

LOCAL

Shaping the borough, making a difference

Summer 2020

Coronavirus Response



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Welcome to Summer Local!

Hello everyone

We've seen the impact that coronavirus has had on all our lives, both at home and work, so it seems only fitting to focus on some of the extraordinary things that have been put in place to help and protect the vulnerable members of our community throughout our borough. As you read the special feature on pages 4-13 you'll see true community spirit shining through, and importantly if you need help, where to find it.

Also in this edition we bring you information about changes to how Council meetings will run for the time being, and the latest on elections, see page 13.

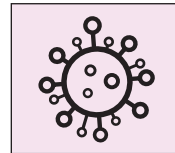
We're delighted to be continuing with Bloom this year, and we recently launched the popular Love Where We Live Awards which recognise all the unsung heroes in the borough and remarkable acts of kindness that people show, so we're expecting more entries than ever before!

You'll find project updates, news and more to keep you up-to-date this summer.

Happy reading!

Stay well and best wishes

Lizzie Goodwin, Editor



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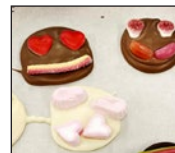
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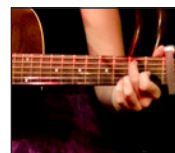
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We produce Local to keep you up-to-date about Council services and news. If you have any comments about the magazine, we'd love to hear from you. Contact us by:

E-mail: Local@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

Phone: 01892 526121

Post: Lizzie Goodwin, Communications Manager, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 1RS

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Coronavirus statement

I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to everyone across the borough for the essential work, care, support and volunteering that you have undertaken on a monumental scale since the coronavirus pandemic started in March. The following pages in the magazine show just some of those community acts that have helped so many.

At the time of writing, our Government have set out a three-step roadmap for lifting restrictions. I hope that as you read this all is going well and that more and more shops are reopening. That your children are starting to return to school and that you are able at long last, to meet with family members who you may not have seen for many weeks.

As councils around the world face similar pressures responding to the pandemic, locally we are looking towards recovery and a new normal for towns and parishes in the borough. We wish to see our town centres and public spaces come back into use in as safe a way as possible. We have established a Covid-19 panel consisting of politicians from all parties and outside partners to oversee the recovery. Senior managers have been in regular discussion

with key partners including businesses, the Business Improvement District, rail and bus operators, the Police and the County Council to ensure we can reopen shops and businesses again. Recovery is not just about supporting businesses and the economy, but also our residents and communities.

Whatever the future may hold, I can assure you that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council will continue to deliver the services we all value - such as beautiful parks to rest and exercise in - as well as working with partner organisations to prevent the further spread of the virus.

I wish you all a safe summer.



Alan McDermott
Leader, Tunbridge Wells
Borough Council

A safe place to stay

We have been providing emergency housing to rough sleepers during the lockdown and giving them advice and help to find longer-term accommodation after the restrictions come to an end.

The Russell Hotel has remained open in order to help people who are homeless. They have been amazing throughout, and we are very grateful to the hotel manager, staff and owners for being so welcoming to people in need.



As the kitchen at the hotel has had to close due to the lockdown, COOK stepped in and have been providing frozen meals to those staying at the Russell Hotel.

Nourish and the Tunbridge Wells Churches Street Teams have also been providing food to the residents.

If you are a private landlord who would be willing to work with us as we seek housing for people who have been homeless, please contact the Housing team on 01892 526121. Full support will be provided to both the tenant and landlord.

Community update

Despite the lockdown we have all been living under recently, there has been a great deal happening across the Council to help and support our local community during these difficult times.

A community hub was set up in the Assembly Hall Theatre in March and the team has been working hard sourcing food and essential supplies, as well as sending food parcels out to vulnerable residents. To date we have distributed over 400 food parcels across the borough.



Assembly Hall Theatre Community Hub

We have also set up a helpline to offer support and advice to residents during the pandemic. The helpline has received over 1,000 calls to date since it was launched at the end of March. Calls received range from requests for food or medicine to information on what constitutes an essential journey and requests for financial advice. If you cannot get assistance from friends, family or neighbours and need help and support, please call our helpline on 01892 554497. The helpline is available from 9am to 5pm.

A community fundraising page, which gives details of local community organisations and charities who need support to be able to continue their work both now and after the crisis, has been set up on our website at tunbridgewells.gov.uk/fundraising. Many are facing reduced income and resources, meaning the wonderful services they provide are becoming harder to deliver each day. A donation can help in so many ways; if you can, please help us help them. Now more than ever all these groups need our support. Thank you.

Community News

Benenden

Like many other communities Benenden is doing an extraordinary job in supporting the vulnerable. Benenden Action Team was very quickly formed and sprang into action immediately. The parish was divided into eight areas, each with a co-ordinator, and 171 volunteers came forward to offer their help – shopping, phone calls, prescription collection etc. Leaflet drops have been made to all households and a dedicated website set up. Working primarily with the village church and community shop, a food voucher scheme was set up, supported by other local people and businesses. Particular needs of the elderly and vulnerable are being addressed, along with mental wellbeing and concerns for local businesses and the self-employed.

Bidborough

Bidborough Call & Care was launched on 16 March by St Lawrence Church and Bidborough Parish Council, together with Viral Kindness in the St Peter's part of the parish. They leafleted all the homes, and 120 wonderful volunteers have been providing phone and doorstep support for those who need help. Bidborough Stores has continued to help many residents with shopping orders and takeaway curries! Church, school, work and family gatherings are all happening online during the lockdown, and the 8pm cheering for the NHS on Thursdays is amazing. They had an Easter Chalk Walk prayer trail in the churchyard, and a chalk fun trail on the pavements to amuse the children (and some keen adults) on their daily exercise. And, with only close family being allowed to attend funerals, the community has supported the bereaved by lining the churchyard path with jam jars containing flowers and messages. At the time of writing (20 April) it's hard to know what impact the pandemic will have had, nor what combination of freedoms and restrictions may be in place when this magazine is distributed in June. But if the love and support already shown is spread as virally as the virus, we can hold to the hope of a kinder and more generous future.

