your normal Town Centre shopping experience.

To start, social distancing guidelines have resulted in the introduction of new signs and markings on the ground to enable you keep the required one metre or more away from other shoppers.

Inside stores, business owners will have their own systems in place to help keep customers safe following the best advice. Outside, however, we have developed some reminders, so that residents are able to remain vigilant and safe.

You will notice outside shops that there is green temporary paint on the paving surface.



This is a "Queue Zone", in the areas closest to shop fronts which are often

under canopies. Shops will not be able to safely facilitate the same number of shoppers in-store, so it's likely that there will be queues to get into your favourite stores.

There is also white temporary paint on the paving surface. This is a walkway or movement zone, to encourage safe travel through the Town Centre. Please try to maintain the two metre distance from other shoppers. Each of the two 'lanes' is one way. A system you will be familiar with, if you have used all the big supermarkets.



Lastly, the yellow paint is to mark out rest zones around benches where people can safely stop or wait to join a queue. The paint forms a two metre 'exclusion zone' around the area. If you're planning to use the ramp by the train station please be advised that it is not quite two metres wide, so it's difficult to distance from people coming the other way. We suggest you use the steps outside the Gordon Craig Theatre as another route, if you can.

### Don't get caught short

We are aiming to open our toilets as quickly as possible and ensure they are safe to do so. Check online for details.

### Car Parks

The usual parking restrictions are back in force and nearly all of our available car parks and off-road parking bays are now open.

### Town Centre

- St Georges Multi Storey
- Forum
- Swingate
- Daneshill
- Railway North

### Old Town

- Primett Road South
- Church Lane North

### Meet Aldon

He can't be everywhere at once of course, but you may have noticed our Town Centre Warden, Aldon on patrol before locked down. He is back in the Town Centre and is happy to answer any questions you may have about the new way of doing things.



# STEVENAGE BETTER

a place for everyone



UPDATE

**While the past few months have been challenging for all, we are happy to announce that progress on the 20-year regeneration of Stevenage Town Centre continues to advance rapidly.**

Work has been underway on Mace's Town Square project since January with local contractors from Ashe Construction on site throughout the coronavirus pandemic. The development will introduce a fresh public realm offer, including new granite paving and bespoke lighting, to an iconic and popular area that hasn't been fully refurbished since its initial creation in 1959. The ongoing pandemic has proved problematic however Ashe has made fantastic progress, with new paving now covering more than half of the square and new tree pits and other features now in place.

Mace and Ashe are also working together on the Town Square North Block. We are introducing new restaurant space in the former McDonald's site along with developing co-working facilities on the first and second floors of the adjoining building. This strategy, which we're replicating across our developments, is aligned with principles from studies like 'The Grimsey Review', which outlines that town centres should focus on diversifying uses, rather than solely focusing on retail. It's designed to increase the number of people working and, in combination with the

major residential developments we have planned, living in the central spaces of the town. The project could see up to 200 jobs delivered in the town centre and we have already noted an increase on the already high demand for these types of facilities.

A planning application was submitted for Mace's SG1 programme in December 2019 which is currently being reviewed by the relevant planning authority. SG1 is our single largest scheme and includes the development of 11 new buildings and a series of streets and thoroughfares designed to improve accessibility and transform the town centre, potentially introducing thousands of new residents into the Town Centre. If you would like to leave feedback for Mace on their proposals then please visit [sg1consult.info](http://sg1consult.info) or the council planning portal – Ref. No: 19/00743/FPM

