

Stanford-le-Hope and District u3a

Keeping in Touch with Members

Good Afternoon Members

Welcome to the latest issue of Keeping In Touch With Members produced by Stanford-le-Hope u3a. Particular welcome to those new members amongst you as this is now Subscription Renewal time.

You will have already received your Subscription renewal information by email during the past week. If you wish to take advantage of your reduced membership fee, then please renew by 30th April. However, rather than do that and leave it, how about renewing now and then you will not forget.

Also, you will have received details of our forthcoming AGM in June and you have forms to nominate new or existing committee members and put forward any motions that you may have for your u3a.

We are still living in difficult times of COVID-19 and the latest update from Thurrock Council will be towards the end of this email. The good news is that by now all of you 'Over 70's' should have at least been offered your first vaccine against the COVID-19 virus. If this is not the case then please follow the advice given by the NHS as to who to contact. Those younger ones amongst us will be contacted very soon either by letter or from your very own Surgery itself. Please do not phone your surgeries for this as they are already in overload.

General Meeting

Last week we held our February General Meeting and this included a Quiz ran by the Quiz Group with Ann Bailey acting as Quiz Master. Our grateful thanks to both Ann and Sue Green for organising the event and giving us something to start the old grey matter cog wheels turning. With lockdown we only have to decide which room to stay in today or where to walk too. Having questions to think about gives it something very different. Sue Green donated a very large Chocolate bar for the winners and I am assured this was to stop John from eating it all himself.

We have some very good and kind Members with us and some of those have written brief notes to be included so that you can all hear what they are doing or give you something else to do in this lockdown period.

Ideas for Members

If any of you have any ideas for members to use whilst they wait for us to all meet again face to face, then let me know by replying to this email. All replies will be included in the next email in 2 weeks time.

Bingo

One such Member has shown an interest in playing Bingo via Zoom. I am sure it can be arranged but we really need more than 1 to play as they will win every time. So, if anybody else would like to play Bingo, let me know by replying to this email.

Ann Bailey's Fortnightly Chat on Radio Programmes

Programmes to listen to

World of Curls 10.45am/7.45 pm. This takes place in a salon in Peckham

How to avoid a climate disaster.9.45am/12.30am By Bill Gates

When you choose a book, does the cover influence you? It does me, in some cases. Gone are the days of row upon row of leather-bound books which are found in the libraries of stately homes, often behind mesh, and certainly not for the reading thereof. It makes you wonder whether all the books in a grand library were simply there for show. It was probably no different to us having the collected works of an author eg Dan Brown, CJ Sansom and Ellis Peters, to name a few.

I expect the snow will all be gone by the time this goes out. It all looked very picturesque in the garden, but gave me a flat battery which a certain car repair van has replaced this morning., Gone are the days when I would go out in it, too afraid of falling over. One Tree Hill looked very busy, and I acquired a small snowman in my front garden, bits of him are still there. The birds were in and out of the garden for food, even the jay which I haven't seen for many months. The sparrows investigated the nest box, the female was in and the male stood guard, think he was too big to squeeze in.

Soon be time to look out for the catkins and pussy willow, harbingers of Spring

Subject: Over 70s Encouraged to get in touch about their COVID-19 Vaccine

From: Mid and South Essex Patient Participation and Community Reference Groups

COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

SUPPORT US TO SPREAD THE WORD, NOT THE VIRUS

Please can you help to share the below information via your networks, friends and families.

Until now the NHS has asked people to wait until they are contacted to help ensure that those who are most vulnerable are protected first – and that remains the case for most people.

However, to ensure absolutely everyone is offered the vaccine, people aged 70 and over can now contact the NHS so they can be vaccinated by the middle of this month.

All people aged over 70 who have not had their first dose should come forward and book their appointment through the national booking service which can be accessed

at www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination. Anyone that is unable to book online can call 119 free of charge between 7am – 11pm seven days a week.

