

Teachers talk openly about mental health

Teachers are opening up and sharing personal stories with their students to help them to take care of their own mental health during lockdown.

Forest Hall School in Stansted took part in Mental Health Awareness Week as a way of communicating with pupils about their wellbeing while away from their normal routines.

Staff recorded video messages sharing their personal experiences and giving advice on how to keep a positive mindset.

Sarah Power, Forest Hall's enrichment lead, said: "Reaching out to students at this time is really important. They are stuck indoors, not being able to see their friends and that is especially tough for teenagers."

"We have video messages from members of staff speaking about what they do to look after themselves normally and especially during these times. I have explained in mine how important yoga is for me when I am feeling anxious, for example."

The school is sending out daily factsheets to families focusing on sleep, anxiety, eating and self-harm, with links to agencies which can help and advise on mental health.

Bridging the footpath gap

Long-awaited work has started on building a footbridge that will open up a network of paths for walkers.

The structure is being put in place over a brook to link the village with Stansted Park, an area of open space given to the village following the Elms Farm development.

District and parish councillor Alan Dean said: "This has been outstanding for two years now because the developer was trying to wriggle out of providing a bridge, but this will now complete the footpath network. Far more people are going on walks at the moment than is normal and it will be an excellent amenity for local people. I will be glad when it's up."

Garden skip service back

The garden waste skip service has been restored in Stansted.

Following the latest Government advice, the service was remobilised by Uttlesford District Council and resumed at Lower Street car park over the weekend. The skip will next visit the village on Sunday June 14.

The parish council has asked residents to be mindful of delays when visiting the site and to be patient. Strict two-metre social distancing rules will be in place and only one vehicle can unload at any time. Operators will not assist any residents with unloading to reduce the risk of transferring Covid-19.

Volunteer seamstresses have got PPE supplies all sewn up



Volunteers in Stansted who have been hard at work making protective clothing (PPE) for local health care workers have been praised for their efforts.

The team of seamstresses have had their foot flat out to the sewing machine pedal in recent weeks providing essential kit for surgery staff, ambulance teams, health visitors and care home workers.

Friends of Stansted Surgery, which has co-ordinated the volunteer response, said they had so far completed 25 sets of scrubs for Stansted doctors; 18 sets for district nurses; 11 for Newport Surgery; six for Elsenham; 30 gowns and bags for care homes; and 100 more gowns and bags for ambulance staff and Home Farm Trust.

"Thank you to all the wonderful volunteers making a difference to so many lives," said organiser Philippa Bennett, who added that they still had cloth masks available to buy at £3 each while suggestions for any organisations that still need PPE were welcome.

This week is National Volunteers' Week and Stansted has an army of more than 110 helpers who have been supporting the community during the Covid-19 lockdown.

Parish councillors notch up their combined half century

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Two Stansted parish councillors have marked a combined 50 years of service to their community.

Liberal Democrats Geoffrey Sell and John Hudson joined the council on May 10, 1995 and have retained their seats ever since.

Their 25-year milestones have not gone unnoticed by their colleagues. Council chair Maureen Caton said: "We are very grateful for their very dedicated and committed service to the community."

Cllr Sell, of Spencer Close, who celebrated his 66th birthday yesterday (Tuesday), has lived in the village since the age of four. Following in the footsteps of his parents, Jane and Ken, who were

both involved with community life, has been an obvious step.

"My mother in particular was very involved in voluntary work and was a founder of the day centre, so I grew up in a household where it was normal to get involved and I felt I wanted to do something for the community," he said.

"I had a degree in politics, and was interested in local government and knew a few parish councillors, so it was a natural thing for me to do. I care about Stansted and wanted to help. It has certainly been extremely interesting and quite rewarding in many ways and I have been able to make a small contribution."

He was chairman of the parish council from 2006 to 2014. In 1998 he was elected to Uttlesford District Council. Aside from a break between 2011 and 2015, he has



Cllrs Geoffrey Sell and John Hudson

served on this authority for 18 years.

The highlight of his parish tenure was working with residents of Save Stansted Village to defeat Taylor Wimpey's proposed development at Bentfield and the introduction of a new PCSO for Stansted.

"It's nice to see things like that start off and coming to fruition – that you can make changes which will be of benefit to the residents."

Cllr Hudson, 76, of Lower Street, said Stansted Parish Council tackled some big issues including airport expansion, transport infrastructure and planning. When he arrived in the village from Leicestershire in the 1990s the Lib Dems were very active in the area.

"I remember the main issue at the time was the building of Forest Hall Park and the airport trying to grow, and now we still haven't got a Local Plan and developers are making plans to build all over the place."

"The countryside aspect of the village is gradually being lost and this is a constant pressure on the parish council. We do serve a valuable purpose in relaying local opinion to the district council and it has been interesting – difficult at times – but it's certainly not a quiet parish council by any means."

Business will re-Zoom at first meeting since lockdown

Stansted Parish Council is gearing up for a return to meetings – with the first Zoom conference scheduled for next Wednesday (June 10).

Since lockdown, the council has mainly operated with staff

and councillors working from home.

But chairman Cllr Maureen Caton said the time had now come for a virtual get-together.

"So far we have done everything via email or phone,

but we do need to have a meeting now," she said.

The full council agenda will be sent out to members this week. It will be the first time the council has met since its personnel sub-committee meeting on March

13. One of its first issues will be helping non-essential retailers to reopen from June 15.

It is working with Uttlesford District Council to ensure that everyone knows what is expected of them to be 'Covid secure'.