

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCILLOR – 2020

PARISH REPORT - April 2020

Covid-19

What an extraordinary, challenging period this has been. I am surrounded by some truly outstanding people who have been moving mountains to help one another, follow the guidelines, adjust to social distancing and find a new norm.

New levels of technological communication have been catapulted into our homes, communities and families have reinvented themselves. Neighbours who have never met are sharing jokes and tips in Whatsapp groups and clap together on Thursday evenings for our wonderful NHS. It has been heartening to witness the goodness out there and the drive to connect and support the elderly and the vulnerable by volunteers is humbling.

I am sure you are aware of them and the bountiful resources which can be found on the CDC, NHS and GOV.UK websites. I have found that the best 'practical' local advice is coming from Neighbourhood Alerts (they have seen an uptake of 25%), the police have excelled themselves in issuing sensible information, the sort we want to hear!
<https://www.neighbourhoodalert.co.uk/>

BIN COLLECTIONS AND UBICO

For daily updates of missed services:

<https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/bins-and-recycling/coronavirus-bins-and-recycling/>

Household waste services are now operating as normal with the exception of the **garden waste service which has been suspended**. There are some missed collections, due to a shortage of crews, which should be resolved with a Saturday collection. Please leave out your food waste bins receptacles until they are emptied. The CDC website is updated first thing every morning with any waste service changes.

Food bin collection is erratic. If your collection has been missed, it is very important that you log it with CDC using the link above.

- Green bin collections are suspended until further notice.
- Food waste levels have increased by over 25% during the period so lorries have had to 'empty' more which has led to staggered collections.
- Ubico lost 20% of its staff since lock-down. They have shifted skilled staff around and recruited more drivers to fulfill collection commitments where possible.

There has never been a better time to think about community composting. As you may know, this is something I believe in for rural areas. Whilst it might make sense in towns, it seems unnecessary to drive a huge lorry around all our tiny lanes and villages in the Cotswolds, better solutions may be available if the options are explored. A good example can be found here: <https://bisleycommunitycompostscheme.org.uk/>

Green waste: People should increase their home composting and/or reduce the amount of garden waste produced. Lawns are the usual problem - mowing less, planting more wildflower meadow areas, leaving more areas to grow long and only picking up the cuttings every other mow (which lets it dry on the ground before it goes in the compost) all help. If residents don't have a compost heap now would be an excellent time to start one.

Gloucestershire County Council has already closed the Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) so green waste cannot be taken there.

Residents should not put garden waste in the black wheelie bin - excessive wet waste is a problem for the operation of the "Energy from Waste" (Javelin Park Incinerator) plant where all Gloucestershire's black bin waste goes. Garden waste in the black wheelie bin will not be accepted.

ENGAGEMENT BY YOUR COTSWOLD MP - SIR GEOFFREY CLIFTON-BROWN

Sir Geoffrey is liaising with cabinet members and group members of CDC on a weekly basis via video conferencing. He has been answering questions and logging issues to take local concerns back to the central government for answers. Let me know if you want me to ask him something for you.

Friday afternoons between 3-4.15pm he is holding live streaming sessions at the Barn Theatre. This is helpful to those with questions which can be answered by someone from the central government. You can engage live via Facebook:

https://www.facebook.com/geoffreycliftonbrown/?__tn__=%2Cd%2CP-R&eid=ARAYwatYk6GR_QGa8HUfZQSHzbMCxk1SwG7TZb6-A0AXto-AW-_RntRy3UdmJENxwMkY_2byvfDaOna6

Thursday 2 April - some issues we discussed for attention:

- Priority to source PPE and ventilators for Gloucestershire NHS staff. This **has now been addressed and 400,000 items have arrived 9 April 2020.**
- Police updates show that at the moment there has not been a spike in crime in this area. **On the whole people are behaving responsibly.**
- Guidelines from Police on driving for exercise or walking dogs. In the absence of approved policy on this issue - informally ... driving a short distance is acceptable,

driving 10 miles or so is not. The virus can be picked up from metal gates so please wear gloves when walking.

