

# Community NEWS



AUTUMN/WINTER 2020

## PLAY YOUR PART

Let's protect St Albans

- Wash your hands
- Keep your distance
- Wear a face covering where required
- Isolate and get tested if you have symptoms

For more information on how to protect yourself visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

St Albans City & District Council NHS Hertfordshire

Stay Safe Hertfordshire

## We're All In This Together

**The Council has been battling with a range of partner organisations to limit the impact of COVID-19 on the District.**

We have been working since the lockdown in mid-March with the NHS, Hertfordshire County Council, St Albans BID (Business Improvement District) and community groups on a wide range of initiatives. This has included dealing with the County Council's pedestrianisation of some City Centre streets to ensure better social distancing.

Some of our employees delivered food parcels to the vulnerable at the height of the pandemic while others volunteered to help West Hertfordshire Crematorium's hard-pressed staff.

A sample of the activities we have undertaken and are continuing with can be found on pages 4 and 5.

One of our key tasks has been to reinforce the Government's key messages on social restrictions and how to stay safe.

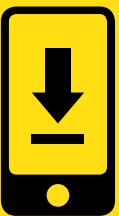
As part of our response, we made a video that has reached more than 30,000 people and can be seen on our Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/StAlbansCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/StAlbansCouncil).

The Council's Civic Centre Offices remain closed to the public with most staff working remotely.

Our website, revamped earlier this year, contains the latest information on our services and is updated regularly: [www.stalbans.gov.uk](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk).

### Download NHS COVID-19 App

We are encouraging all residents to download the NHS COVID-19 tracing app for England and Wales. This is an essential tool in the fight to control the virus. It will let you know if you are at risk so you can alert your loved ones, protecting them and the community. It can be downloaded from the App Store or Google Play.



## Your Questions Answered

Hertfordshire GPs Dr Prag Moodley and Dr Nicolas Small have put together the answers to common questions about coronavirus. These can be viewed here: [www.healthierfuture.org.uk](http://www.healthierfuture.org.uk).



Community News is published by St Albans City & District Council

[www.stalbans.gov.uk](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk)



# WIN £2,000 THROUGH E-BILLING

Residents who receive their Council Tax bills electronically will be entered into a prize draw with the chance to win £2,000. The sum more than covers the yearly Council Tax for a Band D property.

We're holding the draw to encourage more people to ditch paper bills. That is good for the environment, preserving precious resources, and saves Council Taxpayers money. It costs around 42p to print and post a bill with around 60,000 households having to be contacted each year.

To enter the draw, residents need to sign up to e-billing before Sunday 21 February 2021 and will have to be a Council Taxpayer in the District on Thursday 1 April 2021. Residents who already use e-billing are automatically entered. The draw will take place in April. To sign up to e-billing, you need to set up a MyStAlbans District account: [www.stalbans.gov.uk/mystalbans](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/mystalbans).

Council Tax Bill



## Mayor's Charity Appeal

St Albans Mayor Janet Smith has renewed her plea for charity donations after a rise in domestic violence cases during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Councillor Smith made St Albans and Hertsmere Women's Refuge her charity for this Mayoral year.

Recent figures show there has been a 33% increase across the UK for services like the refuge which supports domestic abuse victims.

To make a donation, go to: <https://sahwr.org.uk/give>.

## Fireworks Plea

The RSPCA has issued advice on how to make fireworks less frightening for dogs and other animals.



Residents celebrating Bonfire Night, Diwali, the New Year or other occasions should follow the guidelines to minimise the risk of causing an incident. Research shows that the bangs and cracks of fireworks can be a terrifying experience for dogs as they have highly sensitive hearing.

For information on how to reduce the risk of fireworks upsetting or injuring pets, livestock and wildlife, see: <https://bit.ly/3mRWEia>.

## Are Your Registration Details Correct?

It's important to make sure that your electoral registration details are up to date.

If you've received a household canvass letter, you should respond right away if you haven't done so already.

Elections are scheduled to take place in May next year. If you're not registered to vote, you'll not be able to have your say on polling day. The easiest way to register is online at:

[www.gov.uk/register-to-vote](http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote).

For further information, contact us at: [elections@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:elections@stalbans.gov.uk).

Make sure your correct details are on the electoral register

The Electoral Commission



# Eco Issues

## Action To Tackle The Climate Emergency

More than 100 actions are to be taken to tackle the climate emergency and make St Albans District carbon neutral by the end of the decade. The initiatives are part of a sustainability strategy that has been developed over the past year by the Council.

