

With the uncertainty of a second wave before us, I want to share with you the half-time scores that demonstrate just how your local Council has stepped in to help individuals, families and businesses address the impact of COVID-19 so far.

The figures are really impressive, but what is staggering and makes me most proud, is the way that our team has taken this pandemic in its stride. Over a quarter of our staff have been redeployed and their efforts augmented by volunteers to ensure that every fridge has been filled, every bin collected, every homeless person found a roof over their head and each business assisted with cash, grants or other intervention.

Our staff working in our help hub answered more than 20,000 calls from people needing help and support on a seven day per week rota. In addition we super-served nearly 5,000 shielded residents or were known to be vulnerable. Staff worked from spare bedrooms, kitchens and garden sheds to keep the wheels turning.

Our teams, supported by hundreds of volunteers delivered 4,000 food parcels and prescriptions to those in the greatest need and we provided 78 residents with safe, temporary accommodation.

Our housing and benefits team dealt with more than 9,000 calls, our Economic Development team and our Business Rates team helped administer more than £50 million in business grants and our crews collected over one million bins - black, green and brown. Our website team published nearly 4,000 page updates and we had over 250,000 visits to our website from residents and businesses looking for information and support.

I want to thank our staff and the hundreds of volunteers, who stood up and offered to help, for everything you've done and there are undoubtedly people alive today who wouldn't be, without your efforts.

Now we look the future and the recovery. We have secured over £400,000 to upgrade the narrow Thoroughfare in Harleston to allow safe shopping with pedestrian priority whilst allowing free access for cars, buses and delivery vehicles.

In Wymondham, the station access will now finally be upgraded for disabled access from both platforms in a £1m investment.

And our Confidence Team, is continuing to work with our towns and businesses to get our high streets back on their feet and cash registers ringing again. We are working with businesses across the district to help save jobs and we are helping our licenced premises to stay open, while keeping you safe.

But we cannot afford to be complacent. We haven't beaten this virus yet and that's why it's important that we don't let our guard down and that we're ready for what's to come this winter. But whatever is thrown at us, I can reassure you that your local Council will be ready to help you and loved ones keep safe and secure.

Regards Barry

Cllr Barry Duffin

Forngett Ward

South Norfolk District Council