

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have announced a range of measures to protect our services, communities, councillors and employees over coming weeks.

The moves include cancelling all council meetings for March and April, with the council exploring alternative ways to allow democratic council decisions to continue to be made in the meantime.

Kingfisher Leisure Centre in Sudbury and Hadleigh Pool and Leisure will close to the public on Friday (March 20) following conversations with our partners at Abbeycroft Leisure, and we are in ongoing discussions with Everyone Active about Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre and Stradbroke Swimming Pool and Fitness Centre. Further information for customers will follow from our partners over coming days.

In line with Government advice, we have instructed all councillors and officers in high risk groups to self-isolate and all officers to work from home if they can, although this obviously isn't possible for everyone and precautions are in place around social distancing and hygiene across all our offices and sites.

We are committed to keeping council services running for our communities in the meantime by adopting special business continuity measures across our teams.

This may mean a change in the way we work – reducing our face-to-face services, such as our pop-up Customer Access points in Hadleigh and Shotley for example, or replacing visits by telephone calls – but we are still available to help and support people by phone on 0300 1234000 and via our website.

Employees visiting people's homes, for example our tradespeople carrying out work and essential repairs in our council houses, will be following strict social distancing guidelines and hand sanitisation, and may ask a few additional questions before entering customers' homes – in order to protect both them and our tenants.

We are also exploring ways to support our communities and our businesses in Babergh and Mid Suffolk over the difficult weeks ahead, in line with the package of new financial measures for individuals and businesses announced by the Chancellor this evening.

Babergh District Council leader Cllr John Ward said: "The important thing now is for our councils to work together with our communities to ensure the safety of residents and our staff and to keep our services running. Our councillors and officers are doing everything possible behind the scenes and, although we may need to work differently to deliver our services, we ask that the public understands and works with us during this time."

Mid Suffolk District Council leader Cllr Suzie Morley said: "I'd like to thank everyone in our communities who has already expressed a wish to help others in need. A lot of work has already taken place behind the scenes and rest assured, our politicians and officers are going above and beyond to plan how we can help and continue to deliver services over coming weeks. The situation is fast moving, but we will continue to work with our health and public sector colleagues to provide a co-ordinated response."