Capel

Capel Covid TV have a Facebook page and are registered with Covid-19 Mutual Aid UK. The volunteers have been delivering groceries for vulnerable and self-isolating families, prescription collections and dog walking. Really all the usual things to help those in need. The local church has also been phoning and chatting with isolating parishioners.

Cranbrook and Sissinghurst

The parish council distributed a questionnaire to residents to ask if they would like to help their community, or if they feel they need support themselves.

Cranbrook set up a dedicated e-mail covidcranbrook@hotmail.com as well as 03007 702262 to enable 24/7 coverage for anyone wishing to volunteer, or who needs help.

This information is being used by KCC and TWBC to delegate calls to their help lines.

There are over 200 volunteers, doing a variety of jobs, from chatting on the phone, distributing food parcels to picking up shopping or prescriptions. A small group of seven people manage the links and check that everything is going as planned.

Leaflets were delivered to homes with details of what to do if unwell, companies delivering food, and other useful addresses.

Sissinghurst and Frittenden are working through the churches with a dedicated number of volunteers to ensure everyone is cared for.

Frittenden

An out-of-the-way village with only 900 residents, Frittenden rose to the coronavirus challenge with two distinct initiatives.

The Bell and Jorrocks pub transformed itself into a pop-up shop where locals could order a range of produce by phone with a pick-up time allocated to maintain the social distancing measures. Landlords Sean and Rosie Croucher responded to requests, such as gluten-free items, and instigated home delivery for self-isolators, with a veg box, a salad box and of course beer! So many extra journeys were saved, and locals were able to support their beloved pub.

Working together, the Parish Council and St Mary's Church created a network to link up willing helpers to those in need, drawing people together, running errands and even raising money to help those put under financial strain by the lockdown. It's the result of a long Frittenden tradition of community spirit and looking out for each other.



Messages of support for key workers in Capel



Goudhurst

The Parish Council and Goudhurst and Kildown Church have brought together activities to support those in the parish during this time of uncertainty as part of the Goudhurst Community Support Team. The community has, as always, risen to the call to action, with a group of more than 60 people already offering voluntary support to help those who are vulnerable or self-isolating in response to a parish-wide door drop of Corona Kindness leaflets. Support from the team is being offered across the whole parish and volunteers are providing help by undertaking shopping, delivering prescriptions and medication, and providing a friendly phone call to people in need. There are also a number of other groups within smaller communities looking after residents of roads and streets in the villages. If you need support, please contact Louise Vickerman on 07903 332014 or e-mail gkccovid19help@gmail.com

Goudhurst food bank seeing unprecedented demand

Goudhurst & Kildown Church is continuing to run its Community Cupboard which is the local food bank for those needing support with food, household goods and toiletries and which delivers food parcels to residents' doorsteps. This has seen unprecedented demand with a significant increase in requests recently.



Community Cupboard food bank

'Ordinarily we manage food parcels for five or six individuals or families' says Ali Williams who runs the food bank, along with a growing group of local volunteers. 'We are now supporting 20 or more families and expect to see more requests as time goes on.'

'We have been so grateful to the local community for their continued support with food and monetary donations to help us buy fresh goods. We know that it's not easy to ask for help, but we have plenty of food for those who need it.'

If you need support please contact Ali Williams on 07944 776008 or e-mail ali.williams@gkchurch.org

Hawkhurst

Under the auspices of the Parish Council, a group of proactive villagers in Hawkhurst realised very quickly that there was a need within the community to co-ordinate and support the volunteer effort in response to the coronavirus pandemic. A leaflet drop to 2,300 households in Hawkhurst was arranged and the co-ordinating group of eight members has been running the increasingly successful HCSG ever since.

The group has established a sizeable bank of volunteers, assisting over 130 self-isolating residents. Help offered includes shopping, collecting prescriptions and dog walking. Numbers of both volunteers and residents grow daily.

In conjunction with the two village supermarkets, the HCSG distributed more than 200 Easter eggs over the Easter weekend. A local farm donated 400 bags of Gala apples grown in the surrounding orchards and these too have been distributed to the group's clients, including residents of two local care homes.



Easter egg deliveries



Gala apple donations

The group put a call out for personal protective equipment (PPE) and was inundated with donations which they have passed on to the Hawkhurst GP surgeries and to the village's care homes.



PPE Donations

A recent initiative was an appeal to raise funds to support some families in the village who are struggling at this time. Thanks to local businesses, charitable bodies and many kind individuals, HCSG reached its target in record time.

The group has a dedicated telephone number: 01580 453015, posts regularly on local social media sites, issues a weekly newsletter, and has developed its own website hawkhurstcommunity.com which recorded over 1,300 unique visitors in less than three weeks and has proved a useful resource for those in Hawkhurst and the surrounding areas.

Horsmonden

Horsmonden villagers have come together in innovative ways at this difficult time to try and lessen the impact of coronavirus by creating the following:

A volunteer response initiative to cater for the village's needs. Nearly 100 residents have now volunteered to support others, providing a lifeline for many - whether it is a pint of milk, an essential trip to the post office or a full supermarket shop which is required, volunteers have been helping. If anyone needs assistance, they can contact:

Isobel Kerrigan: 01892 725663
Claire Reed: 01892 457694.

