

End APRIL 2020 ; COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT to PARISH COUNCILS

OXFORDSHIRE County Council has functioned very well through the CV19 lockdown. We have reviewed our activities after first month of lockdown, and these are the main findings:

ICT

Progress on the ICT in the Transformation programme enables 3,500 employees to work from home and performance has been maintained across all services. Plans advanced for holding Council meeting on 4th May to decide essential business, so full audit of all cllr IT capability is taking place. I will chair the first 'public meeting' on transport issues on 30th April, with participants 'meeting' on TEAMS and the public able to observe on a separate connection from the internet.

CUSTOMER CONTACT CENTRE

OCC has re-formed its Customer Contact Centre, who are dealing with calls from the 'shielded' residents (up to 20% of all incoming calls) with about 8,000 to call outbound on welfare issues.

OCC is adapting fast and well to new ways of working.

BROADBAND

Oxfordshire's Superfast BB rolled out to 97%+ residences is robust and has enabled huge change to working from home. Oxon may get onto Ultrafast (Gigabit) connectivity in next tranches next year.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE/PUBLIC HEALTH

CV19 CASES : 1336 (AT 24TH April)

CV19 deaths : 135

Testing expanded to all essential staff; considerable local provision to supplement national provision
Test centre opened at Thornhill Park&Ride.

Care Homes working with Public Health on Action Plan to test all care home residents: supported safe discharge of 302 Oxon patients (to isolation where necessary) and OCC attend daily at JR A&E to find safe placements to avoid hospital admission.

PUBLIC HEALTH services on reduced offer : sexual health kits by post; telephone support where possible; drugs and alcohol, stop-smoking difficult to maintain esp.with homeless in temp. accommodation (some in hotels) so aware there will be a backlog when lockdown is over.

Health visitors deployed on CV testing. Staff absences are lower than last year.

CARE PROVIDERS and DIRECT PAYMENTS increased by 10% one-off payment, to keep care providers 'in business'.

EDUCATION and CULTURAL SERVICES

90.6% children offered first choice for primary school in Sept 2020. School building continuing subject to social distancing requirements. Music being taught on-line

Aware that childminders and nurseries are closing, Referrals for Domestic Abuse. Mental Health and to A&E are down – expecting bulge in demand when lockdown is over.

All 44 libraries are closed. Staff supporting Customer Service Centre and managing death certificates. Temporary Place of Rest established at Upper Heyford.

800 births already waiting to be registered when staff available _____

ENVIRONMENT and TRANSPORT

LTCP5 – next transport strategy (with real change planned for A420) has extended its ‘engagement’ to end of May. Still on track to get Council approval by end 2020.

OCC invited to speak at national conference (on line) on progressing Natural Capital into planning requirements. I spoke with lead officer researching with Oxford University.

HWRCs – RECYCLING TIPS are closed but being ‘reconsidered’. Initially treated as non-essential travel (all Districts have kerbside collection of all waste) OCC is examining how to keep staff and users safe. All District Councils now collecting bulky waste again

Oxford City traffic schemes : ZEZ, congestion management etc postponed till end of 2020 to consult fully. New Respark schemes are being decided and plan to implement 9 in 2020 which is start of congestion management programme. Increased interest to make ‘gains’ from the traffic slowdown.

OX/CAM ARC ; continues its work, seeing its importance grow as science becomes ever more relevant during CV outbreak. Staff currently deployed to transport issues for CV19.

HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE/ NETWORK MANAGEMENT

Schemes paused initially to ensure safe working, now re-programmed for delivery

£32 million has been agreed for highways again this year, and investment in resurfacing schemes will continue. Fawler Road/Hill will be done; Letcombe Regis has notice of 3 separate schemes etc.

At first road teams met aggression from public for being out at work, but understanding has grown.

Increase in use of Public Rights of Way has caused some concerns, but all are open expecting users to observe social distancing.

Key projects : new parking enforcement contract; Civil Parking Enforcement for DCs; street-lighting procurement; electric vehicle charging; Skanska contract extension; OCC/CDC p’ship opportunities and community engagement all continue to progress along with Highway Asset and Network Management programmes.

TRADING STANDARDS has suspended some services (food inspections to be re-set by Food Standards Agency; age-related sales) to focus on new services. Advised 5,386 business on Gov support schemes; visited 17,709 businesses; issued 61 Enforcement Notices

Trading Standards monitors PPE imports and product from smaller suppliers. TS is maintaining contact farmers. _____

OCC LEADER meets weekly with District Council Leaders, MPs and SoS Robert Jenrick to co-ordinate work as much as possible and avoid duplication. FINANCES will take a very big hit : £100 million is expected to be overspent in Oxfordshire Councils alone. So far OCC has received £14 million in share of first £1.6 billion to local councils. Second £1,6 billion has been announced; not yet distributed.

