

Leaders Report for Council Meeting 29th June 2020

There is a great deal that has happened since the last full Council meeting on February 24th, that I won't be able to cover everything off in this report, so I apologise in advance for any omissions.

Coronavirus Covid-19 response.

Later during this meeting Councillors will consider the report about the Council's response and the impact that CV19 and the lockdown is having, and the brilliant work of volunteer groups and our community hub across the district.

However, looking at my report to our meeting on 24th Feb, I reported to you that 9 patients in England had tested positive. Yesterday 28th June, the government reported that **there have been more than 311,000 confirmed cases of coronavirus in the UK and more than 43,000 people have died.** However, these numbers only include people who have been tested, and the total number of deaths relating to coronavirus is likely to be higher.

As of 21st June, Leicestershire has recorded a total of 1,395 laboratory-confirmed cases of Covid-19. The weekly reporting shows that **Harborough district** has the 4th lowest rate of Covid-19 deaths in the county. The rolling 7-day average of daily cases has shown two peaks in April: one around 10th April and one around 24th April. A third smaller peak has been witnessed around 20th May but has since been declining.

Of all care homes in Harborough district, 47.1% (8) have reported outbreaks of Covid-19; this is higher than the county percentage of 38.5%. A third (33%) of deaths involving Covid-19 occurred in care homes in Harborough district, slightly higher than the county percentage of 31%.

Sadly across our district there have been so far, **57 deaths** associated with CV-19 out of a total of 479 in Leicestershire (up to 12th June). This is of course very sad news for the families and relatives of those affected and our sympathies are extended to them.

The latest counts of deaths show there were no deaths in Harborough district in week 24. This has declined from two deaths in each week, in week 22 and week 23.

BUT as our residents, communities and businesses emerge from the harsh Covid-19 lockdown and try to get their lives and businesses working again, we are facing a public order challenge, which is putting all of our recovery AT GREAT RISK.

Many of you will like me have been shocked by the pictures spread across social media, which demonstrate reckless and mindless acts of debauched, anti-social behaviour, fuelled by drugs and alcohol, taking place in our public parks and spaces such as Little Bowden Recreation Ground, and private spaces such as Saddington Reservoir to name but two. Such wanton acts mean that residents of this district are now at a greatly increased risk of a local outbreak occurring, because no social distancing has taken place whatsoever. That is of course aside from the great risks that people are taking driving under the influence of drugs and drink, jumping or swimming in dirty and cold canal water, etc.

The decision of the local Police commanders, to impose a 36 hour emergency dispersal order, on Saturday evening, at the Council's Little Bowden Recreation Ground in Market Harborough is hugely disappointing, but was inevitable given the reported incidents in the days prior to that.

Residents of all ages, need to take, very seriously, their individual and collective responsibility for making sure that they, their families, friends and neighbours, all continue to stay safe - keep well - save lives.

The consequences of not doing so will impact on us all.

Town centres reopen as lockdown eases

Shops and businesses have reopened across Harborough district following the Government's easing of the lockdown – and more businesses are set to reopen in July. My thanks to the 'Highstreet Helpers' (incl Cllr Nunn) who are helping guide shoppers in our town centres; there are also public hand sanitiser stations in high streets, and street markings to show people where to queue.

The public toilets in the Commons car park in Market Harborough, have reopened with additional cleaning arrangements in place, new signage, and staff on hand to allow one person in at a time. (The Little Bowden Rec and Welland Park toilets are due to open imminently and we will confirm as soon as they do).

To create a safer pedestrian environment, temporary road closures have been introduced in collaboration with Leicestershire County Council, Lutterworth Town Council, retail groups and local businesses. These apply to Adam and Eve Street, and Church Street in Market Harborough, and in Church Street in Lutterworth. These road closures will be monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis.

We are also working with local businesses following further Government announcements this week that hairdressers, hotels, pubs and other businesses in England can from 4 July 2020 and how they can do this safely.

We are also working on a 'shop local' campaign to encourage people to support their local shops, and markets, at this time.

The latest information for the Harborough district is available from www.harborough.gov.uk/coronavirus

Customer services reopening for appointments only

We are looking to reopen the Council's customer services at The Symington Building from week commencing 13 July 2020. **This will be by appointment only.** Customers will not be permitted to walk in without an appointment.

Appointments will be on a Monday and Wednesday between 10am-4pm. There are screens being installed and new social distancing arrangements in place for our customers.

Customers will need to call 01858 8282828 number and select the option for an appointment. An adviser will see if they can deal with the enquiry over the phone and if not the customer will be invited in for an appointment.

Customer Services continues to operate the community hub service and will also signpost people to other organisations such as Job Centre for Universal Credit and Citizens Advice for financial support/advice etc.

Parking charges

In line with businesses opening, Harborough District Council will look to reintroduce car parking charges at all Council-owned car parks across the Harborough District, later in July, and details will be shared publicly once a date is finalised.