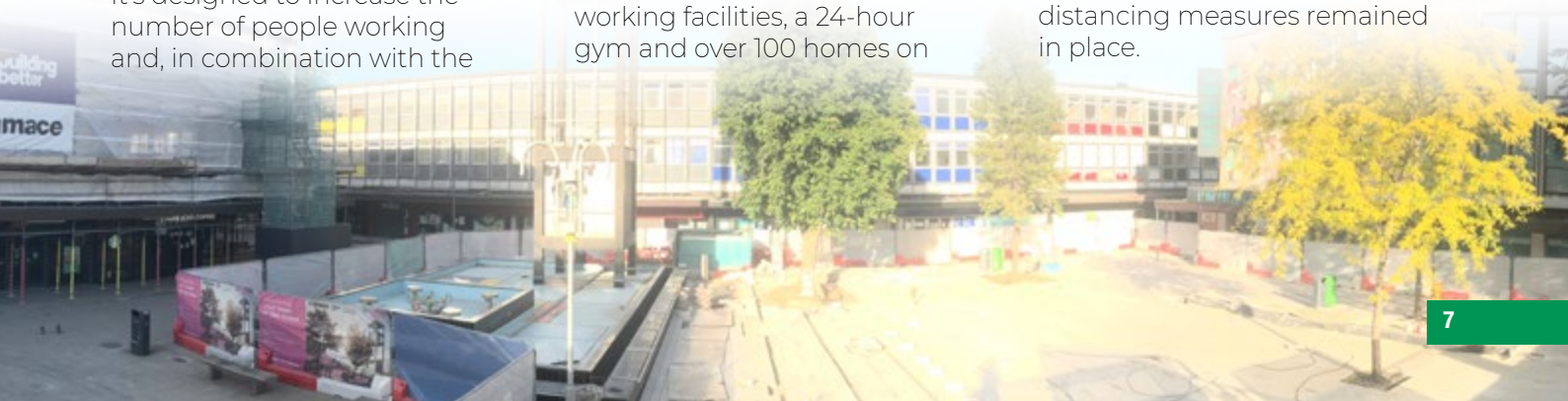
Reef's £50m Queensway North programme is also making fantastic progress with new shops, bars and restaurants being introduced on the ground floor along with new flexible working facilities, a 24-hour gym and over 100 homes on

the upper levels of the former site of Marks & Spencer and the adjoining units. The first stages of Queensway North are likely to be completed later this year and more information about this scheme – and all of our plans for regeneration – can be found at [www.stevenage-even-better.com](http://www.stevenage-even-better.com)

## Housing Development

The Council remains committed to its ambitious plans for new homes for Stevenage residents. These works provide vital new homes, in many cases for sections of our community which have been hardest hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. It also provides vital financial stimulus for the local town, with evidence demonstrating the huge benefits that investment in new homes gives to the local area by way of job opportunities and money invested in the town with local suppliers.

For the duration of the lockdown period, the Housing Development team worked closely with its partners to ensure that progress on the various new housing sites across the town continued safely and social distancing measures remained in place.



# Our Road to Recovery...

Here are some of the ways we are moving on from lockdown to kick-start normal life in Stevenage.

## Play centres

Our play centres have remained closed during the lockdown, and we're currently working on the feasibility of providing active play in parks during the summer holidays. We've also produced 'play boxes' which families collected from their local play centre, which included resources for children to use at home. Over 115 children received a box on the first day of them being offered.

More pop up play activities are being planned leading up to the summer holidays.

## Community Transport

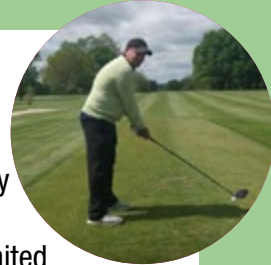
Our Community Transport service remains closed. During lockdown, the team have been contacting users of the service on a regular basis to check they are safe and if they need any support or assistance.

*"I just wanted to say that it is very comforting in these difficult times to receive a phone call each week to enquire that I'm ok and do I need any help. Like a lot of elderly people in Stevenage who have been used to a social life, this isolation and those of us that don't have family locally, life can be hard. Thank you."*



## Leisure

Stevenage Golf and Conference Centre reopened on 13 May, initially the course was restricted to two players teeing off at a time with limited opening hours but this has been extended to four players. The driving range and par three course are also open, but must be booked in advance online for any golf activity. Whilst you still can buy golf merchandise, the pro shop is closed for browsing as is the bar, catering and events.



We're working closely with Stevenage Leisure Limited (SLL) on reopening Stevenage Swimming Centre, Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre, and The Gordon Craig Theatre when it is safe to do so.

