

COVID-19 Update 11/05/20

Welcome to the latest weekly update sent to all PC clerks and chairs, and Bcc'd to community volunteer lead contacts in my District and County Wards. Please do share with other community volunteers in your network.

Planning for recovery

As I write, there is lots of discussion about recovery and what we will do to stand up council services as the COVID peak subsides. I fully anticipate the 'stand up' will be incremental and linked to emerging advice from HMG.

I have also been asked to participate in a project to look at the long-term consequences of COVID, what it means for the council's strategic priorities and what we will need to do in the medium and longer term to respond. It would be excellent to make sure our community volunteers are heard in that policy development.

There is also considerable debate about the change in HMG's messaging, what is still apparent however, is that there will be no quick fix; this is going to be a slow process and it could be months before we establish a "new normal". In the meantime, the help and support of local community volunteers remains an essential part of the response and as ever, you have my thanks and appreciation for all you are doing.

Latest public health update

Keeping up to date with reliable information remains important, especially as the advice changes and as ever, I would recommend using getting the latest advice and information about coronavirus (COVID-19) from the Government, by using: [GOV.UK/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus).

The NHS also has information on how to prevent the virus spreading at: www.nhs.uk/coronavirus

Your wellbeing

Mental Health Awareness week takes place this month (18-24 May) and it focuses on the power and potential of kindness. Research shows that protecting our mental health is central to coping with and recovering from the coronavirus pandemic as there may be potential psychological and social impacts which outlast the physical symptoms. As ever, there is lots of support available online. The NHS [Every Mind Matters](#) webpages provide simple tips and advice to take better care of your mental health and practical advice on how to improve your [sleep](#). I hope you find them helpful and ask that you **share them** with anyone that might benefit.

Health services in Oxfordshire

Please help Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust to share the following information about the availability of health services in the county.

Cancer Treatment: Doctors in Oxfordshire are urging people to get medical advice from their GP by telephone if they are worried about any symptoms of cancer. They will be able to reassure you and, if they do need to see you, then measures will be in place to keep you safe. Remember the sooner cancer symptoms are picked up and treated, the better.

Community and service matters

Community

VE Day 75th anniversary – a shared celebration

I can't tell you how moved and impressed I was by all the dignified celebrations that took part in all of our villages at the weekend. In my village, Ardley with Fewcott, the "Clap for our Carers" on Thursday evening was the best yet, so much so that it had all the wood pigeons take flight just after 8pm! Then on Friday, the village was decked with flags and bunting. At one point we could hear so very impressive community singing just before the national toast and then later, as we walked the dog, dozens of families in their front gardens celebrating this important anniversary. I know from social media that these scenes were repeated through all the villages I represent. Very well done to all concerned! You can also see [here](#) what I had to say about heroes past and present on my Vlog last week for CDC

Coronavirus Carer ID scheme

OCC are offering a Carers ID for any paid and independent Carers who give care and support during the coronavirus pandemic to anyone known to adults and children's social care services in the county. The Carer ID takes the form of a simple letter of authority, which can be presented while out and about, should the Carer be challenged. If you know of anyone who would benefit from a Carers ID please ask them to email CarerID@oxfordshire.gov.uk for more information.

Grants & Councillor Priority Fund update

Over the last couple of weeks I have approved applications for a new parish printer for Chesterton to help them get their weekly newsletter out more efficiently, as well as a larger fridge for the community volunteers at Heyford Park who are now supporting over 60 families in the area with a weekly food box. Please do get in touch if you have any schemes that you think would benefit from some financial assistance.

Community support

A reminder that if you become aware of anyone who is self-isolating due to COVID-19 and doesn't have a support network nearby, to please signpost them to [Oxfordshire All In](#), the central hub for the community response to COVID-19 in Oxfordshire. Here they can find help with shopping, collecting prescriptions, putting the bins out and [guidance on keeping safe when receiving support](#)

Foster Care Fortnight (11 – 24 May)

The pressure to recruit new foster carers is an ongoing challenge. Recently the council has seen a significant increase in the number of looked after children across Oxfordshire and we **need to recruit** another **45 foster carers** to keep up with the continuous demands. **Foster Care Fortnight** is The Fostering Network's annual campaign to raise awareness of [fostering](#) and to celebrate the fostering community. It's an ideal time for people to explore their potential to foster and make a huge difference to children's lives. Please help us to put a spotlight on fostering and encourage anyone who is interested to step forward. More information is on OCC's [website](#), including the help and support on offer.

