

Summer 2020

# COASTLINE

*A FREE quarterly newsletter proudly delivered to you by Gosport Borough Council*

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This special, smaller, crisis edition of Coastline aims to help you find support at this difficult time and show you just some of the amazing work our community is doing.

The information here is correct at the time of going to press, but please bear in mind that the situation is changing all the time.



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## Special coronavirus edition

# Message from the Leader of the Council



*Cllr Hook and grandson Leyton*

These are difficult times for us all, whether you are self-isolating, home schooling, furloughed or social distancing, as lockdown measures have been in place for some time now. We have all made huge sacrifices by staying alert or staying at home wherever possible, protecting the NHS and helping to save lives.

I have been humbled by our residents who have shown huge compassion, togetherness and support with the weekly Clap for Carers, beautiful rainbow art in windows, helping neighbours and the hundreds of volunteers helping others.

Sadly we have lost loved ones and have not been able to grieve properly. It is our intention, when this is all over and we are back to normal, to hold a commemoration service for all those who have passed away, followed by a celebration of life.

Like many of you, family and friends are an important part of my life. As a dad and grandad, I have missed seeing my children and grandchildren, although I am lucky to have my daughter and grandson live with us. We have not been able to see friends or socialise. However, things are changing and we will be able to see one another again.

We need to look to the future, to plan for our community to recover, to help businesses, to help stimulate the local economy, to continue to deliver frontline services.

We can, and must, continue to follow government guidance to ensure that we are able to overcome this horrible virus as soon as possible.

Most importantly, keep safe and look after each other.

**Cllr Mark Hook**

## A life of service to Gosport

Honorary Freeman Graham Hewitt, a former mayor of the borough, died in March after serving Gosport residents with distinction for more than 50 years.

He was a councillor for 16 years and mayor from 1974 to 1976. He was heavily involved with the Multiple Sclerosis Society locally and nationally, and with Gosport's twinning arrangement with Royan, France. He worked all his life for The News.

He was granted the Freedom of the Borough in 2013, and in 2019 he and his wife Juliette were presented with the British Empire Medal for services to the MS Society.



*Graham Hewitt was given Honorary Freedom of the Borough in 2013*





*Gosport Borough FC players Rory Williams, left, and Liam Robinson prepare food parcels*



*Food deliveries are organised at Jacob's Well*

# Community effort to deliver food supplies

**After lockdown restrictions stopped food banks operating as normal, local organisations and volunteers joined up with the council to help residents at a time of growing need.**

The new Gosport Food Partnership gets food to the homes of people who need it. We're working with Jacob's Well Care Centre, Family Church Gosport, the Salvation Army, Radian Housing and Gosport Borough FC, who delivered hot meals to local veterans on VE Day.

One grateful resident told Jacob's Well: "Thank you so much for our delivery, you should be very proud of yourselves and of the help you are giving people."

Gosport Voluntary Action is supporting the effort, and Citizens Advice is helping residents by advising on budgeting and benefits.

**To request help, please call our community helpline (see back page).**

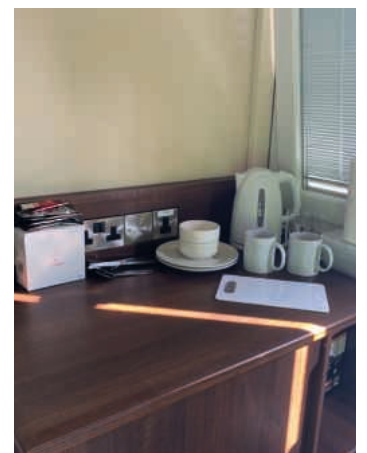
## Helping homeless people

**Helping rough sleepers and people without settled accommodation has been an important part of our response to the coronavirus outbreak.**

In April we put up 30 cabins in Walpole Park car park, some for couples and some for single people, all fully self-contained with a fridge, microwave, shower and loo. We also provided bedding, kettles, cutlery, crockery and other household items.

Although we provided accommodation for homeless people and rough sleepers before the coronavirus outbreak, we needed the cabins because our normal sources of temporary accommodation were no longer available. We also needed to support many new clients without permanent, self-contained homes of their own, so they could have somewhere safe to stay and to self-isolate if necessary.

Julie Smith, our head of housing, said: "We were very happy to be able to provide these cabins for people who needed emergency housing during the crisis. It was a creative approach to providing an essential service during a very difficult time."





# Gosport comes together to support vulnerable people



*Council accountancy officer Chelsie Wheelwright, now on the coronavirus response team, with a council chamber full of food donated by supermarkets for emergency parcels*

**When lockdown started, the council and Gosport Voluntary Action, the umbrella organisation for local charities, set up the Gosport Community Response service to help the most vulnerable people in the borough - those isolated at home with no other source of help.**

Soon the service, boosted by local people who came forward to volunteer, was making around 125 shopping trips a week, along with almost 40 prescription collections and more than 300 phone calls.

