

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

The Government has confirmed that **Oxfordshire will move into the high COVID-19 alert level (tier 2) from Wednesday 2 December**. This means changes to the rules around working, socialising and running a business.

From 12.01am on 2 December, the following will apply:

- People must not meet socially with anybody outside their household or support bubble in any indoor setting, whether at home or in a public place.
- People must not meet in a group of more than six outside, including in a garden or other space.
- Non-essential shops can reopen, as can personal care businesses such as hairdressers, gyms and the wider leisure sector. All businesses and venues that reopen must ensure that COVID-secure measures are in place.
- Hospitality venues will be allowed to stay open until 11pm – with last orders at 10pm. However, only those that serve substantial meals can operate, and alcohol can only be served with substantial meals.
- Collective worship, weddings and outdoor sports can resume, with restrictions in place.
- Everyone who can work from home should continue to do so.

Oxford vaccine trial

Interim analysis of the Phase 3 results of the Oxford vaccine have been published. It showed that the vaccine is 70% effective - with tests on two different dose regimes showing that the vaccine was 90% effective if administered at a half dose and then at a full dose, or 62% effective if administered in two full doses. The vaccine, like that of Pfizer/BioNTech, still needs regulatory approval. But, if approved for use, then it will bring us a step closer to tackling the global pandemic. At a time when cases of coronavirus have passed 1.5 million in the UK and 55 million worldwide, this is indeed very welcome news, as well as a source of great pride that this scientific breakthrough has taken place in Oxfordshire.

Vaccination programme

The Government has asked the NHS to be ready to deliver a vaccination programme for England from December so that those who need it most will be able to access vaccinations as soon as they are available.

Detailed planning is underway nationally and locally to ensure as many people as possible get the vaccination in a timely way. The NHS is working closely with partners across Oxfordshire and across the

Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire & Berkshire West Integrated Care System (BOB ICS) to develop the implementation programme for our area. A multi-agency vaccination cell has also been established to help support this work locally, which reports to Oxfordshire System Silver.

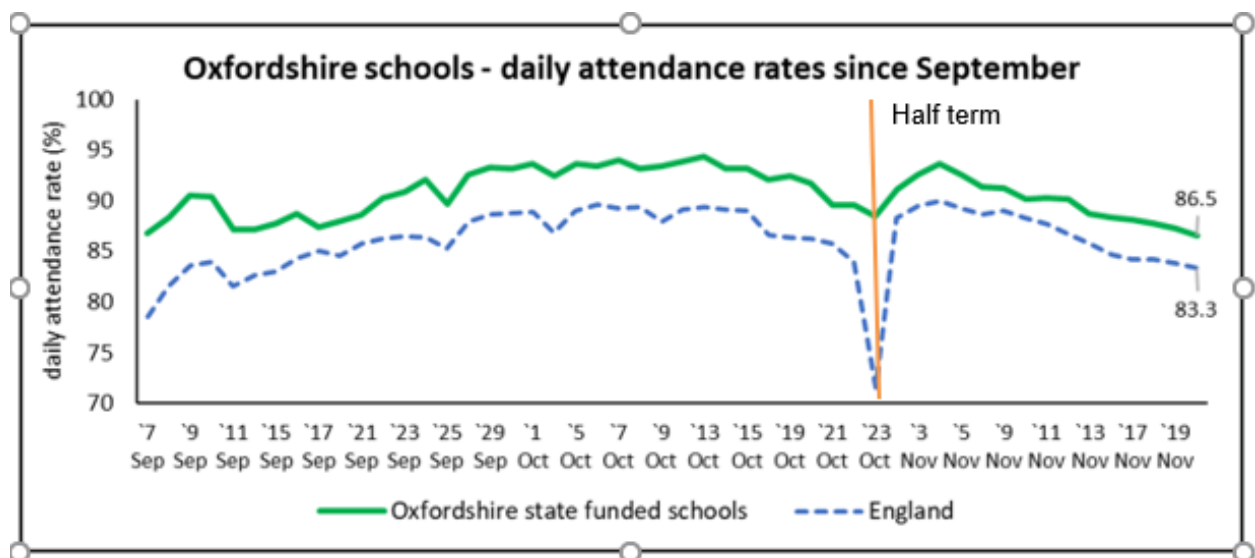
Even after the rollout of the vaccine is underway, the threat from COVID-19 still remains real. We are therefore continuing to underline the need for people to follow protective measures to minimise the risk. These include washing your hands, covering your face and increasing ventilation in enclosed settings, and maintaining a distance of at least one metre from others where possible.

