

REPORT TO FARINGDON DIVISION (Buckland with Gainfield, Buscot, Coleshill, Eaton Hastings, Faringdon, Gt Coxwell, Littleworth with Thrupp and Wadley and Little Coxwell) December 2020

All that is detailed within my monthly report is in the public domain and thus in the media. My monthly report is a document of varied information which will be of interest both to local Town/Parish Councillors, residents and rate payers. The report provides local news and a wider picture of the strategic work that Oxfordshire County Council undertakes and thus involves me both as your local County Councillor and as Deputy Leader for the County Council. Most of the strategic work will have implications locally and thus is “useful” for the local town and parish councillors.

Safety Messages – as Cabinet Member for Community Safety:

Scammers target residents with promise of coronavirus vaccine - Residents are urged to be on their guard against scammers using the promise of a coronavirus vaccine to con them out of money. Criminals across the country are contacting people out of the blue with offers of a coronavirus vaccination. These approaches have been made by text or from a recorded voice message on the telephone. In each case the recipient is required to respond by clicking a link in the text message or by pressing 1 when receiving the call. They are then asked to give personal information, as well as financial details to book their vaccination. However, these are scams, with criminals exploiting the pandemic to attempt to steal personal details and people’s money. The NHS is currently offering the COVID-19 vaccine free of charge to people most at risk from coronavirus. These people will be contacted by the NHS.

Warning signs to watch out for include:

- Scammers who try to get you to pay them money for ‘early access’ to the vaccine.
- Scammers who ask for private information such as bank account details or your NHS number.
- Scammers knocking on your door claiming they can get you early access to the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Vaccine-themed phishing campaigns from suspicious email addresses with hyperlinks that contain misspelled domain names.
- Highly emotive language designed to manipulate you; do not supply login credentials or personal information in response to an email.

People are urged to:

- Monitor key financial accounts regularly.
- Keep software and apps updated.
- If you get a suspicious text asking you to click on a link this could be a scam. Do not click on the link.
- If you receive a recorded voice message on your phone and are asked to press a number, this could be a scam. Do not press any buttons and do not call the number back.
- Report all scams to us via Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 0808 223 1133.

There has been a surge worldwide of vaccine-related ‘phishing’ email scams, and this is expected to increase in these in the coming days. Previous phishing emails have contained malicious files that installed malware, or links to bogus websites to obtain the victim’s information. Scams cost the UK economy £5-£10 billion a year and there is a scam out there for everybody. Before clicking on a link or providing your personal details, stop and ‘take five’. Never be afraid to delete the text, put the phone down or close the door. To find out more about how scams work, the harm they cause and how you can help to protect people in your community, consider becoming a Friend Against Scams at www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk. For more details on the ‘Take 5’ campaign, go to <https://takefive-stopfraud.org.uk/>

Coronavirus vaccine process

- The NHS is asking people to be patient and not to contact their GP. We would like to ask for your help in promoting the following messages to your constituents:

- Please do not contact your GP or another NHS service to seek a vaccine – GP practices are still open for providing care to patients and their phones could become swamped, please wait until the NHS contacts you
- When the NHS does contact you, please be ready and attend your booked appointments
- Please continue to follow all the public health guidance to control the spread of the virus, protect the NHS and save lives.

- **Further information is available** about the vaccine on the www.nhs.uk website.

Safety advice issued by Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service

Residents have been warned about the dangers of drink/drugs driving, and the risks of house fires in a safety campaign from Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service. Many road crashes happen because drivers lose control, particularly on bends or in wet or icy conditions. The safety advice is to drive for the road conditions and give time to react by reducing speed. The difference of a few miles per hour could mean the difference between life and death. Drinking alcohol, or taking drugs, and driving puts all road users in danger. The only safe option is not to drink alcohol. There are always safe alternatives such as taking a taxi, bus or train; designating a 'dry' driver, walking home or deciding to stay overnight.

Councillor Judith Heathcoat, Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Community Safety, said: "If you cause a collision, it can result in life-changing injuries to you, and to anyone else involved. You will also carry the terrible guilt, and for what? For the sake of a lunchtime drink, a phone-call, or saving a bit of time? It really isn't worth the risk."

For further information about driving safely is available at: www.365alive.co.uk/fatalfour

Sale of knives to "under-aged youth" - A regional chain of DIY stores whose Abingdon branch sold a knife to a 16 year old in January 2020 has pleaded guilty following a prosecution brought by Oxfordshire County Council's Trading Standards Service. Selling a knife to a person under the age of 18 is an offence under S141A of the Criminal Justice Act 1988. Sydenhams Limited pleaded guilty to a single offence under this Act at Oxford Magistrates' Court on Friday 18 December 2020. The court heard that on 21 January 2020, trading standards made a test purchase of a Stanley knife from the Sydenhams store in Abingdon with the assistance of a 16 year old volunteer. The company was fined £15,000 reduced to £10,000 to take account of their early guilty plea and ordered to pay the Council's full costs of £1,400 and a £1,000 victim surcharge. The magistrates commented that at the time the sale was made not enough due diligence was exhibited by Sydenhams. **Councillor Judith Heathcoat, Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Community Safety, said:** "No matter the size of your business, anyone who sells age restricted products must ensure their staff are adequately trained and prepared to request a valid form of identification, when appropriate."

Anyone with information about the illegal sale of knives, alcohol or cigarettes to people under 18 should contact Oxfordshire County Council's Trading Standards Service through the Citizens Advice Consumer Service on **0808 223 1133** or by email: TradingStandards@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Gift someone in need this Christmas and New Year by handing back unwanted social and healthcare equipment

Residents who receive care and support are being reminded to ensure that they hand back any equipment loaned to them to allow others to benefit from them.