- On a positive note crime, in general, has decreased significantly over the Cotswolds area. We are still getting burglaries at rural agricultural locations so we still need you to report anything that looks suspicious.
- Universal Benefit is not fitting into all schemes - he is driving this forward for those individuals/business who 'fall between the cracks'. Please let him or me know if you think this might be you.
- There appears to be frustration for Small Business Loans where banks are failing to put up collateral and sometimes charging extortionate rates. This is a moving situation.
- Help for business (see link below), this is a moving situation.
- Utilities. We are seeing assurance that those in hardship will not have their utilities cut off.
- Gloucestershire Community Hub is working
<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershires-community-help-hub/>

CORONAVIRUS AND THE COMMUNITY

 <p>Think of others, consider your actions & be kind</p> <p>People in every community will face the challenges of Covid-19 in some way – from needing basic provisions to help while they are unwell.</p>	 <p>Connect and reach out to your neighbours</p> <p>As self-isolation increases, we need to find new ways to stay connected and check in on one another for our physical and mental wellbeing. Share phone numbers and stay in touch.</p>	 <p>Make the most of local online groups</p> <p>Keep up to date, share information and be a positive part of your local community conversations.</p>	 <p>Support vulnerable or isolated people</p> <p>Different groups in our communities are at increased risk and social isolation and loneliness are key concerns for all ages. There are things you can do like volunteering for local support services or donating to food banks to help.</p>	 <p>Share accurate information and advice</p> <p>Support anyone who may be anxious about Covid-19. Sign post them to the correct advice from Public Health England and encourage people to follow the correct hygiene practices.</p>
--	--	---	--	---

Think of others, consider your actions & be kind: People in every community will face the challenges of Covid-19 in some way – from needing basic provisions to help while they are unwell.

Connect and reach out to your neighbours: as self-isolation increases, we need to find new ways to stay connected and check in on one another for our physical and mental wellbeing. Share phone numbers and stay in touch.

Make the most of local online groups: Keep up to date, share information and be a positive part of your local community conversations using platforms like Nextdoor.

Support vulnerable or isolated people: different groups in our communities are at increased risk and social isolation and loneliness are key concerns for all ages. There are things you can do like volunteering for local support services or donating to food banks to help.

Share accurate information and advice: Support anyone who may be anxious about Covid-19. Sign post them to the correct advice from Public Health England and encourage people to follow the correct hygiene practices.

LANYARDS



I know that most of our residents' needs are being met by local neighbourhood support groups. In order to help those wonderful individuals whilst shopping or carrying out other services, volunteer badges (see pic attached) are being produced by CDC for you to distribute to known groups in your area. Please only give them to those groups, and not to any individuals who are not affiliated to one.

Kemble and Coates already have theirs, please let me know if you would like to order some of these badges and I shall order them for you, I will need a postal address to get them sent to.

Older residents of Gloucestershire from Help The Aged UK.

Please Stay Safe

Support for older people to resolve specific issues

Help Team

01452 422660

Mon-Fri (9am-4pm)

For older people and those around them who need guidance on wide a range of issues. (We will prioritise more urgent issues, over non-Covid19 related enquiries)

Support to older people to stay connected

If you want a friendly conversation

Freephone

0800 2980579

Mon-Fri (9am-4pm)

Your call will be answered by a member of AUKG staff and then matched to a volunteer who will call you back for a 20 min chat. Call again any time

Support to Communities

Advice to mutual aid groups on supporting older people safely and effectively

Advice / signposting to individuals who want to offer help.

Contact **Chris Walker**

CWalker@ageukgloucestershire.org.uk

We will maintain links to latest advice and guidance on our dedicated webpage

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/gloucestershire/our-services/coronavirus-covid-19-and-older-people/>

Out of Hospital Service

01452 420937 or 420928

Mon-Fri (9am-5pm)

For older people recently discharged from hospital who need guidance to stay well back at home. Our OOH Team, supported by volunteers, will make contact by telephone

We are also compiling **resources and ideas from older people and communities in Glos and beyond on staying well**. We will share these in the days and weeks ahead

Also look out for our "**Greet Your Street**" campaign

www.ageukgloucestershire.org.uk

@AgeUKGlos
www.facebook.com/AgeUKGloucestershire



COUNCIL MEETINGS and Parish Meetings

Local authorities in England have now been handed new powers to hold public meetings virtually by using video or telephone conferencing technology. Further details can be found [HERE](#).

I have been using Zoom for group meetings and it is very effective. It can be run from a mobile phone or a laptop (better). You can see everyone at the same time and as someone is speaking, their image is framed in green light so people are not encouraged to all speak at the same time. I recommend that you hold a 'practice' meeting so that everyone can gain confidence using it.

