Message from Councillor Jack Hopkins, **Leader of Lambeth Council**

**Thursday 19 March 2020**

**Lambeth stands together**

Dear Lambeth residents and friends,

I wanted to write to you about Lambeth Council’s response to Coronavirus, and how we are supporting our residents at this very difficult time.

Coronavirus is a huge challenge to every aspect of life in Lambeth as elsewhere. The council is working extremely hard with our NHS, voluntary sector, businesses and other partners to limit health, social and economic harm to our residents, and to plan for what comes next.

I first want to stress the importance of [following the official advice](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDEsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDAzMTkuMTg5Nzc3ODEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5uaHMudWsvY29uZGl0aW9ucy9jb3JvbmF2aXJ1cy1jb3ZpZC0xOS8_bWVkaXVtPWVtYWlsJnNvdXJjZT1Hb3ZEZWxpdmVyeSJ9.B_bgoLUzNNnaUXAak4DppSUBCocUKZ8BjTlgS4G6d2c/br/76336545171-l) from the UK government and Public Health England, particularly for those who are over 70, who have an underlying health condition, are displaying symptoms or have someone in their household who is displaying symptoms.

It is incumbent on all of us to act responsibly, to listen to official guidance and to work to protect our friends and neighbours.

The council is working hard to minimise disruption to our services as a result of coronavirus; however, in some cases services may be disrupted due to staff absence or official advice from the government.

We have initiated our Pandemic Coordination group to monitor the situation and coordinate the response across the council and we are working closely with our NHS partners.

Currently our offices, libraries and leisure centres are open, and our waste collection services are unaffected, but this situation is being reviewed on a daily basis and is likely to change. We are updating the community as the situation progresses.

The government yesterday announced the closure of schools and the council will be working with them to ensure that disruption is minimal. Schools have been asked to make specific provision for vulnerable children and the children of key workers: for example people working in health, social care and the police, and supermarket delivery drivers.

All Lambeth schools have already been making arrangements to deal with the disruption caused by the virus; for example, by putting materials online and arranging web-based lessons and homework. The intention is that every pupil will follow their normal timetable, including both lesson time and homework, while working at home. Parents have also been reminded not to leave their children with elderly relatives, as these are among the most vulnerable to infection with the Coronavirus.

The Lambeth Civic Centre is open, but please only attend in person if absolutely necessary and if possible contact us online or by phone. We are prioritising supporting our most vulnerable residents; that includes over 4,000 frail, elderly and disabled people who require care. Much more information is available about council services at [lambeth.gov.uk/coronavirus](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDIsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDAzMTkuMTg5Nzc3ODEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5sYW1iZXRoLmdvdi51ay9lbGVjdGlvbnMtYW5kLWNvdW5jaWwvYWJvdXQtbGFtYmV0aC9jb3JvbmF2aXJ1cy1jb3ZpZC0xOS1pbmZvcm1hdGlvbj9tZWRpdW09ZW1haWwmc291cmNlPUdvdkRlbGl2ZXJ5In0.ZvOM0kUxnHvVrXpU2fOjsh2L9mq1J1Y_WxPgl8NyWx0/br/76336545171-l)

The scale of the pandemic is unprecedented and will lead to major changes in our way of life over the next few months. In recognition of that, the council has taken a number of important steps:

* **We are treating our agency staff as permanent** so they will be paid if sick or self-isolating.
* **No evictions will be pursued by the council** during the pandemic and we are urging housing associations in the borough to do the same.
* I joined Lambeth’s business community to **lobby the Chancellor for immediate action in the face of the unprecedented economic challenge** posed by the coronavirus outbreak. I am pleased that action on business rates and support has been taken. We will act quickly to implement this for Lambeth businesses and continue to push the government to support all businesses and workers that are affected.
* We are working with Lambeth’s community groups on **expanding our support for vulnerable people and services in the community**.

Whilst observing public health advice about limiting social contact we are encouraging residents who are well to get involved with local organisations such as [Age UK Lambeth](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDMsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDAzMTkuMTg5Nzc3ODEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5hZ2V1ay5vcmcudWsvbGFtYmV0aC9nZXQtaW52b2x2ZWQvdG9nZXRoZXIvP21lZGl1bT1lbWFpbCZzb3VyY2U9R292RGVsaXZlcnkifQ.mEc_OZu7U3kzDXABPC5wxtVhmUCHeABo64T2Evpi8Qo/br/76336545171-l), who have a number of volunteering opportunities available. We also know food banks need donations of goods and money so please donate if you can. There are also a number of [local mutual aid](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDQsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDAzMTkuMTg5Nzc3ODEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5mYWNlYm9vay5jb20vZ3JvdXBzLzIxNDkxODE1MzIyMDAxMS8_bWVkaXVtPWVtYWlsJnNvdXJjZT1Hb3ZEZWxpdmVyeSJ9.hUjWAcXzWeG4rOy8n0O19Fx9XQsdJxI68kt2pJLoU28/br/76336545171-l) and other volunteering groups that people can get involved with. We are looking to help support and co-ordinate these efforts, though they are not run by the council.

These groups are a fantastic example of what makes our borough such a great place to live, and are testament to the levels of solidarity and compassion that exist in our diverse communities. While I would encourage all those involved to follow public health advice on avoiding the spread of the virus and safeguarding vulnerable people, I also want to pay tribute to those whose first thought, at a time of great uncertainty and fear, has been how to help their neighbours rather than themselves.

Best wishes