

CHICHESTER



CITY COUNCIL

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Mayor of Chichester: Councillor Richard Plowman

An open letter from the Mayor – 19 April 2021

We said our final farewell to HRH Duke of Edinburgh on Saturday and felt the loss more keenly as there was never a time when Prince Philip was not in our lives. Our thoughts are with the Queen – 95 on Wednesday - and with the Royal Family. It is hard to believe that next year will be Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee.

Last week I heard from my contact at St Richard's the news I had long been waiting for: the hospital had no Covid patients at all. Together we have turned the corner, but we cannot be complacent. My mother always used to say: 'It only takes one' - usually directed at my mischievous grandfather, 'Pops'. It seems extraordinary that one person from Wuhan in China began a process by which a virus has been passed to 140 million people and killed three million. Infections are still increasing, with new variants appearing. Thank goodness for the vaccine. We may be winning the battle here in Chichester, but the world war against the virus rages on. I still have a couple of weeks before my second job, down in Selsey. The Mayoress and I are looking forward to going, not just for the confidence vaccination affords but also because the team at the centre is so welcoming and efficient. (*See below)

Despite the publicity given to the rare blood-clots which represent a minuscule risk compared to the benefits, ninety-six percent of people in Chichester have taken up the vaccine. The question of risk is not easy to understand. Unless there is a different, underlying problem, the chances of incurring a blood-clot through vaccination for Covid-19 are the same as those of being hit by a meteorite or asteroid. I wondered for a moment if I should wear a hard hat when going outside, but that would have hidden my brand new haircut! You are slightly less at risk from getting bitten by a shark; but, as I reported in an earlier letter, wearing my mother's flowery bathing hat can reduce that risk even more.

The Government's recommendation for much of the pandemic has been for us all to stay safe at home. Goodness me! Whatever were they thinking? Don't they know that 52.3% of all accidents happen at home, resulting in 6,000 deaths a year? You can never be entirely free of risk, but you can minimise it by following the rules. At present I follow a simple CIT principle: C for Crowds - wherever you can avoid crowded situations; I for Indoors – it presents a far greater risk than outdoors; T for time - the risk goes up if you spend 15 minutes or more in close contact with an infected person. It is also interesting to note how hand-washing, masks and social distancing have reduced normal colds and 'flu to practically nothing this winter. The Japanese have been doing this for many years. Now we know why.

You still need to wear a mask in the shops, but it was wonderful last week to see 'non-essential' retail re-open. The pleasure seemed to be mutual, for the reception from shopkeepers was heartfelt. On April 12th, I put on my other hat as Town Crier and welcomed the people back to

Twinned with Chartres, France and Ravenna, Italy



the city centre. It was a chilly day, but the warmth of the smiles and cheery atmosphere were tangible. The retailers have had a really hard time, so please, if you can, do come back to the high street.

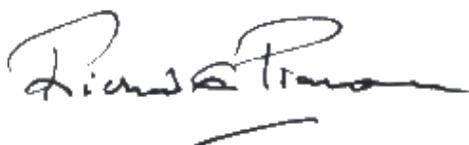
This last lockdown has been the hardest for everyone. Going through those really dark months of January and February was really tough. Now, seeing family and friends, and especially for me the people of Chichester has really lifted the spirits. None the less, stay safe and well and please do follow the rules. The slow release from lockdown and a no-going-back approach is working. Hang on in there, however frustrating it is. We have nearly completed the journey together and, as your Mayor, I am really proud of the Chichester Community.

My two-year stint comes to an end on May 5th. There is one more open letter from me to come, in which I will reflect on this difficult, strange, yet in some respects rewarding, period.

I am also fulfilling my promise for a party to mark our success in bringing the virus under control, when we can thank the NHS, frontline workers and indeed our community as a whole. The organising committee is in place for 'Over the Rainbow' in Priory Park on 30th September. One for the diary.

For now, please stay safe, well and strong.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Plowman', with a horizontal line underneath.

Councillor Richard Plowman
The Mayor of Chichester

*If travelling to your appointment poses problems, the NHS offers a free transport scheme. To book, you should call **01444 275 008** from Monday to Friday between 10:00-13:00 and 14:00-17:00. The travel coordinator will make the arrangements, including any additional needs, such as wheelchair-friendly vehicles. All transport providers have signed up to a COVID-19 safety policy to ensure that every precaution is in place for a safe journey.