

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS – APRIL 2021 BY CLLR LORRAINE LINDSAY-GALE

His Royal Highness Duke of Edinburgh

It is with great sadness that we heard of the death of Prince Phillip on 9th April.

Many of us will want to remember and recognise the service he gave to our country and to the Queen.

During the pandemic we cannot host and open physical books of condolence as it is not safe to do so. The County Council is encouraging those who would like to share a message to sign Buckingham Palace's online book at royal.uk This will close at 5pm on the day after the funeral – 18th April.

Outside of COVID-19 we would, at this time, be looking for suitable locations around the county for the laying of flowers. Unfortunately, we need to discourage this and suggest, as Buckingham Palace has already done, that people make a donation to one of the many charities or organisations that the Duke of Edinburgh supported.

A period of national mourning is being observed until after the funeral on 17th April.

All campaigning for the up-coming Local Elections is suspended until Tuesday 13th, and then on the day of the funeral at Windsor Castle.

Key dates for the 2021 elections are on the horizon

People in Oxfordshire are being reminded that a number of key dates relating to the 6th May 2021 local elections are getting ever closer.

The deadlines for registering to vote and for a postal vote are now less than a fortnight away with the county council holding elections for all 63 seats and 61 divisions and one-third of Cherwell District Council seats also up for election. There is also a Police and Crime Commissioner election for the Thames Valley and elections at Oxford City Council and West Oxfordshire District Council.

What are the key dates?

- Monday, 19th April (at 11:59 pm) is the deadline for people to [register to vote](#)
- Tuesday, 20th April (no later than 5pm) is the deadline for receiving new postal vote applications for all these elections. You can apply for a postal vote

here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-a-postal-vote> .

- Anyone who wants to vote by proxy must apply by 5pm on Thursday 27th April

At the end of Friday, 9th April the list of candidates for the county council and district council elections was available.

The verification for all elections will take place on Friday 7th May and the counts for County, Districts and Parishes will take place on Sunday 9th May. The venue for South and Vale divisions will be the Abingdon White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre.

People are also being reminded that there are vacancies across Oxfordshire in paid roles such as poll clerks and presiding officers on election day. More detail can be found here for people who are interested in applying. <https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/be-at-the-heart-of-local-democracy/>

COVID-19

Testing

The number of new cases in Oxfordshire has now dropped to 33.1 per 100,000 of the population. From 9th April everyone in England can now access free, rapid lateral flow tests to use twice a week. Getting into the habit of twice-weekly testing will help us all to pave the way for businesses and society reopening.

If you don't have symptoms, you can book free LFD tests at the Kings Centre in Oxford, or access tests through your workplace or school, or collect home test kits from any local testing site across the county or order them online for home delivery.

A new pharmacy collect service has also just been launched.

The Government confirmed that restrictions will ease on 12th April in line with the next phase of its Road Map out of lockdown. Shops can reopen, alongside outdoor attractions, libraries and personal care premises.

Vaccination programme

The NHS in Oxfordshire has now vaccinated more than 320,000 people, over 40,000 have had their second dose. Full details can be found in the attached Oxfordshire Update.

Libraries

31 of our libraries will open on 12th, taking every precaution to keep staff and visitors safe. This will include Abingdon, Berinsfield, Thame, Wallingford, Watlington and Wheatley. A further 9 will open on 19th April including Benson. The remaining four libraries cannot open just yet due to alterations and building works.

No library customers will be penalised as a result of having to self-isolate or being unable to travel to return library loans. Click and collect will continue to operate at the larger libraries.

Mental wellbeing hub for young people launched in Oxfordshire

Young people suffering psychological challenges, made worse by COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, will have access to an information hub giving contact details of local professional support services and resources, thanks to a new scheme from Oxfordshire County Council.

Teenagers face daunting choices, such as deciding between continuing in education or entering the workplace. Disruption caused by the pandemic has increased fears that some might fall between the cracks when it comes to assistance and support.

Three major challenges faced by our young people have been identified; isolation, next steps and anxiety. Many are struggling with loneliness, maintaining friendships and social circles, while often wrestling with themselves.

The county council believes that in many cases, parents and carers are also lacking the support they need to help young people manage stress and anxiety. Resources to help with this will be promoted to them in the coming weeks. The hub aims to help young people navigate a myriad of local and national services by conveniently signposting them to practical advice, resources and help tools. Social media and websites will be central to the initiative, designed to offer a one stop shop where advice is just a couple of clicks away. Further information is available from the county council's young people website: www.oxme.info/wellbeing

Councillor's Priority Fund

During the last year I have supported the following organisations through my Priority Fund:

Baldons & Nuneham Community Action Group - COVID	£1,000
Sandford Talking Shop – COVID	£1,000
Orchestra of St John's – music for autism on line	£2,000
Oxfordshire Victoria County History	£1,500

Baldons Parish Council, renovation of school parking	£2,000
Baldons Cricket Club	£700
Berin Centre, Children's Centre – COVID measures	£1,955
Life Education programme	£275
Warborough Parish Council, monument repair	£1,000
Dorchester Primary School, playground repairs	£1,000
Abbey Woods Primary School, eight laptops	£2,000

I have represented this Division for the past 12 years. I am standing for re-election, and if I'm successful, I look forward to working with you in the future.

Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale
 Cabinet Member for Education & Cultural Services
 Oxfordshire County Council
 Berinsfield & Garsington Division