A village Foodbank and Store Cupboard, open to all, offering emergency supplies to those in need or unable to shop. This facility is 'no questions asked' and confidential. Requests can be made by contacting:

Isobel Kerrigan: 01892 725663
Kate Hart Dyke: 01892 722545.

The Tech Bank, which repurposes unused laptops and tablets. Devices, donated by members of the community, are wiped of data before being redistributed to school students. The students can then use the computers to access online lessons. Donations or requests can be made by e-mailing claire.hpnews@gmail.com

In addition to these initiatives, the Parish Council's Emergency Plan has also been used for the first time, mobilising volunteers to assist those on the Government's shielded list; Heath Stores has set up an online delivery service and is now running a very efficient service to fulfil everyone's orders; Heath Pharmacy has adapted its opening hours to try and assist as many customers as possible; and St Margaret's Church has set up Telephone Buddies - a group of volunteers who will ring those feeling isolated or lonely!

Lamberhurst

On 15 March Cllr Dawn Beeby set up Lamberhurst Community Outreach Support group of 100 volunteers (LCOS) willing to collect prescriptions/medicines, groceries, deliver hot pre-prepared food from local pubs, and cream teas from the local café, make regular telephone check-in calls and take on dog walking duties on behalf of those that are self-isolating or vulnerable.

Since lockdown Lamberhurst has seen two significant birthdays including Dr Bruno Capone's 50th birthday, where some Brewer Street residents had lunch on their front lawns in celebration.



Dr Bruno Capone's 50th birthday

Lamberhurst also saw Mr Terry Newman (an ex-local Primary School Headteacher) turn 92 where residents in Pearse Place stood at a 2m social distance and sang happy birthday to him outside his front door. They kept in touch with Rev Andrew Axon who recorded his first ever set of YouTube videos to ensure the local school children had regular assemblies and marked St George's Day and gave hope for brighter days ahead.

Royal Tunbridge Wells

Local resident and business owner Mike Tapp runs a dog care business with his wife and shared the following with *Local...*

'It's been a really tough time but it's been incredible to see people helping. My wife and I have tried to help where we can, from delivering a blood pressure monitor to a young boy in isolation, to taking a wheelchair to a man in need. We have also offered our dog care van as an emergency animal ambulance to the



Terry Newman turns 92

In week five, there was a sense of some people feeling fed up. This is when the LCOS group, in conjunction with Fidgets Preschool and Nursery, started up a virtual hug, giving bored children something to do by writing a letter or colouring beautiful pictures, and these were distributed to residents who were missing their grandchildren, who lived alone or just simply needed a virtual hug. Throughout lockdown, households in Lamberhurst proudly displayed colourful rainbows and stood at their doorways for the regular Thursday 8pm clap for the NHS and key workers. Despite VE Day Royal British Legion events being cancelled on Friday 8 May, people still marked the occasion by hanging red, white and blue bunting, observing the two minutes silence at 11am and placing garden-grown flower posies at the War Memorial monument as a mark of respect to those who lost their lives in WWII.

More information can be found at: lamberhurstvillage.org

vets in Tunbridge Wells and looked after nurses' and doctors' dogs whilst they work long shifts.

'During the sunny period, we were inspired by others and offered our garden to neighbours, whilst we are not using it, which went down well as it's important to get some sun.

'Many people have been helping in Tunbridge Wells and it's incredible to see. I think helping each other, looking out for each other and being kinder will be the new normal, I hope!'



Paddock Wood

Paddock Wood Community Support is a new community group serving vulnerable Paddock Wood residents.

Visit pwcs.org.uk, or the Facebook page Paddock Wood Community Support.

Over 100 volunteers have registered to help with tasks like shopping, delivering medication and friendly phone calls. They helped with 138 tasks in the first month of operation and are also assisting with The Community Storehouse deliveries. Paddock Wood needs you – please volunteer via the Facebook page.

They are making hampers for Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust and other local key workers. Please contact Ros Tucker via the PWCS e-mail paddockwoodcommunity@gmail.com to donate baskets and ribbons, toiletries, hand cream, chocolate, biscuits and any other wonderful treats for those working on the front line.

Don't forget, if you need them, the helpline is 07385 105340 - they would love to talk to you.

Paddock Wood Sing Together!

Founder of Paddock Wood Community Support is musician Sue Lovell. Along with her duo partner Chris Tampsett, she co-wrote an uplifting song, 'Sing Together,' inspired by lockdown, about coming together despite the isolation. She invited friends, family, Paddock Wood residents and the local primary school's children to record themselves singing along to the rousing chorus, in order to create a virtual choir! Sales of the digital track will raise funds for locals who need it during this time of uncertainty and inevitable hardship.

Sue volunteers for Hospice in the Weald and has been helping run the HITW Community Choir online via Zoom, helping members come together and sing for wellbeing. Inspired by this, Sue is creating her own online singing groups for Paddock Wood which she hopes to continue in person when able to!

Please check Sue's website, versatilevocals.co.uk for details on both the song and choir.



Sing Together project Zoom rehearsal

Pembury

If one good thing has come out of all of this, it's the growing sense of community, and Pembury has seen that in spades. Individual residents, neighbours, community groups and three churches are pulling together to offer vital support to help those in need.

Pembury Baptist Church is just one of those organisations offering a range of essential services, including a Community Larder (supported by all three churches), emergency funding for some bills, as well as being the Pembury Contact Hub for TWBC Covid team.

Sally Richards and Tracy Gregory are two volunteers who look after the Community Larder, collecting food and donations from generous businesses and residents and distributing vital food parcels to people in most need.

'We are healthy, we have time, we want to help wherever we can - our community is important to us,' they said.

'Many people are being supported by friends, family and neighbours within the community, and it's great that everyone's coming together. But we've found that some individuals who are less able and live alone, and those with mental health problems or addictions, are the ones who need our help the most.

