

For the record March 2020 Update- Transcript

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IsCiSoSEyxc&feature=youtu.be>

[Text: Cllr Simon Henig. Leader, Durham County Council]

[Cllr Simon Henig is stood behind a lectern addressing the council meeting]

Cllr Simon Henig: The current situation will, without doubt, test and stretch our ability to deliver services to the maximum. We are working tirelessly to plan and deal with the impact of the coronavirus, with an absolute focus on protecting and maintaining services for vulnerable adults, children and other priority services that our communities rely on.

We are working closely with our partners locally and across the region and following national guidance which is changing very quickly from day to day.

Given the latest information and guidance from government there are likely to be implications for the delivery of services as some staff work from home wherever this is possible or have to self-isolate. Through our planning we are looking at ways we can work differently to ensure business continuity wherever possible.

We will ensure that any service disruption or change is communicated to residents and ongoing engagement with communities will be a priority.

In reviewing the way in which we work we are taking sensible and pragmatic decisions around how we meet and where we work from. We will continue to make decisions based on the most up to date advice and guidance.

[Camera pans around the council meeting and shows only a few members and Councillors present]

Based on current guidance on social distancing, we have taken the decision that no further council meetings will take place or be convened in March. We will keep this under review as we await further information from government on council meetings going forward.

A great thing about County Durham are our strong local communities and we've had many approaches with offers of and ideas relating to volunteering, with some fantastic examples of things that are happening to support local communities across the county. The council recognises the important role the community and voluntary sector organisations play in supporting people and is working to put in place a series of measures through our Area Action Partnerships, in partnership with key voluntary sector organisations to help us through this difficult time.

We recognise that when people are in isolation, they are going to need support and assistance and for many this will be provided by friends and family. Where this is not possible it is important, we all act as good citizens and neighbours for those we live alongside. Consequently, we are actively promoting the 'Good Neighbour' approach, coordinating activity through the AAPs so there is a focus on local need.

We are very conscious also of the impact economically for local people, families and businesses and the associated effects this can have on wellbeing. We are committed to supporting communities and businesses as part of this work and we will implement any government backed initiatives as quickly as possible once we receive the detail of the support for businesses announced.

We are also looking at how the council can support local communities through these very challenging times and what we can do now to support the county's longer term recovery.

Our staff are hard working and loyal and I would like to pass on my thanks and I'm sure those of all members for everyone's work in these challenging times. We will continue to do everything we can to help the people of our county. We have dealt with emergency situations, although with reduced resources this is likely to be our greatest challenge.

Our success in County Durham has been achieved through working in partnership and it is more important than ever that we work together to protect our most vulnerable residents and our communities to the very best we can.

Regrettably it will be necessary for the council to make some changes to the services that we normally provide with further announcements to be made today regarding our Culture, Sports and Library offer. We do this with a priority of protecting our residents and staff whilst adhering to the advice we are receiving from government.

Thank you.

[Image of the Durham County Council logo on a blue background]

[Text: www.durham.gov.uk/coronavirus Find out more.]