Service update

Re-opening of Oxfordshire's Household Waste Recycling Centres

Oxfordshire's HWRCs will **re-open on 18 May**. OCC want to manage their re-opening sensitively so the sites can operate safely, do not become overwhelmed or impact negatively on travel. This means changes have been made to the way they will operate.

There's more information via the link below, but please remember that Government guidance says that trips to an HWRC should only be made if 'essential' – that is if the waste cannot be stored safely without harm to health. The Government guidance states: "It would be reasonable for residents to undertake a journey to a HWRC if the waste or recycling could not be stored safely at home or disposed of through other legitimate routes such as a dedicated collection. By this we mean that the waste/recycling could not be stored on their property without causing a risk of injury, health or harm to the resident or other members of their household or harm to public health and amenity."

OCC will begin our proactive communications to residents this week and a full list of FAQs is now live on their website:

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wastereopenquestions .

Delivering Personal protective equipment (PPE) to frontline workers

The vital work in providing PPE to frontline workers continues with colleagues from across the council joining forces in a great team effort to ensure PPE is now in a healthier position and being provided where it's needed. To support this, OCC's Quality and Contracts Teams has been engaging with Care Providers to understand the scale of their PPE demand, which has resulted in the Procurement Team purchasing over two million items of PPE. OCC's County Print Finishers and Fleet Services teams are working to manage this stock and issue it to users via eight key hubs across the county.

Helping vulnerable and concerned customers

In response to COVID-19 the county council has established a dedicated team, contact number and email address to help vulnerable and concerned customers. This team also proactively contacts people on the NHS Shielded patient list to ensure their essential needs are being met for food and medication. The team was brought together from the Customer Service Centre, Social Care specialists and library staff. They have been active every day since the end of March, receiving 2000 calls, contacting 9000 customers and identifying 500 requiring immediate assistance provided by social care, districts, and the local community and voluntary sector.

Refreshed coronavirus webpages and new easy read COVID-19 guide

The county council's [coronavirus webpages](#) have been transformed to provide a more accessible hub of information. The new look pages are easier to navigate and provide up-to-date information. As well as refreshing their webpages, they have developed an easy read Oxfordshire coronavirus support

document. This has been circulated to the voluntary and community sector and public sector partners and is **attached to this email** for your information. Please do pass it on to anyone you feel may benefit.

Local economy and business

The Government's [Business Support](#) web pages set out the coronavirus support available to businesses. Oxfordshire's district and city councils are continuing to work incredibly hard to communicate and action the significant changes passed on by Government to support residents, the economy and businesses in the county through COVID-19.

Quick links are below:

- [Cherwell District Council](#)
- [Oxford City Council](#)
- [South Oxfordshire District Council](#)
- [Vale of White Horse District Council](#)
- [West Oxfordshire District Council](#)

Other sources of advice for business include:

- The Oxfordshire Local Economic Partnership (OXLEP) [Coronavirus business support resource](#)
- HMRC [tax helpline](#) for businesses affected by Coronavirus

Council meetings and events

Democracy in Oxfordshire has passed a **landmark moment** with committee meetings being staged electronically for the first time ever. Our first virtual Full Council meeting also took place on Monday 4 May using Microsoft Teams.

A gradual resumption of meetings is planned in the coming weeks using the same technology and are open to members of the public to view. The next meeting(s) will be:

- Thursday 7 May at 10am – Pension Fund Committee

- Wednesday 13 May at 10am – Delegated Decision by the Cabinet Member for Education and Cultural Services
- Thursday 14 May at 2.00 pm – Health Improvement Partnership Board

My very best wishes to you all

Stay Safe&

Best regards

Ian

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