If they live in Essex, and need further help to book an appointment, they can ring 0344 2573 961 (open 10am-4pm, local rate). If a suitable and convenient slot is not available, people can also call their GP practice.

Kindest regards

Amanda Shears

Patient Engagement Officer

Contribution from Diane Howells

(A Welsh Sense of Humour)

Don't let them take your temperature on your forehead as you enter the supermarket because it erases your memory. I went for Macaroni and cheese and came home with two cases of Beer.

It's a five-minute walk from my house to the pub. It's a 35-minute walk from the pub to my house. The difference is staggering.

My mind is like my internet browser:

19 tabs open, 3 of them frozen
and I have no idea where the music is coming from.

People who wonder whether the glass is half empty or half full
are missing the point. The glass is refillable.

They say every piece of chocolate eaten
shortens your life by 2 minutes.
I've done the maths.
Seems like I died in 1537.

I got myself a seniors' GPS
Not only does it tell me how to get to my destination,
it tells me why I wanted to go there.

Most people don't think I am as old as I am
until they hear me stand up.

Had I known in March that it was the last time
I would be in a restaurant I would have ordered the dessert.

I don't always go that extra mile,
but when I do it's because I've missed the exit.

Answers to Last Times Ditloids

- 1 8 Legs on a spider
- 2 60 seconds in a minute
- 3 7 wonders of the world
- 4 64 squares on a chessboard
- 5 4 stomachs in a cow
- 6 Santa Claus has 9 reindeer
- 7 100 pence in a pound
- 8 88 keys on a piano
- 9 31 days in May
- 10 6 zero's in a million

New Quiz

Famous movie quotes-name the film

- 1 "my mama always said "Life was like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get"
- 2 "I'm the king of the world!"
- 3 "You're gonna need a bigger boat."
- 4 "My precious."

5 “A martini. Shaken, not stirred.”

6 “Hasta la vista, baby.”

7 “You talking to me?”

8 “I’ll have what she’s having.”

9 “To infinity and beyond!”

10 “You’re only supposed to blow the bloody doors off!”

Thanks to our Quiz Group for keeping us amused especially Sue Green for her contribution

And Finally

(With special thanks to Peter Spencer)

Bacon jokes

I saw a fir tree with bacon growing from it the other day. On asking I was told it was a porkypine.

What is a frogs favourite flavour of crisp? Croaky bacon.

The difference between France’s bacon and Frances Bacon is that one comes from belly pork, the other from the belle epoque.

Got attacked by a bacon tree the other day. It was a hambush.

What do you call a Scottish piece of bacon? Ham-ish.

What do you call dinosaur meat wrapped in bacon? Jurassic pork.

What do you get if you play tug-of-war with bacon? Pulled Pork.

Badger jokes

I was driving through the countryside when my sat nav said bear left. It was clearly a badger.
Why don’t badgers like fast food? It’s hard to catch.

I wonder if badgers look more slender than they really are because of how they wear their stripes.

Had to chase a badger away from my house the other day in my pyjamas. I’ve no idea how he got into them.

A teacher asked the class the other day to name six mammals that you might find in the countryside. One of the pupils replied five badgers and a squirrel.

Thurrock Council Update

With half term on the horizon, it will be tempting to get out and about with family or friends – whether you have been home schooling or simply missing your loved ones. However, now is

not the time to undo all of the good work that everyone in our borough has been doing over the past weeks.

It will not help us to make our way out of this lockdown into lower restrictions if our rates start to increase, so I really cannot emphasise enough that you still need to carefully follow the rules. I know it will have been tempting for our young people to get together should we have more snow, but social distancing must be adhered to or we run the risk of undoing all the weeks of sacrifice we have endured to get us to this much improved position. By staying at home and only going out when we absolutely must for essential reasons, we have helped to ease the immense pressure on the NHS – but it's important to understand that that the number of people in hospital now is just as high as it was as during the peak in the first wave so we are still in a very serious position.

