

Hi, I am Kim, Cllr Kim Forward, and I am the leader of your council.

I hope that you are managing in this strange, sad and difficult time. I know that we are all doing our best to stay home and stay safe and it is important that we continue to do this.

I wanted to make contact with you to let you know that your council's priority now is to stand with you and to help you through this tough time.

I know that for some of you life is exceptionally hard at the moment and I hope that you are managing to access the support you need.

You are the people we serve and I thought I would give you a quick update about some of the things we are doing.

We have set up a community hub to provide vulnerable people with key services such as collecting and dropping off prescriptions and delivering food. We did this just over a month ago and we worked with our partners, the community organisations in the town, as well as the NHS and the county council.

If you or anyone you know is in urgent need of help then please call our hub on 0 1 4 2 4 4 5 1 0 1 9. It is open from 9 until 5 Monday to Thursday and 9 until 4.30 on Fridays and then on Saturdays and Bank Holidays it's open between 12 and 4 in the afternoon.

The community hub will be here for as long as you need it.

Of course what we are seeing in the hub is only one part of the amazing picture that is our caring town. There are lots of other volunteer and community organisations and friends and neighbours helping too. Thank you very much everyone.

Since the start of this outbreak we have been committed to continuing to provide our services and this has been quite a challenge as we have to work within the government guidelines, new laws and the illness and necessary self-isolation of some of our workers.

We have been able to keep most of our services running with the majority of our officers working from home. However we have had to suspend some things and do others in a slightly different way.

I am pleased to say that one of the services that we had to pause ,garden waste, is up and running again now and you can look up your collection day on our website. You'll find a link on the homepage under popular tasks.

In fact the website is a really good place to find out all the latest information about how our services are running. You can find it at www.hastings.gov.uk

Our town is home to many wonderful businesses and some of them are instrumental to the country's efforts to deal with the impact of COVID-19 as they are providing vital equipment for hospitals and also manufacturing testing kits.

Some of our businesses have been able to adapt and find different ways to provide their services in line with government guidelines. But many of them are really struggling right now and we are working as hard as we can to support them.

Since the government announced a grant scheme for small retail, leisure and hospitality businesses we have processed over 1,300 applications and distributed more than £15.6m to eligible businesses in Hastings and St Leonards.

Our website has the latest guidance and information including other business support that's available. We are working hard to find and contact those businesses who could apply but haven't yet to let them know that the grants are there for them.

I will talk to you again next week and in the meantime please check out our Facebook page, follow us on Twitter and Instagram and look at our website for regular updates and lots of other useful information, support and resources including a link to our wonderful museum and art gallery.

Please be kind to yourself and to others and remember that if you need help and support it is here for you -from us, from one of the many great community organisations or from the NHS.

Finally please STAY HOME and STAY SAFE