'We are receiving referrals from TCHG, TWBC, the NHS Mental Health and Early Help teams as well as self-referrals and worried neighbours.

'Some people do not reach out for help, such as people with mental health issues, so we need to go to them rather than waiting for them to come to us. We have been delivering knock and drop food parcels to the parts of Pembury where many of our most vulnerable residents live to ensure no one goes without.'



Sally Richards



Tracy Gregory

Our response to coronavirus

50,070

letters sent to every household explaining what help is available

Over £24.5m in grants paid out to 1,840 businesses
99.7% of the grant monies applied for paid

48 people who could have been sleeping rough helped with accommodation

Parks stayed open for your daily exercise

150 wellbeing calls made to isolated people

400+ food parcels delivered

Community Hub

1,000+ calls made to our helpline

1

in 5

Council staff redeployed to help keep essential services running



Exceeded crowdfunding target and raised over £10,500 for 3 local charities





Good News

Positive Postcards

Put a smile on someone's face with a Positive Postcard! We are asking residents, especially younger members



of the community, to design and create a Positive Postcard which can then be sent to vulnerable and isolated people with the help of our partner organisations in the borough.

A Positive Postcard can be any design, shape and size, and ideally will include a cheery message, well-wishes or even a joke or two to bring a smile to the face of the recipient. Please send your finished postcards, in an envelope, to the Town Hall, Civic Way, Royal Tunbridge Wells TN1 1RS. There is more information and a helpful how-to-guide available at [twsocial.co.uk/channels/get-crafty](https://www.twsocial.co.uk/channels/get-crafty)

VE Day



Despite the lockdown, events to mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day still took place across the borough. Flags were raised on village flagpoles, church bells were rung and social distancing street parties were held. Two buglers from TS Brilliant, accompanied by a TW Royal British Legion Standard Bearer, played the Last Post at Tunbridge Wells Cemetery, and a number of amazing historical photographs showing how Tunbridge Wells celebrated VE Day in 1945 were loaded to the VE Day pages of Tunbridge Wells Social [twsocial.co.uk/channels/ve-day](https://www.twsocial.co.uk/channels/ve-day)

Wellbeing Calls

During lockdown, our Health team has been making wellbeing calls to vulnerable residents every day. The calls provide a friendly voice to those who may be isolating and can be any length, and topics of conversation are whatever the resident wants to talk about.



One resident said she was so grateful and she was going to 'clap for the Council on Thursday'. Another was struggling with maintaining good mental health and the One You Advisor was able to direct this person to additional sources of support.

If you would like to receive a wellbeing call, or would like to arrange one for a family member or friend, please contact our helpline on 01892 554497.

Age UK Tunbridge Wells

The charity launched Local Voices, a collection of readings recorded by and for the local community.



Being in isolation doesn't mean you are alone and unable to connect with others. From original poems, to classic passages from books, the readings offer a collection of friendly voices each week, to enjoy at home. Listen at [twsocial.co.uk/videos/local-voices-vol-1-by-age-uk-tunbridge-wells](https://www.twsocial.co.uk/videos/local-voices-vol-1-by-age-uk-tunbridge-wells)

There is something calming about being able to sit back, relax and just listen. If you would like to donate a reading or would like to request something to be read, please contact Age UK Tunbridge Wells on 01892 522591.

POSTER CAMPAIGN

In April we launched a hard-hitting poster campaign to encourage residents, and in particular young people, to stay at home and not gather in groups. You may have seen the posters in bus stops and outside car parks in Royal Tunbridge Wells and in front of the Assembly Hall Theatre when you were perhaps out getting food supplies.

The poster campaign was created by Yoyo, a local creative digital agency, who designed a series of posters for free, so a big thank you to them. The challenge for the project team was to reach an audience that didn't want to be told what to do. In answer, Yoyo created a campaign that spoke to everyone, using positive and confrontational messages to make everyone stop and think.



Photographed by [johnknight.co.uk](https://www.johnknight.co.uk)

Last month Age UK Tunbridge Wells helped an isolated and vulnerable older man in our community so that he will be able to receive daily FaceTime calls from volunteers. He is physically disabled and finds it difficult to move around, so this will be a real help to him.

He doesn't have access to a landline phone so spends his days listening to the radio and watching TV. Aside from the daily hot meals delivered by Age UK Tunbridge Wells he doesn't see or hear from anyone.

With an internet connection now set up in his home and an iPad on order, it won't be long before he can receive the calls. In the meantime, a local volunteer will chat through his open door at a safe distance.

Help is available

Early on in the lockdown Council Leader Alan McDermott and Chief Executive William Benson sent a letter to all the households in the borough setting out the measures in place to support you during the coronavirus outbreak.

Help and support is still available should you need it and more information is on the special coronavirus pages on the Council's website.

Shielded households

The Council is offering support including food parcels to people who are shielded and those who are vulnerable and cannot get help from friends, family or neighbours. We are working really closely with Age UK Tunbridge Wells, Nourish Community Foodbank and Mental Health Resource to get this help to the right people. Parish and town councils are also looking after people in their areas. If you need help please get in touch - don't delay.

There's a 24-hour Kent Together helpline on 03000 41 92 92 or you can contact us on 01892 554497 during office hours.

Stay connected

It's easier to go out now than it was at the start of the lockdown, although we should still be observing sensible social distancing practices. As a result, the opportunity to connect with others may now be more available which is great for our wellbeing. But not everyone is able to go out and if you don't have someone you can contact on a regular basis we are offering free wellbeing calls (see page 10). Our team of friendly staff will be happy to chat and provide a welcome distraction to your day.