We are still asking that all those who cannot work from home get a weekly test – this week's testing figures show that happily a higher proportion of younger men have now been getting tested, but men aged 40 to 59 are still not taking up this offer as much as we would hope to see. Please do access this free PCR test – it's quick and easy to do, and you can book a walk-through or drive-through test, apply for a postal test or just turn up at Crown Road car park any day of the week between 9am and 3pm. I know people are busy working, but by taking the time to have this quick test you can make sure you are not spreading the virus to your families or the wider community. You do not have to self-isolate after you get the test, only if you get a positive result.

The vaccination programme is continuing to roll out rapidly in Thurrock. While a large proportion of our over 75s have now received the first dose of their COVID-19 vaccination, it is still very important that we ALL continue to follow hands, face, space guidance diligently including those who have received their first vaccination. I myself got vaccinated this week, as I am a person in the fourth group of those who should receive the vaccine. I can reassure everyone that it is a safe and extremely well run operation and I recommend that absolutely everyone who receives their invite takes this offer up and gets the protection that vaccines offer.

Residents who are over 70 and/or Clinically Extremely Vulnerable who haven't yet had their first COVID-19 jab should now contact the NHS. A national booking system can be accessed [online](#) or you can also arrange your vaccination by calling 119, speaking to your GP or by calling local rate NHS number 0344 2573 961 which is open 10am to 4pm daily.

More information on the vaccination programme is available at essexcovidvaccine.nhs.uk

Family fun for February half-term

Despite lockdown restrictions still being in place and the recent cold snap making the outdoors less welcoming than usual there is plenty for children and families to do this half-term without leaving their home or garden.

You can take virtual visits to the zoo with videos, live streams and virtual tours available from [London Zoo](#), [Whipsnade Zoo](#) and [Chester Zoo](#) which give you the chance to learn about rare animals, enjoy feeding time and even some [fun activities](#) you can do at home.

It's not just zoos that offer virtual tours, you can also enjoy the wonderful exhibits at the [Natural History Museum](#) and [Science Museum](#) or take a tour of the stars by joining a [Royal Museum Greenwich planetarium show](#) which includes expert commentary from their team of Royal Observatory astronomers.

The [Southbank Centre](#) has shows for babies and kids of all ages across the whole of half term week. Entry costs £5 a device to join one of their interactive sessions. Or you could take a look at the baby rhyme time and story sessions brought to you by our own libraries team on the fantastic [YouTube Channel](#).

The [National Trust](#) has a lot of handy ideas for activities including a downloadable [sounds of nature bingo card](#) to help little ones discover all the wildlife that lives around them.

Royal Parks has a full week of free activities lined up for half-term with interactive sessions taking place including live crafting, story-telling and animal spotting and feeding sessions. [You can sign-up online](#).

Other free crafting ideas for the whole family can be found at [Foundling Museum](#) which has plenty of ideas and tutorials to keep children occupied for hours.

Remember as long as you [follow the rules](#) practise [social distancing](#) and don't meet with anyone who you don't live with families can enjoy daily exercise at their [local park](#) right here in Thurrock.

A childcare bubble is where one household links with one other household to provide informal, unpaid and unregistered childcare to a child aged under 14. Childcare bubbles are exclusive which means that families cannot form more than one childcare bubble with people from different households.

- you cannot use a childcare bubble to mix with another household for reasons other than childcare
- if you decide to change your childcare bubble, you should treat your previous bubble as a separate household for 10 days before forming a new bubble
- if anyone in your childcare bubble develops symptoms or tests positive for coronavirus, follow the stay at home guidance on the gov.uk website

You can find all the information regarding bubbles, how they work and guidelines to whether you are eligible to form a childcare bubble at: [GOV.UK: Making a childcare bubble with another household](#).

The guidance about treating your previous bubble as a separate household for 10 days before forming a new bubble also applies to support bubbles, you can read the full guidance at: [GOV.UK: Making a support bubble with another household](#)

Free half-term school meals

To once again ensure that our vulnerable children and young people will not go without during the school holidays, all children eligible for free school meals in Thurrock schools will receive a £15 supermarket voucher for the upcoming February half term week.