Among the commitments are the creation of more charging points for electric vehicles and improving the energy efficiency of Council homes.

Energy audits of the Council's largest buildings, such as Westminster Lodge and the Civic Centre, will look at how consumption can be reduced.

A £100,000 rewilding project over the next two years will improve biodiversity across the District,

including habitats for birds and wildlife.

A full-time staff member is to be recruited this year and given the role of delivering the strategy.

The Council agreed in a unanimous vote in July last year to declare a climate emergency. An update on the past year's progress was given to September's virtual meeting of the Full Council.



Picture: Artist's impression of what the project will deliver.

## Revitalising The Ver

**A multi-million-pound project to improve the River Ver as it flows through St Albans is now picking up pace.**

The Environment Agency (EA) has appointed an engineering contractor to progress the detailed design. In September, they held a workshop with key groups to develop the plans. Over the next year the designs will be finalised for a public consultation and then a planning application will be made towards the end of 2021. The project's first phase is focused on improvements to the river as it flows through Verulamium Park.

The Council is working with the EA, Affinity Water and other partners to restore the Ver and enhance the water quality of the park's artificial lakes.

This will be achieved by returning the river to a more natural course and introducing meanders and habitats on the banks.

Work should start on site in Spring 2022 and be completed the following winter.

To find out more, visit: [www.stalbans.gov.uk/revitalising-river-ver](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/revitalising-river-ver).

## Bikes For Key NHS Workers

St Albans City Hospital nurse Jane O'Connor is the first winner of a bicycle that has been restored and donated by a partnership formed by the Council, rail operator Thameslink and the St Albans Cycle Campaign

Thameslink has donated six bikes abandoned and unclaimed at railway stations across its network. The Council commissioned cycle repair specialists to restore them and the campaign group funded the work.

West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust organised a prize draw for the bikes and Jane was the first winner.



## Waste And Recycling Advice

**Frozen bins** – to ensure waste is all removed when we have a cold spell, please loosen the material before collection, especially your garden waste. Crews do not have the equipment on board to do this.

**Garden Waste** – do not include soil or stones. It makes the bins too heavy to lift onto the vehicle.

**Paper and Card** – cover your boxes with the lid to keep the content dry. Wet paper and card can be rejected by the processor. Quality over quantity.

**Missed collection** – please report within two working days. Excess waste cannot be picked up and overfilled bins cannot be emptied.

# During the COVID lockdown



Supported over **130 households** in temporary accommodation

Housed **20** rough sleepers

Redeployed over **70 Council staff** to help respond to COVID-19



Held more than **50 committee meetings** remotely



Worked with Hertfordshire County Council to **distribute food parcels** to vulnerable residents, and people in temporary housing and supported accommodation



Made over **6,000 repairs** to Council houses

**Relaxed parking restrictions** at the height of the lockdown to support businesses and key workers



Emptied over **2.36 million waste and recycling bins** and maintained a full waste collection service

Cleared over **140 fly-tips**



**St Albans**  
City & District Council

# down and subsequently we:



Maintained our twice-weekly **markets**

Answered over **50,000 calls** to the Council contact centre

Called **2,500** vulnerable residents to offer support and **1,200** residents who had not responded to government shielding letters



Secured **2 closure orders** to help tackle anti-social behaviour and crime



Enabled more than **90%** of staff to work from home

Distributed over **£27.1 million** of grants to more than **1,950 businesses**

Gave more than **350 businesses** advice and support to re-open safely



Kept all our all our **parks open** for people to enjoy and exercise

Reopened Museum + Gallery and Verulamium Museum with **COVID-secure** measures

Attracted **41,200 visits** to the museums website, hosted **2 online exhibitions** and made nearly **52,000 collections objects accessible online**



Gained **1.4 million visits** to the Council website, including **18,700** to the COVID-19 updates page and **6,000** to business support services



[www.stalbans.gov.uk](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk)



# Police Priorities

**Breaches of COVID regulations, car crime and drug dealing are to be priorities for Police in St Albans over the next few months.**

During a recent spike in COVID-19 cases, officers patrolled green spaces and parks to make sure people were observing social distancing.

Following a spate of criminal damage to cars near the City Centre, officers have been undertaking high-visibility patrols. Drug dealing hotspots have been identified around the City and action will be taken by neighbourhood officers.