Advice for businesses

Government has announced a number of different grant schemes for businesses. If you are a local business, don't miss out on funding available to you. See our website for details and read more on page 17.

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse or violence is a crime and it should not be allowed to hide behind social isolation, neither should social isolation be an excuse for domestic abuse. There are organisations ready to help and support you even in these difficult times. Contact DAVSS (Domestic Abuse Volunteer Support Services) on 01892 570538 or call Kent Police. davss.org.uk kent.police.uk

Avoid the scams

Despite all the difficulties we are facing there are still some people hoping to take advantage of the situation, and new scams are springing up on an almost daily basis. There is no miracle cure or protection from the virus available to buy. Why is that person asking you for personal information and your bank details or PIN? Know who you are dealing with and if you need help talk to someone you know or ring one of the helplines on this page.

If you have online access check actionfraud.police.uk (tel 0300 123 2040) for up-to-date information and advice about fraud and scams.

Look after your mental health

Feeling overwhelmed or anxious about the current situation is a normal response. There are things you can do to protect your mental health or the health of those you're close to.

If you're feeling the pressure, don't suffer in silence. Call 0800 107 0160. Text the word Kent to 85258 or visit releasethepressure.uk

Council Tax

If you have been financially affected by the current situation and are unable to make your Council Tax payments, please contact our Council Tax team on 01892 526121 or e-mail counciltax@midkent.gov.uk. Please talk to us as soon as possible.

Contact the Department for Work and Pensions to claim Universal Credit if your income has been reduced, and if you do this you will also need to make a claim for Council Tax Support. There's information and advice about how to do this on our website.

If you are entitled to Council Tax Support and your bill is reduced, an adjusted bill will be sent to you.

A big thank you...

...to all residents who were able to donate to local good causes over recent months, whether direct to a good cause, through TW Lotto or our crowdfunding initiative Tunbridge Wells Lend a Hand. We also want to say a huge thanks to those who have given their time to help others.

In just four weeks Tunbridge Wells Lend a Hand raised over £10,500 for three local good causes who are supporting residents throughout the borough during the coronavirus pandemic. This money has been shared equally with Nourish Foodbank, Age UK Tunbridge Wells and Mental Health Resource to support them as they continue their much needed work in the community. If you wish to support a local good cause visit the fundraising page on our website for details or go to TWLotto.co.uk





The Council recently launched a new community website, Tunbridge Wells Social, to help combat the social isolation and loneliness many people have experienced during the coronavirus lockdown.

An online sense of community has been established through the website, which is free to use and offers something for everyone. There is entertainment for all ages including a specially designed Escape Room challenge, tips and workshops for healthy living, and helpful information on where you can go to get more support if you are feeling anxious or lonely. Exciting content is being added every week so check back regularly and see what's new [twsocial.co.uk](https://www.twsocial.co.uk)

In addition to the website, a weekly podcast, Tunbridge Wells Talking, has also been launched and provides a lighthearted weekly round-up of local news, views and music. Contributions are welcomed and we would love to hear from you! Please get in touch via e-mail at TWTalking@TunbridgeWells.gov.uk or by texting your ideas and suggestions to 07751 288830. [twsocial.co.uk/channels/tw-talking](https://www.twsocial.co.uk/channels/tw-talking)



Businesses Ready to Re-Open

Businesses across the borough are eager to see visitors and shoppers return to high streets, and have been readying themselves for a re-opening. As this happens they want to ensure that all the measures put in place will protect the safety of visitors and staff alike.

Local has been talking to Ross Feeny, Chief Executive of Royal Tunbridge Wells Together (an organisation directly funded by businesses to support Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre) to hear about initiatives planned to prepare businesses for re-opening.

He told us that Royal Tunbridge Wells Together is providing social-distancing floor stickers, advice posters, face masks and sneeze guards for every member business that needs them, as well as providing advice to businesses on how to manage visitors to their stores, with suggestions on queuing and social distancing. They are working closely with us and other partners as we all plan further recovery measures as restrictions are eased.

Shops are looking to include one-way routes around aisles, a restriction on the number of shoppers in their stores at any one time, management of queues, sneeze guards around tills and floor stickers to help shoppers keep to the social distancing guidelines.

All businesses in the borough need your support now more than ever and want to welcome you back soon. They are doing all they can to make sure that when you are able to visit you will be confident with the safety measures in place.



Some of our local businesses are innovating and offering new delivery services so check out: [twdelivery.co.uk](https://www.twdelivery.co.uk) or look out for buy now-use later vouchers, which are being offered by a number of attractions and other hospitality businesses.

Don't forget it is Father's Day on 21 June so look out for ideas for presents and experiences from businesses across the borough on [visittunbridgewells.com](https://www.visittunbridgewells.com)

For getting out and about locally – try the [visittunbridgewells](https://www.visittunbridgewells.com) Facebook page and discover new places on your doorstep. It's being updated all the time!

Local elections

In early May we should have been setting up polling stations across the borough for the 16 wards that were due to elect new councillors, and for the Police and Crime Commissioner elections that were to be held on the same day.

Like so many other things the elections for borough councillors and the PCC were postponed and will now take place in May 2021, meaning councillors whose term of office was due to end will remain in post. The Government made this decision to allow local authorities to focus their efforts on delivering front line public services and to reduce the risk to everyone involved in the elections process.

In Tunbridge Wells borough, councillors are elected on a three-yearly cycle, and next year should have been a year when voters didn't go to the polls to elect their ward councillors. The postponement of this year's voting means that we will see borough elections next year but only in the wards that could not vote this year.



Council meetings

As you would expect the lockdown has brought changes to the way the Council conducts its business. Legislation was brought in to allow meetings to be held remotely and for the next few months it has been decided that only essential meetings will take place, and they will be held online. Essential meetings include Cabinet, planning and licensing committees.

