

THE RUGELEY RECORD



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 4



AND THEN, THERE WAS LIGHT! Our Christmas Extravaganza brought people, joy and brand new festive lights to Rugeley.

So many of you joined us for our annual Christmas Lights Extravaganza on 24th November last year, and we know a lot of visitors came from all over Staffordshire to enjoy the evening.

We had huge numbers thronging through our lovely town centre and we hope you agree that the atmosphere was electric.

You will have noticed that we moved the layout a little, which on the whole we were happy with, but as with all large events such as this, they are a moveable feast, and we will try to make improvements year on year.

Talking of improvements - what about our brand new, sparkling Christmas Lights! We were so happy with them, and where a lot of Councils have cut right back in terms of lights given the cost increases, we felt that it was important to up-the-anti on the festive cheer that we were bringing to Rugeley, rather than slim it down.

It's a tough time for many people across the UK and within our own community and

having battled the pandemic and now a cost of living crisis, we hope that the lights managed to bring you a little joy. We hope you agree that it was time for a change, and have enjoyed them this past festive season.

On that subject, we wanted to dedicate this issue of the community newsletter to the fuel and cost of living crisis and the knock on effect that this appears to be having on so many people's mental health - but offering some avenues of support and tips and tricks for saving your very hard earned cash and looking after yourselves, so we hope that you find something within these couple of pages that is useful to you personally.

We also thought that it would be useful to share the phone numbers for the Rugeley Town, Cannock Chase District and Staffordshire County Councils once again, with their responsibilities, which will hopefully save you a little time, when you need to contact any of us.

Rugeley Town Council

01889 574074

Small Grants, Rugeley Rose Theatre, Commenting on Rugeley Planning Applications, Urban Greening Scheme, Grants, Rugeley Neighbourhood Plan, Community Engagement on local issues, Community Events, Christmas Lights & Artisan Markets

Staffordshire County Council

0300 111 8000

Education and Youth employment, Transport, Social Services, Strategic Planning, Roads and Pavements, Highways Maintenance, Street Lights, signs and traffic lights, Footpaths & Blue Badge Applications

Cannock Chase District Council

01543 462621

Coordinate and Collect Council Tax, Environmental Health, Housing Benefits, Planning Applications, Local Plan, Leisure facilities, unclassified roads, waste Collection, Licensing & Tree and listed Building preservation.

HOW CAN RUGELEY TACKLE THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS?

Last October 4.5 million UK Households were in fuel poverty. It now estimated to be 6.7 million.

As of October 2022, the number of UK households in fuel poverty was 6.7 million & rising. The average annual energy bill in October 2021 was £1,271, now even with the government support package, it's around £2,500, on average. The total energy bill is NOT capped – it's the price per unit that is. If you use more than the average, you will pay more. Anyone reliant on a standard variable or default tariff or coming to the end of their fixed term has seen or will see a huge increase in their energy bills.

We doubt that many of us are turning on our heating as often as we would like to due to this astronomical hike in energy prices, and given the extremely low temperatures we're facing, we've collated some energy/cost saving tips and ideas to help you through the next few months.

Firstly, millions of pounds of welfare benefits go unclaimed each year. If you are on a low income it's worth doing a quick benefit check at www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators it should take around 10 minutes.

'Beat the Cold' is committed to helping those who live in, or are at risk of fuel poverty, or whose health could be detrimentally affected by a cold home. Contact them by phone on 01782 914915 or via the website: <https://www.beatcold.org.uk/contact-us/>

If the cost of living is impacting your outgoings and your Housing Benefit or Universal Credit does not cover the full amount of your rent, you can apply for a discretionary housing payment. <https://www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/d-o-it-online/request-it/discretionary-housing-payment>

We also rely on broadband for so many things within our homes & social tariffs are a way to access broadband for

Tenants receiving Universal Credit & other types of benefits. The broadband deals are much cheaper than the standard monthly rate for the service and are reserved for these customers to help them afford the usual monthly price of a broadband connection.

The broadband packages still give the same speed, quality as other home broadband deals. For more information, Ofcom publishes what options are available and <https://www.uswitch.com/broadband/guides/broadband-deals-for-low-income-families/>

There may also be crisis support grants that you can access if you're struggling to make ends meet, take a look on <https://grants-search.turn2us.org.uk>

It's also worth noting which of your household appliances cost the most to run. This is a list of the top 5:

- Electric Shower - 7,000 - 10,500 watts - £2.38 - £3.57 per hour
- Tumble Dryer (condenser/vented) - 1,500 - 2,500 watts - £1.51 - £1.94 per full load
- Immersion Heater (single rate tariff) - 3,000 watts - £1.02 per hour
- Fan Heater - 1,000 - 3,000 watts - 34p - £1.02 per hour
- Kettle - 2,500 - 3,000 watts - 85p - £1.02 per hour

Here are a few small changes you can make to help to bring down your costs:

- Get into the habit of turning off lights when you leave a room. Leaving one light bulb on for 12 hours a day will cost you £89.50 per year.
- Switch to low energy LED light bulbs - they can use up to 90% less energy.