St Albans Chief Inspector Lynda Coates said: *“I hope that local residents feel reassured by our latest priorities. We know that it’s a really tough time for everyone and I hope that our increased patrols in response to the pandemic provide you with peace of mind.”*

Much car crime is opportunistic and there is a lot drivers can do to reduce the chance of becoming a victim. You should refrain from keeping valuables in your car, such as loose change or dash cams. Close all of your windows and, if you do leave anything in the vehicle, lock it in the boot or glove compartment. Most importantly, lock the doors even if you are only going to be away from the vehicle for a minute or two.



## Public Space Protection Order

**A Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) covering the centres of St Albans and Harpenden has been extended for a further three years.**

This follows a consultation with the public and local organisations.

A PSPO requires individuals to hand over alcohol when asked to do so by an authorised person such as a Police Officer or accredited Council Officer. Failure to hand over alcohol could result in confiscation, arrest and a fine of up to £500. The new PSPO came into force in October 2020.

The order will be enforced when people drinking alcohol seem likely to cause anti-social behaviour. Street drinkers will continue to be offered advice and support to help them address their addictions.

## Domestic Abuse

**Victims of domestic abuse have been under particular strain during the Coronavirus lockdown.**

There is never an excuse for committing abusive acts, no matter the circumstances, and victims are urged to seek help.

If you are a victim or are worried about the welfare of someone, dedicated support is available by calling **0300 790 6772**.

Anyone who requires emergency refuge accommodation can call Safer Places’ specialist domestic abuse service on **0330 102 5811**. This line is manned 24/7.

**If home isn't safe, we're here to help.**



**If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic abuse, call 0300 790 6772\* for advice and support.**

In an emergency, always call 999. If you are afraid to speak, call 999 from a mobile and press 5, 5. For more information go to [hertssunflower.org](http://hertssunflower.org)



## Mental Health Report

**Efforts to improve mental health in the District have been highlighted in a national report.**

*“Our Place”* is a detailed analysis by the Centre for Mental Health and the Local Government Association into what councils are doing to promote good mental health and general wellbeing. Our work features as an example of how a local authority can take a strategic approach. A case study shows how we helped draw up a three-year programme with local organisations with the ambition of supporting a District *“where everyone lives a fulfilling and healthy life”*.

The full report can be viewed here: [www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk).

# WHAT'S ON at the museums

St Albans Museum + Gallery, St Peter's Street, St Albans, AL1 3DH  
Verulamium Museum, St Michael's Street, St Albans, AL3 4SW

## St Albans Museum + Gallery

For detailed information about the events programme, go to: [www.stalbansmuseums.org.uk](http://www.stalbansmuseums.org.uk).

### Opening Hours

We have introduced measures to keep all our visitors safe: masks must be worn inside, social distancing observed and details given for the NHS Test and Trace scheme. Hand sanitiser is available at entrances and extra cleaning is taking place.

#### St Albans Museum + Gallery

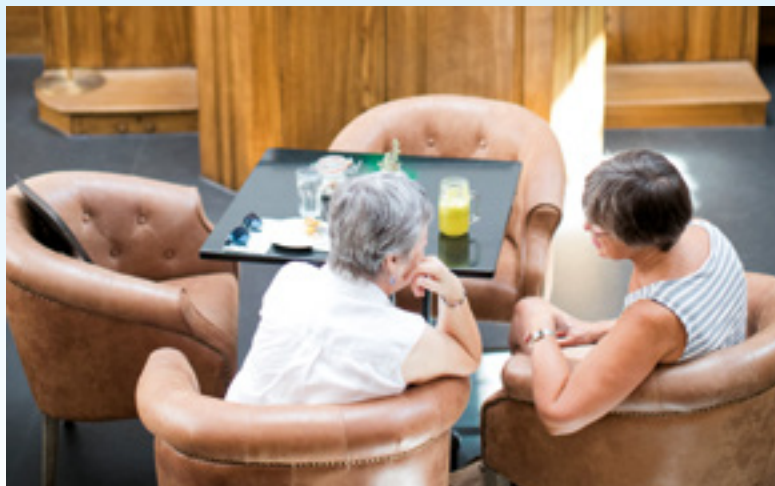
Open every day: 11am – 5pm

#### Verulamium Museum

Monday – Friday: 10am – 4.30pm

Saturday: 11am – 3.30pm

COVID-secure indoor café seating is available in the historic Courtroom at St Albans Museum + Gallery.