## Healthy Stevenage

We're working on launching our Young People's Healthy Hub virtually in the summer. We've regularly been updating our partners and residents with our weekly healthy activity newsletter, and we are working on a project to provide activities in parks and online during the summer holidays.

## Stevenage Museum

Since the beginning of lockdown, our museum team have been busy supporting Stevenage Helps, helping with virtual events like VE Day and Stevenage Day, answering enquiries, running a Zoom online support group for Mind in mid Herts and sharing the museum's collection on social media.

In early June, the museum's volunteers won a regional



digital volunteering award for their archiving.

Going forward, the plan is to open in phases once all of the safety measures are in place, with bookable slots for family groups starting in early August.

The new normal is likely to include a retro feel, where visitors are invited to look and not touch – something the museum hasn't done for decades!

Look out for is 'The Story of Stevenage in 100 objects' – if you've got a favourite object, whether in the museum or it could be something you own, they'd love to hear from you and potentially invite you to share the story for a new online exhibition.

If you haven't visited the museum before but would like to get involved, you can come along for a socially distanced guided tour to help choose your object. Email [museum@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:museum@stevenage.gov.uk) or call 01438 218 881.



## Arts and heritage

The Stevenage Arts and Heritage Strategy – **Stevenage Re-imagined** – was launched in the summer of 2019. Unfortunately, much of our partnership work has been affected by Covid-19, with many programmes having been postponed, including the Hertfordshire Cultural Education Partnership, arts programmes in the town centre and cycle network, and Stories from the Gordon Craig. We're working to implement these programmes through modified approaches, or to new timescales, to meet social distancing guidelines.



## Community wealth building

We will shortly be launching an **inclusive economy charter** as we encourage more job creation and more opportunities for residents across the town. We want to ensure that local businesses and organisations can benefit from opportunities that emerge across Stevenage as we recover from Covid-19.

## Green spaces

We're fortunate to have a large number of diverse **green spaces** to enjoy in Stevenage. These have remained open since the lockdown began as they provide a number of health benefits to visitors. Everyone who visits our parks and open spaces should follow the latest government guidance and continue to social distance and wash their hands regularly. Please follow any site/facility guidance displayed.

Our **play areas** and **outdoor gyms** are now open. We recommend that all users wash their hands thoroughly both before and after use of each item of equipment to minimise the risk of spreading the virus.

Since May, limited **fishing** recommended at Fairlands Valley Park, with pre-booking arrangements in place. We're working closely with Welwyn Garden City Angling Club – who manage the fishing activity on our behalf – to monitor activity, and we hope to be able to allow more fishing over the summer.

Due to social distancing rules, it will not be safe to open the **Aqua Park** in 2020, but we hope to open it as normal from Easter 2021. It is also unlikely that **sailing** and **other water activities** will be able to take place this summer.

The **kiosk** reopened in May, and will continue to be open – subject to weather conditions – throughout the summer. There are currently no plans to open the café and toilets, but we will review this if government guidance changes.

**Allotments** across Stevenage have remained open to existing plot holders, although toilet facilities have been closed.

Our **tennis courts** have reopened, and we have put up signage reminding users to social distance and keep washing their hands before and after playing.



# Councillors and ward surgeries

## Bandle Hill

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### Adrian Brown

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## Bedwell

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**Labour & Co-operative**

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## Chells

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**Liberal Democrat**

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**Conservative**

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**Conservative**

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## Manor

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**Liberal Democrat**

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### Sarah Mead

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Thank you for supporting our front-facing staff with your thank messages and gifts.

## Symonds Green

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**Conservative**

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## Councillor surgeries

Call or email with your local councillor at one of these monthly sessions. Councillors can help with information and advice, making a complaint, or enquire about services that the council provides.