- If you need to replace an appliance - go for an energy efficient A-rated one.
- Use a cooler wash to do your laundry. Washing at 30% can save you up to 40% or use a shorter wash if clothes just need freshening up.
- Electric showers are one of the biggest energy users - set a timer for 3-4 minutes.
- Towel dry your hair first to minimise the time you use your hairdryer - they use a lot of energy.
- Cooking in a microwave or combi-oven uses less power than your main oven.
- Slow cookers are also energy efficient - use on a low heat for several hours, but bulk cook to make the most of the energy you use.
- Unplug devices at the wall all around your home - items plugged in, even on standby, still draw electricity.

If you run a business in Staffordshire there is also advice and support available to help you manage the impact of cost of living rises on your business. <https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Community/Cost-of-living-support/Businesses.aspx>

GET HELP

If you or someone you know can't afford to heat their home then there is help available. A range of advice and support both directly to people in need, and via frontline workers and other intermediaries is available by calling the number below

Call

0800 304 7159

MONDAY TO FRIDAY

10.00 AM-12.00 NOON

But most importantly, please don't wait until things are desperate to ask for help. If you're struggling, please seek help now - these things often take time to process.

LOOKING TO BOOST YOUR INCOME?

EASY WAYS TO EARN MORE MONEY - LEGALLY!

1. Cashback credit cards pay you back a proportion of what you spend each time you use them. Set up a direct debit to pay the card off in full each month, so there's no interest to pay, and you can earn £100s a year. Just use the card for all your normal spending. The best cards pay 5% cashback for the first three months. There's fierce competition in the banking market – so much so, some bribe you to switch. The best incentives come and go, but typically it's possible to grab £150, and they're often for the best buys too.

2. Local Facebook groups and Facebook Marketplace are where, instead of eBaying second-hand goods, people harness the social media network's power to sell to others in the local community. The best bit is there are NO fees, so you keep the profit.

3. If you've mountains of unmatched Lego bricks sitting somewhere – perhaps your children have grown out of them or they were a hobby you're no longer into – you can now turn them into cash and sell them online to Music Magpie by the kilo (or half kilo).

4. If you've an old wedding dress boxed up in the loft, dig it out and turn it into cash. You could get £500+ for a sought-after dress by a well-known designer. A host of wedding dress selling sites promise help. You upload a description and some photos. The buyer usually comes round in person to try it on.

5. If you have a flair for picking up things at the Car Boot, make it work for you. Pick up items cheaply and sell them for a profit on ebay or selling sites. Be sure to arrive early to beat other bargain hunters. The big money lies in spotting collectibles to sell on, so do your research and check the item on your phone while you're there!

6. A host of magazines pay a premium for interesting letters and photos. To boost your chances of winning 'star letter', include how one of their features inspired you.

7. If you wear a uniform at work, and have to wash, repair or replace it yourself, you may be able to reclaim £100s of tax for up to five years of expenses. This applies whether it's just a branded T-shirt or you're a fully uniformed pilot, police officer or nurse.

8. Leaves on the line, the wrong kind of snow and service faults... delays are all too common on our railways. But it's possible to claim for a delay if you know your rights. You can also claim your money back if you do not get a seat when you have paid for one.

9. If you've been hit with bank charges in the past few years and are in financial hardship, you can ask for them back. It all depends on your circumstances, but if you incurred charges of £35, four times a year for the last six years, then on average that all adds up to a huge £840 payback.

10. If you're delayed by more than three hours or your flight's cancelled, you are often entitled to between £100 and £520 in compensation.

11. Whichever authority controls a road has a legal duty to maintain it to a fit standard. If it doesn't, and your car's damaged, it should pay for the repairs! Often you will only get a pay out if you can prove negligence, but it's worth giving it a go.

12. If you've got an iPhone, download free app Field Agent; it pays up to £10 a job to check prices/snap photos.

13. Set up a professional ironing service, advertising in local shops and newspapers. A good tip is to advertise in the poshest part of town; that way you can charge more.

How much? Ironing businesses generally charge by the item, with 20 items costing around £10. This varies depending on location, so check what other local services are charging.

14. Taking part in psychological experiments can be an easy – and often interesting – way to pocket a little extra cash. These could be on anything from how sleep affects memory, to how people identify information in "noisy videos". Many university psychology departments recruit participants of all ages to help with their research.

15. Offer your services by advertising locally for 'odd jobs'. Everyone is so busy, and if they can afford to, would happily pay someone to do jobs like: Furniture assembly, Help moving, Delivery, Cleaning, Laundry and ironing, Pet sitting, Shopping & garden work



SAVE MONEY ON YOUR FOOD SHOP

A couple of tips to save you £'s on your weekly shop.