If you want to give it a go, I recommend you set up an account and you can then send invitations to your committee - they then set up an account, click into the meeting with a number which they are sent and away you go! Somerford Keynes are currently using this to hold Parish Council meetings

<https://zoom.us/>

PLANNING APPLICATION OBSERVATIONS

Please continue to comment on Planning Applications via the CDC portal (link below). Whilst physical Planning Meetings have been suspended, applications with even one objection will be brought to my attention. I will liaise with residents/parish councillors and the head of planning and officers where appropriate. I strongly encourage any of you who wish to object, support or make other observations to an application to make comments via the preferred Public Access route on the Council's website. The CDC website was updated in February 2020, links saved before then will no longer work.

<https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-permission/view-planning-applications/>

Find the application you want to comment on, click into it and click on the COMMENTS tab where there is a form for you to fill in the details.

Occasionally comments are submitted by other routes and this can lead to misunderstandings and/or a lack of formal record being made on the system, which in turn can lead to lack of formal communication & notification regarding procedures (e.g. Committee dates, public speaking, etc.)

CIRENCESTER CAR PARKING

Car parking charges have been suspended until further notice.

Community Activity Support Grant scheme

The Community Activity Support Grant scheme has been suspended until further notice.

ROADS

08000 514514 gloucestershire.gov.uk.

Email: william.bellerby@gloucestershire.gov.uk

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic Abuse Support During Covid-19 Lockdown

Staying at home can be stressful. If you're concerned that a neighbour, friend or family member could be experiencing domestic abuse please do something. Give them a call or a text and set up a code word if they're in need of urgent help. Please remember never to confront a perpetrator or talk to a victim in front of them.

If you're concerned about someone or need help tell us at www.gloucestershire.police.uk, by calling 101, or in an emergency by calling 999.

Helpful links:

<http://www.gdass.org.uk/what-is-domestic-abuse/>

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/.../report-a-child-at-risk/>

<https://www.hopehousesarc.nhs.uk/>

<http://www.glosrasac.org/>

BUSINESS

Council Tax Support Hardship payment qualifiers identified (where we will be adding £150 to 2020/21 Council Tax Support entitlement). CDC will be helping 450 households, totalling £67k.

- Business Rate Grants, where the customer has provided their information, will start to go out today, 922 firms will receive their grants this week (Com. 14/04)
- Eligible businesses that have not submitted their details to download the form from the Council's website at

<https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/business-and-licensing/coronavirus-business-and-licensing/>

<https://mailchi.mp/0501137bc79f/covid-19-business-matters-cotswold-03-april-2020?e=c8b02e39ee>

Some useful Coronavirus notes for Homeowners

The following notes have been collated for the holiday rental home owner. Everyone's circumstances are different and for this reason a number of the items listed below might not be applicable. Please do take independent advice.

The government has announced a series of packages in the last two weeks. Access to the information is via the [gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website.

Business rates holiday and cash grants for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses

Key features of the scheme

A holiday from business rates for the 2020-2021 tax year. This applies to all businesses in these sectors.

Small businesses with a rateable value below £15,000 (in England) will receive a cash grant of £10,000.

Cash grants of £25,000. These will be given to businesses in these sectors with rateable value between £15,000 and £51,000 (in England).

The reliefs will be administered by local authorities. Cash grants will be paid automatically. In Scotland, businesses will need to apply.

Businesses will receive a bill showing no business rates charge for the 2020-2021 tax year.

Those who had already received bills for the 2020-2021 tax year will be rebilled. You should contact your local authority for further details.

Deferral of Self-Assessment payment and time to pay helpline due to coronavirus

The self-assessment payment on account, that is ordinarily due to be paid to HMRC by 31 July 2020, may now be deferred until January 2021. For those who are unable to pay due to coronavirus, HMRC will discuss your specific circumstances to explore:

Agreeing an instalment arrangement

Suspending debt collection proceedings

Cancelling penalties and interest where you have administrative difficulties

contacting or paying HMRC immediately

The helpline number is 0800 024 1222 - and is an addition to other HMRC phone contact numbers.

Opening hours are Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm. The helpline will not be available on Bank Holidays.

Mortgage Payments

Most mortgage lenders have confirmed that anyone who is suffering financial hardship as a result of the Coronavirus may request up to a 3 - month payment holiday from their mortgage. Please speak to your individual mortgage lender who will offer you further advice on this.

Water Bills

Ofwat, the water regulator, have assured people that they are expecting firms will offer payment holidays, and moreover, some water providers are running a scheme for those who have built up large debts, where the utility provider will contribute £1 for every £1 you pay towards the arrears. Please speak to your water provider for more details.

Gas and Electricity

The big six energy suppliers have said that they are likely to push back bill dates for customers who have been affected by the Coronavirus or remove debt charges for late payments. Each case will be reviewed on an individual basis, although the support particularly applies to vulnerable customers.