### Bandley Hill (including the Poplars area) (Labour)

Saturdays 1 August 2020,  
5 September 2020,  
10.00-11.00

### Bedwell

Wednesdays 19 August  
2020; 16 September 2020  
10.00-11.00

### Manor and Chells

Thursdays 13 August 2020;  
10 September 2020  
19.00-20.00

### Martins Wood

Saturdays 29 August 2020;  
26 September 2020  
11.00-12.00

### Pin Green

Saturdays 7 August 2020  
19.00-20.00;  
5 September 2020  
10.00-11.00

### Roebuck

Tuesdays 11 August 2020;  
8 September 2020  
12:30-13:30

### Shephall

Saturdays 1 August 2020;  
5 September 2020  
11:00-12:30

### St Nicholas

Saturdays 1 August 2020;  
5 September 2020  
10:00-11:00

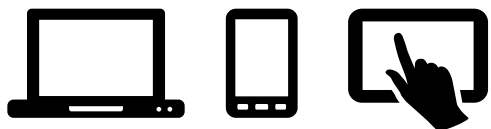
### Symonds Green

Get in touch with the ward councillors directly using the contact details provided and leave a message. Symonds Green councillors will offer digital / online surgeries for their residents soon.

### Bandley Hill, Longmeadow, Old Town, Roebuck and Woodfield (Conservative)

Tuesdays 18 August 2020;  
15 September 2020  
18:00-19:00

# How to get in touch



You can access all of our services online at [www.stevenage.gov.uk](http://www.stevenage.gov.uk)

If you wish to speak to us regarding any of the issues in this box please contact either of our main numbers: **01438 242242** or **0800 136661**

- Cemetery Services
- Litter
- Graffiti
- Household Waste and Recycling
- Street Cleaning and Grounds Maintenance Parking
- Parks, green spaces and woodlands
- Trees
- Lost/found/contained dogs
- Planning

## YOU CAN ALSO CONTACT SOME DEPARTMENTS DIRECTLY USING THE NUMBERS BELOW:

Allotment Lettings and enquiries **01438 242323**  
Garage Lettings **01438 242548/242416**  
Environmental health and protection (air and noise pollution, health & safety at work, food inspections and licencing) **01438 242908/242916**  
Street Wardens (anti-social behaviour) **01438 242666**  
Stevenage Parks **01438 242323**  
Stevenage Leisure Ltd **01438 242605**  
The Gordon Craig Theatre **01438 363200**  
Stevenage Museum **01438 218881**

## STEVENAGE COUNCIL HOUSING

For any of the housing matters listed in this box please call **01438 242666**

- Maintenance and emergencies
- Independent living services
- Homelessness and housing needs advice
- Right to buy

## PLEASE CONTACT HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL FOR:

Highways – potholes, roadworks and streetlights **0300 123 4047**

Libraries **0300 123 4049**

Schools **0300 123 4043**

Adult social care (including Meals on Wheels and Bus Passes) **0300 123 4042**

HWRCs (tips/dumps) **0300 123 04051**

General Enquiries **0300 123 4040**

## OTHER USEFUL NUMBERS

Citizens Advice (Stevenage) **03444 111 444**

Domestic Violence/Abuse line **01438 242666**

Energy Efficiency Advice Line **0800 512012**

Floodline (Environment Agency) **0845 9881188**

Gas Emergencies **0800 111999**

Hertfordshire Police **101**

NSPCC: Childline **0800 1111** HelpLine **0808 8005000**

NHS non-emergency **111**

Pest Control – Dial-a-Pest **03444 828334**

RSPCA **0300 1234999**

Samaritans **116 123**

Thames Water **0800 9808800** (sewerage problems, blocked main drains) Water Emergencies (Affinity) **0345 3572407**

Leakspotters (Affinity) **0800 3765325**

Women's Refuge and advice **01438 242666**

Alcoholics Anonymous **0800 917 7650**

## Get your local news in this magazine

The next edition is delivered later this year. If you would like information to be included please email: [chronicle@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:chronicle@stevenage.gov.uk) Chronicle is provided by Corporate Communications. Please be aware that the Editor reserves the right not to print articles. While every effort is made to ensure the information contained in Chronicle is correct, Stevenage Borough Council cannot be held liable for omissions and inaccuracies.

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