

**UPDATE ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19):
STRATFORD CENTRE TO CLOSE FROM 8PM TO 5AM FOR 28 DAYS
IN RESPONSE TO PANDEMIC**

**FROM MAYOR ROKHSANA FIAZ
28th March 2020**

This morning the Council sought and were granted legal permission to be able to close Stratford Shopping Centre overnight between 8pm and 5am.

The step has been considered necessary on public health grounds and is part of the Council's response to dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, following an order by the Government asking all local authorities in England to house rough sleepers off the streets by this weekend.

This follows a special Cabinet meeting, convened urgently on Friday night, when I and Cabinet members unanimously agreed that the Council seek court approval to be able to close the centre on a daily basis for a period of 28 days. You can read the Cabinet report, including the letter and guidance issued by the Government [here](#).

The court approved the Council's application earlier today, and supports the Council's actions to protect rough sleepers who bed down in the centre overnight, and others who use the centre, including workers that serve the wider community with food and other essential household items, from the risk of infection from coronavirus.

The overnight closure order will last initially for 28 days to allow longer term measures to be considered. The Council's street homeless outreach team will proactively offer individuals impacted with accommodation, food, medicine and assistance, working with voluntary sector partners who are assisting this life-saving effort.

Closure orders have also been displayed at the centre, and it applies to all pedestrian walkways and entrances to members of the public. Notices will be displayed outside the centre during the restricted hours directing people to alternative routes. During the restricted hours, access will only be allowed to members of staff of businesses inside the centre, market traders for the purpose of business, security staff, cleaners, and the emergency services.

This decision wasn't taken lightly, but in light of the coronavirus pandemic we know that the virus is deadly and no one is immune. Rough sleepers are a highly vulnerable group in our community and even before this Government order, we stepped up our support to help them during this unprecedented and deadly pandemic.

We have been working hard and have already implemented a street homeless emergency action plan in response to the coronavirus pandemic, providing self-contained accommodation to 65 rough sleepers already. This is part of a wider pan-London effort that the Greater London Authority and the Government are leading, to

ensure that all rough sleepers are offered accommodation to be able to self-isolate and to reduce the spread of the virus.

Yet despite all of our efforts and expanded outreach and providing housing provision, we are still seeing a steady additional rise in the number of rough sleepers in the Stratford Centre, especially this past week.

We are acutely sensitive of the need to ensure all our rough sleepers are housed safely, and so this move to close the centre at certain hours overnight is being done with their safety at the forefront of our response to support Newham's most vulnerable individuals.

Our application to the court was entirely made on the basis of public health grounds. It wasn't a choice, it is about saving lives. These are exceptional, unique and unprecedented circumstances and the number of people in Newham being tested positive for coronavirus is rising at an alarming rate – 148 as of Friday evening, which is almost twice the number from Wednesday.

That's why I am urging all Newham residents to help stop the spread of the virus in our borough and #StayAtHome, limit your travel and gatherings. If you do need to go out, make sure you follow social distancing: remember, you need to be at least two metres apart, especially in our public parks if you are taking your exercise this weekend.

For all the latest and best advice please visit:

- Newham Council: www.newham.gov.uk/Coronavirus
- NHS Guidance: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- NHS 111: <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>

In the meantime, stay safe and stay well.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rokhsana Fiaz', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rokhsana Fiaz
Mayor of Newham

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of Everything We Do