Members of the public will be able to listen live via our website. It will still be possible for people who wish to speak at meetings to do so by phoning in, and you will be guided through this process when you give notice of your intention to speak. You can find out more about this on our website.



Mayor remains in office

The Annual Meeting of Council did not take place in May and so councillors were unable to elect the Mayor for the new municipal year.

The current Mayor, Councillor James Scholes, and Deputy Mayor, Councillor Joy Podbury, have agreed to remain in post until a Full Council meeting can be held to elect a new Mayor.



To all the Key Workers and Volunteers across the borough in these extraordinary times

For putting yourselves on the front line we want to say





Taxi and private hire vehicles are still working across the borough during these difficult times for businesses.

Usually face-coverings would not be allowed to ensure drivers are clearly

identifiable to their passengers but because of coronavirus the Council has given drivers permission to wear a face mask and gloves. With or without a face mask drivers should continue to display their driver badge.

And, although it's not a requirement, in the interest of public safety some operators may choose to install protective screens within their vehicles.

Government guidance does not require drivers or passengers to wear masks and we are advising passengers that it is a personal choice if you wish to do so. It is also a personal choice whether you travel with a driver who is not wearing a mask.

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**For more information, please call 01892 864429 or email admin@mghomes.co.uk
www.mghomes.co.uk**



Love Where We Live Awards 2020



This year's Love Where We Live Awards are now open for nominations. Our annual community awards celebrate the people who make the borough of Tunbridge Wells a great place to live and work. This year more than ever we wanted to invite you to thank those individuals and organisations who have made such a difference to people's lives during the challenging times we have found ourselves in recently.

With seven categories open for nomination, there is an award for everyone and every group. The awards include Charity of the Year, Best Group, Ethical Business, Sports Achiever of the Year and Individual Hero. For the younger members of our community we have the Young Sports Achiever of the Year award for those 16 and under, and the Young Volunteer of the Year award for those aged 24 and under.

To find out more and to nominate please visit lovewherewelive.co.uk. By nominating you will help us recognise the achievements and commitment of some of the amazing people in our borough. Nominations must be received by 5pm on Friday 31 July. Good luck!



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For every ticket you buy **60%** goes to helping good causes within Tunbridge Wells borough, plus you can WIN up to **£25,000**

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If you know of a good cause that needs some support we can help!

Simply visit twlotto.co.uk/good-causes for more information

TwLottoUK

TWlottery

Grant Funding Still Available for Small Businesses and Companies in the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Industry

Prior to lockdown, Government announced that they would provide financial support for small businesses and those in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors (for properties with a rateable value below £51,000). They would be offering grants of £25,000 or £10,000 depending upon the size of the business.

On 1 April, Government sent us over £27m to distribute to the 2,100 eligible businesses in the borough, asking us to administer the grants as quickly as possible. The Council created online application forms and wrote to all of the businesses we understood to be eligible. A new Grants Team, made up of people from our Revenues & Benefits, Fraud, Finance, Business Development, IT, Audit,

Property and Parking Teams, was formed. All were redeployed to administer the grants as per the Government guidelines and to ensure that all of the payments were properly processed.

We all recognised that many of our businesses needed help urgently whilst they were unable to trade and we have worked very hard to get the money out to them. So far we have paid out £24.5m in grants to 1,840 businesses. There are still some grants that have yet to be claimed. We have tried our best to encourage businesses to apply, phoning, e-mailing, writing letters and searching online to find alternative contact details. Some businesses have needed some reassurance that it is a grant, not a loan, they don't have to pay it back; some have been afraid that the e-mails were a scam; and some just didn't realise they were eligible. We have tried to explain how the grants work, how to apply and to urge businesses to do so. We have also respected those businesses who have said that they are managing, trading effectively online or by other means, do not need the

grant and would rather it went to others in need. This really demonstrates the public spirited nature and honesty of the business community in Tunbridge Wells.

If you are a small business or in the retail, hospitality or leisure sectors and have yet to apply for your grant, please go to our website [tunbridgewells.gov.uk/businessgrants](https://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/businessgrants). It's very easy, but if you have any problems completing it please call 01892 554603. We'd be happy to help you.

Breaking News

Last month, Government announced new discretionary grant funding, primarily for businesses in shared spaces, B&Bs that pay Council Tax, charities and other organisations not eligible for the initial grant scheme. We were given £1.365m to allocate, still within set Government guidelines, but with a little more flexibility than their first scheme. Since then we have received applications and delivered these funds to eligible businesses in the borough.

New play equipment and help for wildlife

It's not all about Covid-19.

New play equipment in Horsmonden and looking after wildlife in Royal Tunbridge Wells are two schemes that have been approved for funding during the lockdown period.

It's still business as usual for many of the Council's teams and decisions continue to be made to ensure borough life carries on as smoothly as possible. Just a few weeks ago two decisions were approved by the relevant Cabinet members to release money from contributions received through planning conditions for community projects.

In Horsmonden this means some new play equipment is to be installed in the children's play area at Lockett Green, Back Lane with £2,331 of developer contributions going towards the project.

In Royal Tunbridge Wells the local wildlife will benefit to the tune of over £650 which has been released to the Kent High Weald Partnership to go towards the preservation of wildlife on Tunbridge Wells Common.





ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS IN BLOOM

Celebrating 10 Years of Royal Tunbridge Wells in Bloom

This year, due to the coronavirus outbreak, we have had to make some changes to our annual Royal Tunbridge Wells In Bloom competition.

We will only be judging residential entries that are visible from the street. Unfortunately, we have had to cancel our usual competition for businesses and the Best Back Garden category.

