

## **Leader Statement – Council 7 January 2021**

It's disappointing that we're once again in lockdown. The severity of the situation nationally and locally, means that this Council must continue to work together with our residents, partners, businesses and stakeholders, taking what we've learnt from previous lockdowns to go the extra mile to save lives and protect the NHS.

We've taken steps and closed a number of public facilities this week, from Tuesday 5 January and these include:

- Football pitches and pavilions
- Tennis courts at Abbey Fields, St Nicholas Park, Victoria Park and Christchurch Gardens
- Edmondscote Athletics Track and its gym and pavilion
- Outdoor gym equipment
- Skate parks

The district's parks, public toilets and children's playgrounds **remain open**, but all exercise permits for group activities are suspended, but 1-2-1 personal training can still take place. The cafes at St Nicholas and Victoria Parks are open for takeaways only. The weekly markets in Warwick and Kenilworth will continue for stalls selling essential items.

Other **Council owned facilities** including the Leisure Centres, Art Gallery and Museum and Spa Centre will remain closed, with the [Library](#) open for click and collect. The Town Hall is open so that customers can access the temporary Post Office, but we are unable to hire out our rooms to third parties and the Glasshouse remains closed. Our volunteers are not permitted to help us in our parks and green spaces, which effects the work of Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, and suspends the weekly programme of health walks.

**Waste and recycling services** will continue as normal, and as before, will continue to be supported by additional waste collection vehicles where the recycling is tipped into the back of this vehicle and sorted separately.

During this time the Council's **Housing Team** will renew their efforts to accommodate anyone found sleeping rough and continue to provide support to those in temporary accommodation.

For businesses, the **Council's finance and business support teams** are on stand-by to process the new lockdown grants for the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors as quickly as they can.

Our staff are supporting the NHS with the **vaccination programme and testing regime**. Teams from the Royal Pump Rooms are helping the County Council at the community testing centre in Lillington. And they've been busy! At 4 January - 3600 tests had been carried out, since it opened on 22 December, with only a small proportion being positive.

I'm pleased to report that our local Primary Care Networks have established **Vaccination Centres in the District** at the following locations:

- Leamington Rehab Hospital
- Lisle Court, Brunswick Street
- The Warwickshire Golf Club, Leek Wootton

Now that the Oxford Astra-Zenica Vaccine is being rolled out, we expect a significant increase in the number of vaccines administered over the coming weeks. And we are doing all we can to support this; co-ordinating a community transport scheme, and providing CCTV surveillance and continuing to promote the messages from the NHS around the benefits of the vaccine and the process involved.

Behind the scenes our **Health and Community Protection team** continues to review legislation and government guidance to ensure consistency in approaches to enforcement across the district and updating businesses with the new regulations rapidly put in place. The team is also lending its support to the **Mega Testing laboratory** being built in Whitnash. Throughout the pandemic the CCTV team have continued to keep a watchful eye on our town centres. A reduced night-time economy has resulted in a change of shift patterns and a rise in welfare related incidents, with 37 reported in December. The current lockdown has also meant the suspension of food inspections and also external pest control with the exception of rats.

The council's staff will continue to work from home, but any of our staff working from Riverside House and other Council buildings including Acorn Court and CCTV, can continue to do so with the safety measures which have been put in place. We are advising staff who have been instructed to shield, to return to working from home.

For my fellow Councillors, I can now confirm that we have agreement to deliver all **Council/Executive and Committee meetings** remotely up to the 7 May 2021, the schedule of meetings will continue to be promoted in our weekly residents' newsletter every Friday.

Our plans to deliver the local elections on 6 May 2021 remain, with our Elections team working with Public Health England and the Electoral Commission to ensure

that polling stations and the local count, operate in a covid-safe and compliant way.

It's going to be a tough few months for everyone, but I am confident that by continuing to pull together, brighter days are ahead. And finally, I've heard that there will be a weekly "Clap for Heroes" on Thursdays during lockdown, so we might just have time after this meeting to step outside and once again demonstrate our appreciation for the courageous and selfless service being given by so many in support of our health, well-being and community life.