

From the Council Leader

During this time the council has gone into recess and there is virtually nobody working from the City Chambers.

The council says it is working remotely and intensely to house homeless people and ensure that those who need help get it.

Council Leader Adam McVey writes : “This is an incredibly worrying and confusing time for everyone, and I want to reassure you that we’re doing everything we can to keep vital services running and keep you informed and supported. I would also like to send my best wishes to those directly affected by the virus, you and your family and friends are in my thoughts.

In light of Monday night’s announcements from both the UK and Scottish governments, it’s more important than ever that we all listen to and act on the instruction to stay at home, unless absolutely necessary. I can’t express strongly enough the need for us all to follow advice from the experts. It will help us protect those most vulnerable to this virus and those essential workers who are supporting our city.

We’re all working hard to respond to a continuously developing situation and process a lot of information and advice, which is constantly evolving.

Please keep informed through the dedicated information pages on our website, which are updated regularly with service changes and a wide range of practical advice and guidance.

Following the closure of our schools, nurseries and early years centres on Friday, Edinburgh Leisure venues, libraries and community centres have also closed, as have pubs, cafés,

shops and restaurants. Thank you to all the employees, businesses and everyone across the City for your co-operation in making this happen. Your actions will truly save lives.

I know it's a very difficult time and many of you will be worried about your job, business, being isolated from family and friends or simply not being able to do the daily activities you enjoy, like going to the gym.

Work is ongoing to look at the economic implications of this crisis and the impact on poverty in Edinburgh and we're actively taking steps to alleviate the impact on residents and businesses. Our website has information about what to do if you're struggling to pay your Council tax and other available financial support. It also has information for businesses about the help available.

We're working at pace to prioritise learning and childcare for key workers, who remain crucial in supporting our city's response to this crisis. We're opening 23 school buildings Monday to Friday each week to provide support for families where both parents and carers fall within the key worker category and have no other possible childcare arrangements.

I would ask that you please contact us online as much as possible so that our phonenumber (0131 200 2000) is available for emergency calls only, for queries such as social care direct, urgent repairs and welfare support. This will help us prioritise help for our most vulnerable residents.

We're also temporarily changing the way people interact with our Locality Offices. These buildings and 249 High Street are now closed to the general public as we roll out a new model of Local Critical Resilience Centres. These centres will provide a base for Council officers to work from so that they can target support for welfare crisis, urgent housing issues, homelessness and household support. We're looking at how we provide food vouchers through these centres and further

details of this will be released in the coming days.

We've set up a homelessness project team to identify additional accommodation for those who need it.

Within our services, key roles are being identified so we can direct and train staff to provide much-needed support to our frontline services.

This is an unprecedented situation, but please be reassured that, across the city, all organisations are working together, and flat out, to support you. Please bear with us as we put new measures in place.

I know I speak on behalf of everyone in the city when I say a massive thank you to everyone who is working to keep the city running, providing essential support services for health and social care staff or keeping food supplies flowing.