#### Cabaret Mechanical Marvels

Saturday 14 November 2020 to Sunday 21 February 2021, Weston Gallery, Museum + Gallery.

Celebrating the fascinating world of automata, self-propelling machines, this exhibition showcases some of the finest contemporary examples from the UK. Interactive exhibits will feature fun scenes powered by gears, cranks and cams and you can have a go at creating your own.

Learn how automata are made and see a selection of historic tools collected by local resident Raphael Salaman.

**Admission:** Adults £4, Concessions (Students and Seniors) £3, Children (5-16) £3, Friends of St Albans Museums and Under 5s, Free

#### 175 years of the St Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society

From now until Sunday 31 January 2021, Keeper's Galleries, Museum + Gallery, Free.

2020 marks the 175th anniversary of the Society, the home for people curious about the history of St Albans. Telling the story of the City and surrounding District, this exhibition highlights a series of fascinating objects, all associated with the Society, and shows its regional and national impact.



### Christmas Plans

The Christmas Cracker event to launch the festive season in St Albans District is to be turned into a virtual experience because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Normally, crowds of more than 12,000 throng the City Centre for a six-hour-long street party that culminates in the switching on of the Christmas lights. Such a large gathering cannot take place this year, so the Council - which organises the event - has decided to reimagine it online so that Christmas can still be celebrated by the community.



The internet alternative will include festive music from local performers, workshops on making sustainable decorations and children's stories. The focus for the Online Christmas Cracker will be the Enjoy St Albans website with more details due to appear here: [www.enjoystalbans.com](http://www.enjoystalbans.com).

The Charter Christmas Market will be in operation every day from Saturday 12 December to Christmas Eve.

St Albans BID (Business Improvement District) will be organising a Christmas Trail, Santa Post Boxes and Pop-Up markets from Monday 30 November.





## REMEMBRANCE DAY

*Let Us Forget*

### Remembrance Sunday

The very large annual Remembrance Sunday parade in the City Centre to honour Britain's war dead has been cancelled because of COVID-19 restrictions.

St Albans Mayor, Councillor Janet Smith, will attend a service on Sunday 8 November at the Cathedral where she will lay a wreath and observe a two-minute silence.

She will also lay a wreath at the War Memorial within the Civic Centre at a private ceremony attended by a small number of invited guests.

A video of this will be put on a special Remembrance Day page on the Council's website: [www.stalbans.gov.uk](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk). This will include links to national activities and Royal British Legion sites.

### ENTER: SHIKARI

St Albans City FC have an exciting new sponsor – rock band Enter: Shikari. The group, whose four members were born and bred in the City, has become the club's main shirt sponsor for this season.

Picture: Dave Diedhiou, St Albans City FC



### Market Trader's Award

St Albans Charter Market trader Danni Jefferson was shortlisted for a prestigious national award.

She was one of the finalists for the Young Market Trader of the Year title which is handed out by the National Market Traders' Federation. Danni had previously won the regional final for London and the South East.

She set up a stall at the twice-weekly market 18 months ago after being made redundant from her retail job. Her *Jefferson Crafts* sells eco-friendly products for bathrooms and kitchens that she makes herself at home from sustainable and reusable materials.

### Warmer Homes Scheme

St Albans Warmer Homes helps residents improve the energy efficiency of their homes and reduce their fuel bills.

Those who may qualify for funding include people who receive means-tested benefits or who have a low household income. They could receive free or low-cost cavity wall and loft insulation as well as new energy-efficient boilers or boiler upgrades.

If you think you may qualify, call **YES Energy Solutions** on **01422 880100**.



*Have your say... we welcome anything you want to say about our services.*

We hope you enjoy reading Community News. If you can spare a moment, please email [communications@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:communications@stalbans.gov.uk) and let us know your views and what else you want us to include.

**St Albans City & District Council,**  
Civic Centre, St Peter's Street, St Albans, Herts. AL1 3LD

**Website:** [www.stalbans.gov.uk](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk) **Email:** [contactus@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:contactus@stalbans.gov.uk)

The Civic Centre, our main offices, are currently closed due to the pandemic. For service updates and enquiries, please go to the Council's website.

**Telephone:** 01727 866100

**Alternative formats:** If you want to receive this newsletter in an alternative format, such as Braille, please call 01727 819572. See [www.disabledgo.com](http://www.disabledgo.com) for information about access to local facilities.

**Twitter: @StAlbansCouncil**

**Facebook: St Albans Council**

**Facebook: Recycle for St Albans District**