If you have a prepayment meter, most utility suppliers are advising customers to top up on the phone using its automated service or online where this is possible.

Customers with a traditional prepayment meter can potentially access emergency credit on their meter, which may last during an isolation period.

If you run out of emergency credit before your isolation period ends, make sure you contact your energy supplier to discuss your options.

Phone/Broadband

The leading mobile phone networks (EE, O2, THREE and Vodafone) and broadband providers have all confirmed that for those suffering financial hardship as a result of Coronavirus, there are options available to customers to support with payment plans.

In addition, most providers have also “zero rated” any NHS web page, meaning that it will not come from your data allowance if you need to access NHS information. In addition, O2, whether they are pay as you go, or a monthly customer can call NHS 111 free of charge from their mobile.

Welfare Benefits

Universal Credit – The Chancellor announced that Universal Credit will be increased by £1,000 per year for the next 12 months.

Ensure you are claiming all the benefits you are entitled to. Use the following link to determine the benefits you are entitled to:

<https://www.entitledto.co.uk/benefits-calculator/Intro/Home?cid=f436a549-5374-4728-9cb2-31bd9c4b2c0a>

Memberships

Most major gyms, leisure centres, clubs etc. who are now closed are approaching their customers to confirm suspension of subscriptions. You may wish to approach them directly in respect of future payments if you face financial hardship.

Rent Payments

Rent support may be available via housing benefit. In addition, please be aware that since 18th March 2020, landlords can no longer apply to evict tenants for the next 3 months for rent arrears.

Fraud alert

In these difficult times you need to remain alert to scams. If someone texts, calls or emails claiming to be from HMRC or a utility, saying that you can claim financial help or are owed a tax refund, and asks you to click on a link or to give information such as your name, credit card or bank details, it is a scam. If in doubt please hang up the phone and contact your adviser, or the utility company directly.

WhatsApp Coronavirus information Service

The Government has launched a GOV.UK Coronavirus Information service on WhatsApp. The new free to use service aims to provide official, trustworthy and timely information and advice about coronavirus (COVID-19), and will further reduce the burden on NHS services. To use the free GOV.UK Coronavirus Information Service on WhatsApp, simply add 07860 064422 in your phone contacts and then message the word 'hi' in a WhatsApp message to get started. A set of menu options is then presented which the user can choose from and then be sent relevant guidance from GOV.UK pages as well as links to GOV.UK for further information. For more information, please click here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-coronavirus-information-service-on-whatsapp>

Scam - We have received a report of an email circulating from the DVLA that a car tax refund is due. This is a scam so please delete the email and do not open any attachments.

Business information

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-business-support-grant-funding>

The Council has announced how it intends to support businesses across the district and you can read detailS here:

<https://news.cotswold.gov.uk/news/council-announces-its-help-for-local-businesses-affected-by-coronavirus>

The CDC business pages, including the form to provide contact information, is here:

<https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/business-and-licensing/coronavirus-business-and-licensing/>

Form here: <https://cotswold.us19.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=66f35b07c29401898685866be&id=cb401c9a96>

Renting

Non-statutory guidance for landlords, tenants and local authorities in the private and social rented sectors in the context of coronavirus was published on Gov.uk over last weekend. This guidance provides advice to landlords and tenants on the provisions in the Coronavirus Act 2020, and further advice for landlords, tenants and local authorities more broadly about their rights and responsibilities during the coronavirus outbreak. The guidance is available to read at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-and-renting-guidance-for-landlords-tenants-and-local-authorities>

SHOPPING TIPS

Hortons Chemist, Cirencester Market Place - no queue
Chesterton Pharmacy - 1 hour queue

It seems that the bigger the store, the longer the queues. Shopping creatively may pay off, especially if you are volunteering.

BP Centurian Garage - Now set up as convenience store
Gloucester Rd, Cirencester GL7 7JR
01285 821878
<https://goo.gl/maps/PwhvuY5S6h38Z4Tv9>

JESSE SMITH - Click and collect

THE MARKET GARDEN fruit and veg - they will make up a box for you which they load into the boot of your car. Pay contactless. May deliver.
text Ian Crees on 07825 544235

THE TUNNEL HOUSE, COATES - PIZZA's - local delivery or pick-up

BRAMLEYS WHOLESALE - Love Lane, Cirencester - click and collect

JOLLY NICE - collections only

HOBBS BAKERY, TETBURY - will deliver

Food banks - information about how to donate to Food Banks can be found here:
<https://cirencester.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-food/>