The supermarket voucher can be used to purchase lunchtime meals for children as would typically be provided at school and is funded by the Government COVID-19 Winter Grant Scheme.

More than 6,400 food vouchers are being distributed to our children and young people and follows the work of the council in December 2020 when it supported thousands of eligible children across the borough with access to free school meals.

What is an essential journey?

As part of the national lockdown it is advised that you do not leave your house unless it is absolutely necessary. This is to help reduce the flow of people and the contact between people in workplaces, on public transport and in other spaces and reduce the transmission of COVID-19.

The law states you must not leave your house without a reasonable excuse or you could face a fixed penalty notice starting at £200 for first offenders.

The following are [acceptable reasons](#) for essential travel:

- to go to work if you are unable to work from home
- volunteering
- attending medical appointments at the hospital or your GP
- to access childcare
- to visit those in your support bubble
- to provide care or emergency assistance
- buying goods or services that you need
- outdoor exercise (you may only travel a short distance to access an open space)
- accessing veterinary services or exercising your pet
- for communal worship and life events, such as funerals and weddings
- if you believe you are at risk of being harmed if you stay at home

Outside of the above reasons, it is advised that you only travel locally, meaning you are not leaving your town, village or the part of the city you live in.

Waste collection update

Following this week's snow and freezing conditions there has been severe disruption to household refuse collections which has meant that bins and waste has not been collected from many homes in Thurrock.

Icy roads and pavements made it very dangerous for the crews who have to move bins and the drivers of trucks who have to navigate often narrow roads and there were unfortunately some accidents involving both vehicles and waste crews.

Waste crews and street cleaning and ground maintenance teams have been redeployed to help clear footways leading to medical centres, COVID-19 testing and vaccination centres, shopping areas and transport hubs.

Our waste service has been monitoring weather updates which are forecast to remain below freezing and are not expected to improve sufficiently to allow safe working conditions for crews and our fleet of refuse lorries until after the weekend.

Collections are expected to resume on Monday 15 February on their usual day.

- waste crews will take 1-2 additional black bags with grey/green refuse bins next week – this amount will ensure that our lorries can continue to get through their rounds during your next collection date
- due to extra waste being collected, bin collections may take longer and possibly carry into Saturday next week
- black bags are not recyclable and could contaminate recycling side waste – flattened cardboard can be put next to your blue bins
- please squash down additional recycling or put extra recycling in either a clear bag or one of the council's clear blue bags

There is no need to report missed collections or contact Thurrock Council about bins missed this week as a result of the unusual weather.

Thank you for bearing with us as we take these necessary decisions to ensure the safety of our crews.

You can find out the latest information at www.thurrock.gov.uk/waste or by following our [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) accounts.

Mental Health

If you are worried about coronavirus or struggling with your mental health as you stay at home follow advice from [Every Mind Matters](#) or contact [Inclusion Thurrock](#) on 01375 898680 or [Thurrock and Brentwood Mind](#) on 01375 391 411 to access local services.

If you feel you need support you can:

- contact [Thurrock First](#) on 01375 511 000 between 7am and 7pm seven days a week
- contact [Samaritans](#) on 116 123 to talk to immediately at any time, or email jo@samaritans.org for a reply within 24 hours
- text "SHOUT" to 85258 to contact the [Shout Crisis Text Line](#) and start a text conversation with a trained Shout Volunteer; or text "YM" if you're under 19
- contact [CALM](#) either through an [online webchat](#) or by phone on 0800 585 858 between 5pm and midnight 365 days a year

Support for Children and young people is available through Thurrock COVID-19 Child Wellbeing Support Line on 01375 652 537 or 01375 652 558, email: SWS@thurrock.gov.uk

If you're under 19, you can also call 0800 1111 to talk to [Childline](#). The number will not appear on your phone bill.

Many thanks to you all for your feedback and to those who have submitted ideas for other Members.

Stay Safe and Well

Paul Brice
Advanced Notice Editor