As part of the service, vulnerable residents can contact the council to register for shopping deliveries by GVA volunteers. GVA helpers are also on hand to offer a friendly phone call to lonely people.

Residents can also request prescription pick-ups, carried out by volunteers from Gosport and Fareham Inshore Rescue Service (GAFIRS), the Red Cross and GVA. GAFIRS are also delivering urgent food parcels.

As Coastline went to press, the Community Response service had supported almost 500 households and carried out more than 4,000 tasks.

Other local community groups have also been doing vital work to support vulnerable residents. These include Jacob's Well Care Centre, First Light Trust, Family Church Gosport, Gosport Borough Football Club and Gosport Trash Café. And local supermarkets have been donating goods.

Cllr Mark Hook, Leader of the Council, said: "Gosport has been amazing, the way people have responded to this



*Community support volunteer Danielle keeps in regular contact with Michaela, left*



crisis. Council staff, GVA workers, local groups and individual people have all rallied round and are doing fantastic work.

“The team at the council has been working seven days a week and I know local groups are putting in massive efforts too. I’m really proud of our community.”

Ian Reeves, chair of GVA, said: “The volunteers find the work so rewarding and residents really appreciate the help they receive. One volunteer told us: ‘The lady I help is so lovely. Her guide dog opens the door and collects the shopping for her. He had the cheque in his mouth and a thank-you card for me last week. It makes it so worthwhile.’”

Jake Robinson, community director

for GAFIRS, said: “Contributing to the whole community during this defining moment in our generation is an inspiring sight to witness. For some of the people we’ve met, we’ve been the first face they’ve seen since the lockdown began. Seeing how these vulnerable people are coping has been a humbling experience.”

One 81-year-old resident with health conditions was distressed because she couldn’t get out to shop or collect medication. She lives with her daughter, who has disabilities and usually goes to a day centre, but it had closed. The Community Response service arranged to deliver her shopping and prescriptions and made sure she got a regular friendly phone call. She told the team she was now “very happy”.

Michaela, another resident, was full of praise for volunteer Danielle, who keeps in touch via WhatsApp, even sending pictures of products to make sure they fit Michaela’s dietary needs. Michaela told the service she appreciated Danielle asking how she was doing mentally, as well as checking on her shopping needs.

Suzanne, another resident, said: “Huge thanks to David our volunteer who collects prescriptions and shops for us. He has proven to be such a treasure, not only carrying out his duties but so bright, cheerful and happy it has made a world of difference to us. He has made us feel a great deal more positive about the future.”

**See the back page for Community Response service contact details.**



*GAFIRS volunteers ready for action (left to right): Nathan Allen, Matt Crofts and Ben Tatem*



To donate to the Community Response service, please go to [www.gva.org.uk](http://www.gva.org.uk)

# Extra help with council tax

Thousands of low-income households are benefiting from money we secured from the government's Covid-19 hardship fund to help them pay their council tax bills.



Each home has received up to £150 towards their bill, as well as the support they already receive.

Cllr Mark Hook, Leader of the Council, said: "I'm delighted we've been able to help so many people across Gosport with extra support at a time they needed it.

A lot of people's jobs and income have been affected by the rules brought in around coronavirus and anyone whose circumstances have changed who thinks they might qualify for council tax reductions should get in touch with the council. We want to help as many people as possible."

If you already get a low-income council tax reduction, you get the new support automatically.

If you want to apply for a low-income reduction or a discount, please call **023 9254 5470** or email **counciltax@gosport.gov.uk**


 **Caroline Dinenage MP** 



**Member of Parliament for Gosport, Stubbington, Hill Head & Lee on the Solent.**


*My team & I are here to help with advice, support & signposting.*


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**For more information visit**

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  /Caroline4gosport

 @cj\_dinenage

Promoted by Caroline Dinenage MP, 167 Stoke Road, Gosport PO12 1SE.



## Turning to tech in a crisis

**With social distancing restrictions, the way we've kept services running has changed dramatically.**

Thanks to technology, we enabled about 80% of our staff to work from home. We've also ensured that our website has been kept up to date with the latest coronavirus news and have kept online services running for various activities.

At the time of print we are working to begin holding online council meetings which residents will be able to attend virtually, continuing to keep democracy and decision-making transparent and accountable.



# Grants for businesses and clubs



**Don't miss out on free money to help you through the coronavirus crisis. That's our message to businesses and organisations in Gosport and Lee-on-the-Solent.**

It's the council's job to pay out these grants, and according to government statistics, we've been one of the best-performing councils in the country. But some businesses still haven't claimed what they could.

The grants are for small businesses, and firms in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. Sports and social clubs, and charity shops, may also be eligible. Each grant can total thousands of pounds.

Cllr Stephen Philpott, Chairman of the council's Economic Development Board said: "We really want this money to be distributed so businesses and organisations in the borough get the money they're entitled to."