Parking restrictions continue to apply at on-street locations across the district.

Market Harborough Farmers' Market set to return

Market Harborough Farmers Market is set to return to The Square on Thursday 2 July 2020, from 9am to 3pm. The market had been stopped due to the coronavirus pandemic but will restart with new safety measures in place. Social distancing measures will be introduced, which includes fencing of the Square to create a one-in, one-out queuing system at entry, a revised layout and hand sanitiser stations in place. Sit down seating will not be available, and shoppers will be asked not to touch produce without buying and are encouraged to pay by card. The return of the Farmers Market follows the full reopening of the indoor market hall. We are urging the public to get behind traders and 'shop local'.

New podcasts on how Council has responded to Covid-19 crisis

A new podcasts series is being published over the next couple of weeks on YouTube, documenting how Harborough District Council has adapted to support residents and businesses throughout the Covid-19 crisis, and onwards as we look forward to the recovery phase. The episodes, which are each approximately seven minutes long, cover a range of topics including, fly tipping management, virtual planning meetings, increased safeguarding and local food banks. They include interviews with council employees who have been redeployed from their usual roles to support the evolving needs of people across the district.

You can find the podcasts here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ofwJdqfUKKs&feature=youtu.be>

I hope you enjoy listening to the podcasts in the series, and welcome any feedback. Please send comments to: communications@harborough.gov.uk

Community hub

More than 1,000 residents and families have requested support through Harborough District Council's Community Hub which offers help to those who are vulnerable or self-isolating. People who are vulnerable and do not have a local support network can contact Harborough District Council's Community Hub if they:

- need immediate help with supplies of essential food
- are feeling lonely or would like a friendly phone call or text message
- would like to connect with a local community group
- need transport to medical appointments
- would like advice about staying active and exercising

To refer yourself or someone you are concerned about please visit: www.harborough.gov.uk/hd-community-hub

If you cannot use the online forms please email: communityhub@harborough.gov.uk including contact details and support required or call 01858 821 232 9am-5pm.

Draft Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Transport Priorities 2020-2050

As the minutes from the 24th Feb show I advised Council that a draft strategic transport priorities document had been prepared by Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council to outline high level priorities for the two Local Transport Authorities (LTA's). I also asked HDC Officers to prepare a response using the services of an external Transport Consultant. Due to the CV-19 situation we were not able to hold any community engagement activities, but the consultation was extended until midnight on 29th June. As advised in last week's member briefing the Council's response has now been submitted along with a copy of our consultant's report.

Without repeating in full the Council's response here, there were 5 themes which it was based on:-

- 1) Lack of an evidence base
- 2) That the aims, challenges and priorities needed to be restructured
- 3) That the 'travel around the county towns and other urban areas theme is ill-defined
- 4) Lack of stakeholder consultation in development of the document
- 5) The LLSTP is too narrowly defined on passenger transport and needs to take into account long term impact from COVID-19.

Fly-tipping campaign shortlisted for national awards

Harborough District Council's Tip Off campaign, which aims to increase awareness of fly-tipping, and encourage reporting of it, has been nominated at the National Recycling Awards 2020 in two categories 'Campaign of the Year' and 'Local Authority Success'.

The National Recycling Awards celebrate those making a difference in the recycling and waste management industry. In November, the Council bucked the national trend announcing that incidents of fly-tipping had fallen by more than a quarter compared to the same period in the previous year – **the biggest reduction since Council records began**.

The fall was attributed to the Council's proactive actions, through its Tip Off campaign, and its success in catching those responsible.

During the recent lockdown period, due to the coronavirus pandemic, where other local authorities had seen a huge spike in fly-tipping, Harborough district saw slightly less incidents compared to the previous year due to its Tip Off campaign.

Last week, the Council reported that they had caught a fly-tipper on CCTV just days after launching banners on their refuse collection vehicles which read: 'Fly-tippers beware – we are watching you.'

Residents and taxpayers of this district are fed up with rubbish being dumped and indiscriminate littering. HDC is committed to keeping our district as clean and green, and protecting it from those that seek to destroy it through their illegal actions.

My message to the criminal fly-tippers is our campaign continues!

No place for hate or racism

Back in February I condemned unreservedly those who recently attacked students from the Brooke House College in Market Harborough, in some wildly misguided belief that they somehow were responsible for carrying coronavirus to the UK.

But since then there's been extremely upsetting circumstances in the United States.

We need to listen and learn, and recognise that racial bias still exists.

At Harborough District Council we celebrate diversity and we acknowledge the role that we have in challenging inequality. We will continue to tackle inequality in all its forms and endeavour to support everyone in our community.

To help us with this, I am creating the member role of Equality and Diversity Champion and have invited Cllr Amanda Nunn to undertake this important role.

Cllr Phil King

Council Leader

29 June 2020