- The only way to avoid the temptation of the 'specials' in the supermarket, is to avoid going in altogether! Log onto www.mysupermarket.co.uk add your shopping list, and they will tell you which supermarket is the best price. Order it online.
- If you must go to the supermarket, be aware that they position things in your sight-line (and your children's) that they want to promote! This is usually premium priced produce. Look at the alternatives placed higher and lower on the shelves.
- Use greengrocers and market's for fruit and veg - better prices & often much fresher.
- Don't buy ready meals! The price hike for someone else doing the work is extortionate - cook it yourself (or learn to) in a batch and freeze the rest for next week.

Don't shop hungry!

You'll save yourself a fortune



WELLBEING ISN'T JUST ABOUT PHYSICAL HEALTH. LET'S TALK MENTAL.

In recent years, there has been increasing acknowledgement of the important role mental health plays in our wellbeing as a whole.

Depression is one of the leading causes of disability. Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among 15-29-year-olds. People with severe mental health conditions die prematurely – as much as two decades early – due to preventable physical conditions.

Staggering statistics.

Conversations around mental health have become the norm, after years of misrepresentation and falsehoods. Rightly so, as the mental health epidemic needs to become a global priority. The term 'mental health' is starting to lose its stigma, although we're just hitting the tip of the iceberg.

14.3 per cent of global deaths are due to mental health and that's a wholly preventable pandemic. Even though it is such a big killer, we don't even speak about it as a global issue and that in itself can contribute to stigma, discrimination and human rights violation against people with mental health conditions.

Honest conversations around mental wellbeing are taking the centre stage after high profile celebrities are engaging and bringing the conversation to social media, allowing people to speak out against the shame and not suffer in silence and to get the help they need. Since the increase in discussions about mental health, there has been a massive increase in individuals reaching out to professionals, friends and colleagues for support in their mental health struggles.

1 in 4 of us struggles with our mental health

This issue was exacerbated by the pandemic, which caused a significant 25 per cent increase in the prevalence of anxiety and depression worldwide. The theme of the last World Mental Health Day in October was around making Mental Health a Global Priority for just this reason, as given the number of mental health related deaths - there is still an overwhelming fear with many sufferers around discussing their issues.

Along with the pandemic, the global cost of living and fuel crises, the Ukraine war - these events can be overwhelming, they directly impact you. The more you hear about these life events, the more bitter you feel about the world around you. Sadly, a lot of people are losing hope. They are finding themselves in a dark place and can't see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Given the vicious onslaught of the previous two years we limped, crawled and staggered over the finish line of 2021, spent and exhausted and similarly we tentatively tiptoed into 2022 still carrying shock, trauma and grief. But we have found ourselves in a whirlwind of desperation, trying to catch up with everything that we felt we had lost out on - work, school, relationships, friendships and just LIFE. There is a real human instinct that the busier we make ourselves, the less we will think about the bad stuff, but the brain doesn't work like that, and the worrying result is that we are hurling through our lives at great speed like frenzied, neurotic lab rats. Our children are all going through the same - so many people with kids have commented on a huge switch in their mental health - they are lost, anxious and fully aware that they are not where they should be education wise. We are all catching any illness that is doing the rounds, we can't sleep - or we're sleeping too much - in summary, we are mentally and physically exhausted.

So, after reading all that, take a breath. Just stop. There is a reason why you are finding life really hard at the moment, and it's completely justified. We all need to start being kind to ourselves and to one another.



This isn't a time for powering through, it's a time for finding compassion for each other but also for ourselves. The whole world needs more kindness, take a moment to reflect on what you have personally been through over the past few years, and acknowledge the upheaval that you have experienced. Instead of crashing into this New Year full of determination and purpose, perhaps find the little pockets of silence and calm and allow yourself some breathing space.

How to improve your mental health

1. Get a hobby - the last thing someone who is struggling with poor mental health needs is too much time on their hands. Crafting, painting, learn a new skill. It's proven to lift your mood.
2. Physical health impacts mental health - start walking, if you can, jog - brilliant, if you can't it doesn't matter, just walk. Breathe in fresh air, try yoga, eat fresh food. Exercise produces endorphins - nature's natural stress reliever.
3. Starting to do more things in the community can greatly enhance your mental health. Rugeley Community Centre has a whole diary of community activities and groups available to everyone - give them a call on 01889 579341 or drop in to see them at the Community Centre on Burnthill Lane.
4. If you are struggling, or are feeling in a dark place, please don't delay in speaking to your GP, there are professional support options available to you. Please don't suffer in silence.

Download the Cannock Chase CAN app on your phone and learn about health and wellness activities in Rugeley.

& DO SOMETHING FUN!

Rugeley Rose Theatre will be hosting our friends from Rugeley Musical Theatre company on January 25th, 26th & 27th for their production of the pantomime *Sleeping Beauty*
Tickets available on:
www.ticketsource.co.uk/rugeleymusicaltheatrecompany