The categories open this year are:

Best Basket

Best Planter/ Tub/Container

Best Street and Flats

Best Front Patio/Balcony

Best Front Garden

Best Wildlife Garden

Best Allotments

To enter please visit the Bloom website and complete the online form. Entries can also be made by e-mailing competition@royaltunbridgewellsinbloom.org.uk or by phone - 01892 554031. We hope to carry out the judging in July and August but more details about this will be made available in due course.

In addition to this year's residential competition, the Bloom team is also running three further competitions:

Blooming Marvellous Photo Competition

The theme of this year's photo competition is Trees of Tunbridge Wells. Children and adults alike are invited to capture the beauty of the trees growing in our town and parks.

Photographs can be taken in both landscape or portrait but they must be high resolution. Please submit your photos via e-mail to BloomPhoto@tunbridgewells.gov.uk by 11 September. Maximum three pictures per person. Please include the photographer's name, age, title of the image and where it was taken in your e-mail.

Bloom Goes Digital

We are running a weekly photo competition on the Bloom Facebook page and Twitter feed. Please post pictures of your garden, windowsill, basket or a pot on our social media channels and we will select a winner every Friday.

 [facebook.com/
RoyalTunbridgeWellsinBloom](https://www.facebook.com/RoyalTunbridgeWellsinBloom)

 [RTWinBloom](https://twitter.com/RTWinBloom)

Being 10 – Children's Writing Competition

RTW in Bloom was revived in 2010 and is celebrating its 10th birthday in 2020!

We would like to encourage all children born in 2010 to share their experiences of 'Being 10' in the form of a poem or a short story.

Please e-mail your entry to competition@royaltunbridgewellsinbloom.org.uk by 31 July.

For more information on all of this year's RTW In Bloom competitions and to enter visit [royaltunbridgewellsinbloom.org.uk](https://www.royaltunbridgewellsinbloom.org.uk)

Amelia Scott

Latest Project News

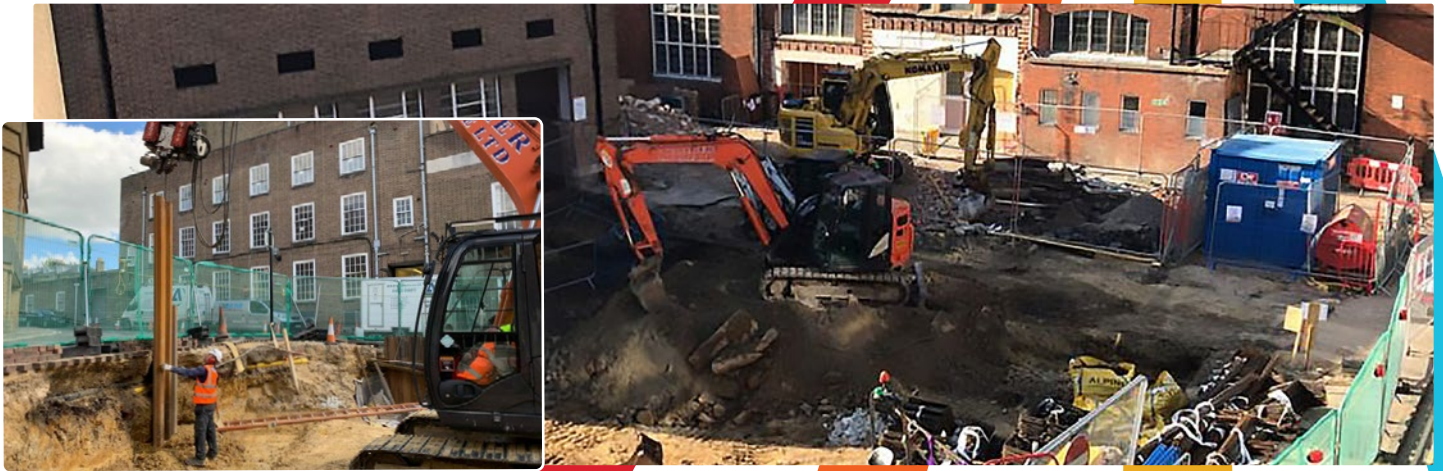
Work has continued safely on the Amelia Scott site, with contractors following the social distancing guidelines from Government.

We are pleased to report no delays to the programme at this time. Scaffolding to the elevations re-started in May

which allowed for a detailed inspection of the surfaces. Work was also carried out in May to connect all the essential utilities under the road. Demolition and groundworks have continued as planned (as you can see from the images!) We remain on track to open in 2022.

The website is now live so please visit theamelia.co.uk to get regular updates and see how the project progresses. We will print further updates in future editions of Local magazine.

theamelia.co.uk



Revised Local Plan timetable

Following the public consultation on a Draft Local Plan last autumn, we published the comments that were received earlier this year. These can all be viewed on the Local Plan page of our website.



Such has been the level of response – over 8,000 comments - that the Council has decided to defer the next stage in the plan-making process in order to give more time to properly consider and take account of them.

Therefore, we have published an updated timetable for the next consultation stage of the Local Plan, which is now due to take place next March/April. Full details are contained in the Council's Local Development Scheme, May 2020, which is published online at tunbridgewells.gov.uk/lds.

The opportunity to make representations on the revised, final draft version of the Local Plan will be widely publicised at the time; also, all those who made comments at the draft stage will be directly notified.

Council Leader Alan McDermott said: 'Preparing the Local Plan is a major responsibility of the Borough Council and it is vital that we get it right. We undertook a wide-ranging consultation on draft proposals, so it is only proper that we now carefully consider the contributions that local people have taken the time and trouble to make before moving forward.'

Tunbridge Wells Open Data Portal Coming soon

The Tunbridge Wells Open Data Portal will be a website where you will be able to download trusted, Council-related data.