Oxfordshire County Council, alongside Oxford Health, Oxford University Hospitals have been leading the Hand it Back campaign, which is now urging residents to hand back their unused equipment for recycling. Worldwide manufacturing of items such as bed rails, pendent alarm equipment/ sensors (telecare) and mattresses has slowed down because of the COVID-19 epidemic, meaning new ones may be harder to come by and recycling even more crucial.

The pieces of unused equipment being sought are:

- chairs, beds, bed rails and mattresses
- wheeled commodes
- any electrical items
- walking and toilet frames
- pendent alarm equipment/sensors (Telecare)
- slings.

Anybody wanting to give back equipment can arrange a collection by calling NRS Healthcare on 01869 225420 or by sending their details enquiries@oxfordshire.nrs-uk.net

Covid-19 Winter Grant Scheme - Families and individuals struggling with finances or needing help because of COVID-19 this winter can now access support provided by Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council, district councils and voluntary and community organisations.

Oxfordshire councils have received £1.37 million from the government's new COVID-19 Winter Grant Scheme to run local support schemes for those in greatest need. We are working closely together to identify residents requiring urgent assistance within the rules of the scheme and the most effective ways of delivering support. This includes working with local Citizens Advice services to continue and expand support already put in place during the autumn.

For anyone needing support this winter, Good Food Oxford's food map provides practical information to help find and access information about services such as foodbanks, community kitchens and food surplus cafes. It covers the whole of Oxfordshire and the city and each of the district councils also have information on their websites about additional local support services:

Covid up date - Oxfordshire to remain in tier 4 - Oxfordshire will remain in tier 4 for the next two weeks. The next tier review is expected to take place on 13 January.

The latest data shows that the virus is continuing to spread rapidly in the county. The weekly rate currently stands at 338.2 per 100,000. The rise is particularly concerning among the over 60s, where cases are continuing to rise in all parts of the county. Hospital admissions are increasing rapidly as a result. The announcement that the Oxford-AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine has been approved for use in the UK is very welcome news and represents another important milestone in the fight against the pandemic. However, with coronavirus cases continuing to rise across the county, our NHS and the social care services under extreme pressure and so, we cannot afford to let our guard drop. Tier 4 is the highest of the national four-tier alert levels and it represents a clear warning that we must all be extra vigilant, follow the rules, and take every precaution.

The county will continue working with our NHS and local authority colleagues to remind residents about the importance of sticking to the tier 4 restrictions and continuing to follow public health guidance about washing hands regularly, wearing a face covering and maintaining social distancing. I should be grateful for your support in promoting these messages to your friends and neighbours and urge them to continue to follow prevention measures.

A reminder of tier 4 restrictions:

- **Stay at home**, except for permitted reasons. This includes shopping for food and other essentials, exercise, education, childcare, collecting prescriptions, medical appointments, essential work, and attending a place of worship.
- Everyone who can **work effectively from home** should do so.
- **You cannot meet other people socially indoors or in a private garden**, unless you live with them or they are part of your support bubble.
- **You can exercise (unlimited) or meet in a public outdoor place** with people you live with, your support bubble (or as part of a childcare bubble), or with **one** other person at a safe social distance.
- **Don't travel to other areas** – it is not permitted (other than for legally permitted reasons) to help slow the spread of COVID-19.
- Shops selling non-essential goods and market stalls not selling food must close.
- **Cafes, restaurants, bars and pubs remain closed** but can serve takeaways, click and collect and delivery orders.
- **Personal care, hair and beauty salons must close**, as should tattoo, massage and spa venues.
- **Entertainment venues, indoor attractions and leisure facilities must close.**
- **Clinically extremely vulnerable people** are advised to stay at home as much as possible, except to go outdoors for exercise or to attend health appointments. If they cannot work from home, they are advised not to go to work and claim any support where eligible.

A comprehensive set of FAQs is available at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/stopthespread.

Oxfordshire wins £3 million grant to help prevent sewers flooding

Householders and businesses could see the risk of flooding reduced, after Oxfordshire was awarded £3 million to prevent excess surface water from entering the sewer system.

Oxfordshire County Council, as lead Local Flood Authority, led a successful bid with Cherwell and Vale of White Horse District Councils for the funding from Thames Water. The two districts will each receive £1.5m towards projects to tackle the problem over the next five years and the funding will enable the councils to explore schemes to tackle the safe disposal of rainwater, which can overwhelm the sewer system and lead to flooding in homes, businesses, and the environment. Sustainable drainage solutions, such as raingardens and using green spaces to temporarily store rainwater after heavy rainfall, mimic nature by absorbing rain into the ground or slowing its journey to drains and sewers. As well as reducing flood risk, this approach also provides wider benefits, such as improving the local environment, reducing air pollution and helping biodiversity.

I should like to finish my monthly report by thanking everyone for all their hard work during 2020 supporting those in our communities and to thank especially the shopkeepers and delivery people who have ensured that we have fresh foods to buy and eat. The house to house deliveries, the postman, milk delivery people and many more all of whom take risks on our behalf on a daily basis mixing with people who just might be infected with Covid. The NHS and health workers all get thanked on a regular basis but the local people ensuring a "business as usual" attitude do frequently get missed! Thank you! Here's wishing you all a very Happy New Year!

Judy

Judith Heathcoat, C/Cllr Faringdon Division
Deputy Leader, Oxfordshire County Council and Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Regulatory Services

Judith.Heathcoat@oxfordshire.gov.uk

01367 241468

1 January 2021