

## **COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS BY CLLR LORRAINE LINDSAY-GALE – APRIL 2020**

### **COVID-19**

These are unprecedented times; we all need to take care and follow the latest Government advice. Staff at the County Council are working flat out as we cannot simply close down or ask everybody to work from home, we are there to support and protect Oxfordshire's residents particularly the vulnerable. We are prioritising our work and where possible staff are working from home. There are some areas that will see an increase in demand at a time when some of our staff will become ill with the virus. There will be some changes as we have to prioritise our work to key areas.

The main area of work in Social Care for both adults and children has to continue on a 24/7 basis protecting around 7,000 residents. We expect the number of people requiring care to increase as informal carers become ill and are unable to continue care. This work is vital as it's important we keep as many people as possible out of hospital.

We are working closely with the NHS to provide care and facilities for those patients that do not require acute care to be cared for away from hospitals or at home freeing up beds for those that most need them. This includes the group that we need to shield from the virus who are thought to be most at risk across the county.

The Government are shielding the extremely vulnerable – approx. 1.5 million across the country full details can be found on the website: [Extremely vulnerable](#). Currently those people identified by the NHS as extremely vulnerable will be contacted by the NHS by letter, email, text or all 3 to say that they need to isolate themselves at home for the next 12 weeks. They will be asked if they have any help to collect prescriptions and food, this may be supplied by one of the brilliant local groups that have been set up. If they don't have any help then they will be told to contact the council who will arrange a contact which again may come from one of the local groups. If somebody thinks they should be on the list and haven't been contacted by Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March, then they should contact their GP or hospital clinician.

To assist in the logistics across the country there are Local Resilience Forums, we are in the Thames Valley are based around the Police authority area. These are where the blue light services (Police, Ambulance, Fire) link in with the NHS and local authorities to consider the high-level strategy. These then delegate down to the County to work with SODC and other Districts to coordinate the local hubs. The

Government have seconded military planners to assist in the hubs which is where all the local community groups liaise in to the local networks. This is about all working together to ensure that we do not duplicate provision or even worse miss a vulnerable resident.

The organic growth of the community networks or hubs that we are seeing being set up is fantastic. These groups are providing some excellent services to local residents who are self-isolating or do not have relatives locally. It's important that they are community led but we need to avoid duplication, so the County Council and Districts are working with Oxfordshire Volunteers to list them all and provide support where needed. I have already sent out details of how groups can register and a form for them to use. Thank you to those who have already submitted information about their parishes.

If you are approached by people wishing to volunteer, they can register at: <https://oxonvolunteers.org/vk/volunteers/index.htm>

## **SCAMS**

Unfortunately, there are some cases of people taking advantage of vulnerable residents to cheat them into parting with money for various different bogus schemes. OCC Trading Standards are working with the Police monitoring the situation and will take action should there be a need. Should you be aware of anything please do not hesitate to contact me and I will pass the information on.

## **COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S PRIORITY FUND**

The next issue of funds - £15,000 for each Councillor – becomes available on April 1<sup>st</sup>. If you are aware of any groups who would benefit from some financial support over this crisis period, they can apply to me on line. They should apply in the usual way, making clear their urgent need and marking their application COVID-19.

The County Council will prioritise any such applications to get funds to where they are most needed as quickly as possible.

## **MY PORTFOLIO**

I am the Cabinet Member responsible for the Education Service and our Cultural Services. I am extremely proud of the schools and their staff who have shown enormous flexibility and compassion in the face of this pandemic, and our own staff who have worked night and day to ensure that families that need child care through the schools find a suitable place, together with transport and a hot meal.

Our Registration Service has had to stop all but death registrations, even new parents will have to delay the registration of their babies since it is a legal requirement that this is done face to face. All the offices across the county are closed except the Head Office at Tidmarsh Lane in Oxford. A huge temporary mortuary facility has been sourced as this county braces itself for what is to come.

Our 44 Libraries, the Woodstock County Museum, the History Service, the Resource Centre at Standlake, the County Music Service are all closed.

All waste recycling centres are closed. All our offices are closed including County Hall, for all but very essential staff.

This is a very fast-moving situation so please use the [OCC](#), [NHS](#) and [Government](#) websites for the latest information.

I would like to say a big thank you to all the residents who continue to work to help us get through this difficult time.

Above all please take care, stay safe and follow the advice.