Service update: schools and early years settings

School leaders have been working extremely hard to ensure that schools across the county have remained fully open since the Autumn Term started on 1 September. In total only 8 primary schools, 1 secondary school and 2 special schools have needed to close and, in all cases, this was due to lack of staff and not for public health reasons. To date, 3 secondary schools, 3 special schools and 150 primary schools have not had any COVID cases.

Two members of the Education Team have been deployed to work full-time on coordinating support and advice to schools when they have a confirmed COVID-19 case or outbreak; they are supported by two members of the Public Health team.

The overall daily attendance rate in Oxfordshire maintained schools (including academies) remains consistently above the national average, as shown by the graph below:



Daily attendance in primary schools is high at 93%, while the attendance rate in secondary schools has been between 80% and 85% over the last

week. Where pupils need to remain at home, education is 'remote' and consists of a blend of text book, work book and online teaching, plus some face-to-face teaching.

Communication and training

Regular meetings and briefings are held by the Education Team to keep stakeholders up to date with key information, including local COVID-19 data, Department for Education (DfE) guidance and interpreting the impact of this in schools, and feedback from meetings with the DfE and with Ofsted. Weekly meetings are held for headteachers, which attract over 150 Heads; monthly briefings are held with School Governors and Trustees, with over 60 people attending; and weekly updates are provided to all schools via the 'Schools News' e-newsletter.

The team is also delivering a range of online training and resources to help support headteachers. These include case studies for online learning, which Heads can use with their staff; and a webinar on resilience and wellbeing for headteachers on 7 December, which will explore the challenges and demands of leading through a crisis and the importance of maintaining personal wellbeing. The webinar will be followed by a weekly follow-up for Heads from a professional coach and mentor, which is part of a framework of ongoing support provided by the team to Oxfordshire headteachers in the months ahead.

Governor Services

During the pandemic, the Governor Services team have worked swiftly to adapt their methods of delivery and communication. During the first period of lockdown, all training course content was reviewed, trainers were upskilled, and software was rolled out, allowing the seamless delivery of support to school governors. Since Easter, all courses have been provided virtually. At least one course is being delivered each week; average attendance has doubled compared to last year; and feedback has been very positive, with 94% of attendees saying that the content will help them to be more effective. Shorter 'bite-sized' courses have also been introduced, which can be accessed at any time, alongside special events – these have included a session on the Service Pupil Premium, which was attended by over 60 governors.

Virtual briefings have also been delivered for Chairs of Governors, which have attracted over 150 governors, with key topics including COVID and teacher wellbeing. The most recent clerks briefing, which again was held virtually, had the highest attendance of any such session in the last 12 months, with attendees providing positive feedback about the online delivery model.

I hope this update has given you a useful insight into some of the great work that is taking place to support our schools and early years settings during the pandemic. I would like to pay tribute to the teams involved for all their hard work, and to staff across the council for their dedication and flexibility in responding to the pandemic and continuing to deliver high-quality services in the most challenging of circumstances.

Mineral & Waste Plan

I was able to initiate a meeting between Parish Councillors from Nuneham Courtenay and Sandford-on-Thames with OCC Cabinet Member for the Environment Yvonne Constance to discuss progress on the Minerals & Waste Plan on 24th November.

The Plan has been delayed yet again. This time because Nuneham and Sandford successfully challenged the proposal put forward to identify a large area between their two villages as the sole new area to provide sharp sand and gravel from the South of the county up to 2031. As a result, County officers decided that the only way forward was to go into reverse and start the site allocation process all over again. This is inevitably going to take many months.

An issue of serious concern for the Councillors was that their site – SG42 – was still being referred to as “the preferred site”. It was agreed at the meeting that this would be changed so that all sites in the new selection process would be nominated as “potential options”.

A challenge was made to the size of the Local Area Assessment figure used to determine how much gravel should be extracted each year. It was agreed that officers would work with Councillors to examine the methodology used by OCC and therefore the relevance of the current figure of 1.015 Million Tonnes Per Annum.

It was also stated that a timetable for progress of the Plan would be published after Christmas, with a consultation in March. Decisions would have to be taken after the next County Council elections in early May.

Oxfordshire Stakeholder Briefing

In addition to this report I have sent parish councils the recently published **Oxfordshire NHS and Local Authorities Stakeholder Briefing** document. It provides an excellent overview of the many ways in which we are all working together to help protect our residents.