Philip Jenkins, director of Gosport opticians Phillips and Edgworth Ltd, said: "I just wanted to say thank-you to the council team for the prompt and efficient way in which they administered the Small Business

Grant – I applied and received the money into the business bank account on the same day. It's a great help and one less thing to worry about in these difficult times."

To find out if you're eligible for a grant, and to apply, go to [www.gosport.gov.uk/businessrates](http://www.gosport.gov.uk/businessrates) or call **023 9254 5470**. We're aware of companies offering to help with grants for a fee. Please ignore these and apply to us at no cost.



## Watch out for scammers

**Here are some tips on avoiding coronavirus scams.**

- Don't open the door to cold callers.
- Don't accept help from people who want money up front.
- Never give out your debit/credit card or PIN number.
- If in any doubt about a phone call, hang up and check with a friend or relative.
- Don't click on links in texts or emails unless you're sure who they're from.
- Be alert to fake offers of tests, cures, tax rebates and compensation.

For advice or to report a scam, call **0808 2231133**. For more info search "scam check" at [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) or see [www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk](http://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk)

# Getting the help and advice you need

In these difficult times, we're working hard with other local organisations to make sure vulnerable residents get the proper support.

If you have no-one to help with shopping, getting prescriptions or other practical tasks, or if you'd just like a regular friendly chat on the phone:

- call the council's community helpline: **023 9254 5588** (Mon to Fri, 9am to 5pm).
- at weekends call the Hampshire County Council coronavirus helpline: **0333 370 4000** (9am to 5pm). Requests are passed to us.
- or go to **[www.gva.org.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gva.org.uk/coronavirus)**

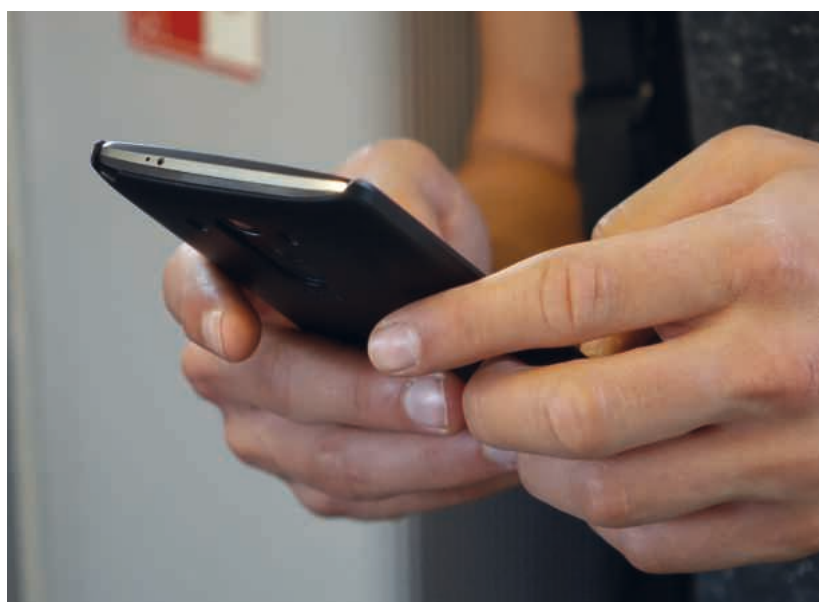
For details of other help and advice services, plus shops and businesses offering home deliveries, click on **local updates** at **[www.gva.org.uk](http://www.gva.org.uk)**

If you're struggling to afford food, then please call the community helpline: **023 9254 5588**.

For the latest on council services, go to: **[www.gosport.gov.uk](http://www.gosport.gov.uk)**

For the latest official coronavirus health advice, go to **[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)**

For the latest government coronavirus guidelines, go to **[www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)**



## Top tips for mental wellbeing

Here's some expert advice if you're feeling a bit low:

- Keep a routine
- Get some sunlight and fresh air
- Think of jobs or activities to fill your time
- Plan healthy meals and eat sensibly
- Drink water regularly
- Watch your alcohol intake
- Try some exercise

It can help to think about positives about the current situation, like these:

- "I like the way that it has brought communities together."
- "Life is more peaceful and there's less traffic noise."
- "It's lovely to see nature around and to enjoy regular walks."
- "Using technology is a challenge but it's good to keep in touch."

If you're finding things difficult, talk to your GP or call NHS 111. Or try some of these services.

**Solent Mind:** Their coronavirus helpline is **023 8017 9049** and there's lots of useful advice at **[www.solentmind.org.uk/update](http://www.solentmind.org.uk/update)**

**Italk:** **023 8038 3920** or **[info@italk.org.uk](mailto:info@italk.org.uk)**. Use the "self-referral" button at **[www.italk.org.uk](http://www.italk.org.uk)**

**Every Mind Matters:** advice on how to look after your mental health. **[www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters](http://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters)**

**Connect to Support Hampshire:** this website is a link to the most comprehensive directory of support and services for all sorts of areas that might be a challenge in your life, not just mental health. **[www.connecttosupporthampshire.org.uk](http://www.connecttosupporthampshire.org.uk)**

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