

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

## MY PORTFOLIO

### 1. Cultural Services

#### **Libraries**

All 44 libraries across the County remain closed. Staff have been moved to other roles, including supporting the Customer Service Centre with our Shielding Operation and homeworking Registration staff by collecting paperwork to enable the production of death certificates to the public.

There's been a dramatic rise in the use of ebooks – up from 11, 784 last April to 20,611 this year – a 75% increase. Also 102% on eAudio. People are going digital.

#### **Registration Service**

Registration is limited to deaths only, and face to face appointments are suspended. All Registrars are working from home. We have a backlog of 1000 births waiting to be registered and 275 weddings have deferred to next year.

A Temporary Place of Rest has been established at Upper Heyford under heavy security. Some Inquests are being undertaken, only in circumstances where the family does not wish to attend. (Covid-19 is regarded as a natural death.)

#### **Music Service**

On line music teaching began last week. This has been a challenge due to safeguarding concerns and the need for staff training. Some music staff are helping in schools. The Service is applying to the Arts Council for an emergency support grant as it is experiencing a significant loss of income due to COVID-19.

### 2. Education Service

#### **Brokering Service**

Through our Emergency School Place Brokering Service all schools whether Academies or Maintained have worked together to make the best arrangements they can for our children. This will continue until the restriction on schools is lifted.

#### **Early Years and settings**

A number of childminders and nurseries are choosing to close because business is unviable and the opportunity to furlough staff is financially

more advantageous for them. DfE is aware and considering this issue.

### **National Primary Offer Day**

90.6% of out of 7,384 Oxfordshire children have been offered their preferred choice of primary school for September 2020. In this Division 99 children gained their 1<sup>st</sup> preference, and 3 their 2<sup>nd</sup>. Every family was notified on 16th April. The full data by Constituency, Division, District and School is available online.

### **Schools Building Programme**

The majority of projects are stalled – mitigation measures are in place where necessary. There are ten schools projects under construction across the County including Benson which continues to operate, the choice of the individual contractor and their workforce. II others are in the pre-construction phase, and may encounter staff shortages and delays to planning.

### **New Appointments**

A new Director for Children's Services was appointed last week – Kevin Gordon who has recently been working for Hammersmith. A new Assistant Director for Education will be arriving in early June – Hayley Good who joins us from Warwickshire County Council.

### **COVID-19**

#### **Clinical Lead urges people to use Emergency Departments**

Staff at OUH are encouraging people whose health may be at risk to come to the Emergency Departments at the John Radcliffe and Horton General hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Attendances have been significantly lower since the pandemic started and the Trust is concerned that people are putting their health at risk by not accessing life-saving services. Staff will treat any serious conditions or ailments. There are systems in place to triage patients with suspected COVID-19, so everyone who comes to hospital will be treated in a safe way. More information is available on the OUH website.

#### **Pregnant women encouraged to attend important appointments**

Pregnant women in Oxfordshire are being reminded that medical help is still at hand during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Like many providers of maternity services, the OUH has made a number of changes to how maternity care is provided during pregnancy, to keep both women and staff safe. This has included carrying out some appointments by telephone or video. However, maternity services are

still open 24/7 for births, urgent care, and clinical advice for women who have concerns about their health or their unborn baby. Some face-to-face appointments with a midwife or doctor are essential, and it is important for women to attend. It is understandable that many people have anxieties around their health during this very unusual time – especially pregnant women.

Women are reminded care is still available and it is important that they stay in contact with their maternity team and attend their scheduled appointments. Appropriate measures will be taken to keep them safe from infection and wherever possible appointments will be done remotely.

### **Advice to help food banks and markets stay open**

After learning some food banks and food markets had closed over concerns about maintaining social distancing, staff from Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council have devised practical infection control guidance for people and organisations supporting more vulnerable groups. A shared resource is now in place which helps communities, third-sector organisations and small businesses understand how to keep themselves and others safe. The guidance, which has received positive feedback, has helped several food banks and food markets to remain open, providing essential items to less privileged individuals and families.

### **OxLEP COVID-19 support**

The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) has launched additional business support programmes, which complement its existing support for the county's business community:

- Critical COVID-19 support programme – this is designed to provide support and guidance in areas including business resilience, cash flow, cost reductions, and business diversification.
- Regional redeployment service – this service will match those recently made redundant with new work in sectors experiencing a surge in employment demand.