On the portal you will be able to find an array of data, including location-enabled data, that can be downloaded and accessed in various formats. You will be able to filter the data so that you can get exactly what you need to answer your queries and you'll be able to see it in visual formats too.

The portal aims to assist you in getting answers to Freedom of Information requests by enabling data transparency. There will be access to financial data, Local Government Transparency Code data, planning data and many more datasets licensed by the Open Government Licence. If, for example, you were thinking of making a Freedom of Information request to find out how much a Council department spent because of the coronavirus outbreak, the portal could save you time by answering your question straight away, giving you the most up-to-date reply.

We aim to launch the portal in September 2020.



Photography Competition

It's time to share some magic...

If you are already using the Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons for daily exercise, then pop your camera or phone in your pocket. When you see something that makes you think 'Wow' - and you will - then please take a photograph and enter it into the Commons Conservator's Photography competition. All of the fabulous images will be available for the whole community to see and enjoy. So even if people are unable to get to see the Commons for themselves, they will be able to see them through your eyes.

Whether you capture a butterfly, a newt, a beautiful orchid, your dog running around, a smile or a fabulous view, it's guaranteed to brighten someone's day.

The competition is free to enter with a Junior (12 and under), Teen (13-18) and Adult Category. Prizes include nature kits for children and vouchers or wine for everyone else.

Entries can be of any aspect or area of the Commons, anything that celebrates the magic. The competition closes on 31 July 2020 and judging will take place shortly after. Winners will then be notified. Please see updates on the website (twcommons.org) or [facebook.com/groups/twrcommons](https://www.facebook.com/groups/twrcommons)



Full competition details as follows:

- Please send your photograph to info@twcommons.org. Your entry e-mail must include: name, date of birth, address, date the photograph was taken and where on the Commons the image was taken.
- Any photograph is to be sent as a JPG/Jpeg file and be a maximum of 6MB.
- A confirmation-of-receipt e-mail will be sent. If you do not receive this please contact info@twcommons.org for clarification.
- Each entry must be the original work of the entrant and must not infringe the rights of any other party.
- Responsibility for ensuring the consent of the subjects in a picture lies with the photographer.
- One entry only per person.
- Editing and enhancing a photograph is not allowed, but cropping is.
- Entries from professional photographers will be refused.
- Commons Conservators have a right to refuse an entry on any grounds.
- The judge's decision is final.
- Entry into the competition permits the Commons Conservators to reproduce your photograph to promote the Commons, across our publications, the website, and social media pages without a fee. A credit will be given wherever possible.
- As a winner you will agree to moderate publicity and the use of your name, eg in a press release.

FAIRTRADE CHALLENGE



The Rusthall Rainbows

The Rusthall Rainbows recently visited a small family-owned chocolate business, 'Temper Temper,' to find out about cocoa and how important Fairtrade is for the farmers and their families who benefit from selling their cocoa into the Fairtrade market.

The visit looked like it was a lot of fun, and was part of a Fairtrade Challenge Badge for Tunbridge Wells, which has six components:

1. Tunbridge Wells is a Fairtrade Town - find out more about what this means.
2. Attend a Fairtrade event.
3. When did the Fairtrade organisation begin and why?
4. Make a display for others, giving information about Fairtrade.
5. Use Fairtrade products to produce a tasty meal.
6. Make a wish leaf: My wish for children...

To achieve the badge, Rainbows have to complete three of these challenges, while Brownies, Guides, Rangers, Leaders and Trefoil have to complete four or more.

You can see what the Rainbows learned in this film on Youtube youtu.be/DMEKa1YfU0o

Or by visiting fairtrade.org.uk

If you would like to know more or get involved in the Tunbridge Wells Fairtrade Town campaign, please e-mail contact@twfairtrade.org.uk



Events



Normally at this time of year Jazz on the Pantiles would be in full swing and we'd be excited to let you know all the dates for Local and Live, and those other great events around the borough we all love to attend.

It's good news that local businesses and event organisers are continuing to plan for them to take place when it is safe to do so. And at the same time local borough councillors are working with the businesses and event organisers to plan a special event to be arranged for later in the year, when it will be safe to do so.

As we all know we can't predict when that will be, but in the meantime why not try these online alternatives from the comfort of your home...

Virtual Pop up

EVERY FRIDAY

Support Local Pop-Ups Every Friday on Instagram
[@supportlocalpopup](https://www.instagram.com/supportlocalpopup)



Paul Dunton & Guests Live Streams every evening at 8pm on Facebook: [facebook.com/paulduntonandguests](https://www.facebook.com/paulduntonandguests)



Local business events in Tunbridge Wells
[tunbridgewellstogether.co.uk](https://www.tunbridgewellstogether.co.uk)



TW Deliveries Site - [twdelivery.co.uk](https://www.twdelivery.co.uk)

Keep an eye on [tunbridgewellsevents.co.uk](https://www.tunbridgewellsevents.co.uk) and organisers' websites for details about events as the lockdown restrictions are eased.

heritage open days

We're optimistically looking forward to September and this year's Heritage Open Days

The national organisers of this event are determined that HODs will happen in some form.

At the moment the dates for your diary for Tunbridge Wells Heritage Open Days 2020 are Friday 11 September to Sunday 20 September 2020 inclusive.

Heritage Open Days is England's largest festival of history and culture. HODs means thousands of free days out across the country, with the chance to visit buildings not usually open to the public, behind-the-scenes tours, guided walks and much more.

The theme for this year's Heritage Open Days is Hidden Nature. Keep an eye on the local HODs website for what's happening in the borough
[tunbridgewellsheritageopendays.org](https://www.tunbridgewellsheritageopendays.org)





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