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Mayor of Chichester: Councillor Richard Plowman

An open letter from the Mayor – 14 May 2020

Often, on your way down from the peak, the first obstacle you meet is the glacier. Unless we are careful as we exit the lockdown, we could find ourselves teetering on a dangerously slippery slope.

The vast majority of our residents have followed faithfully the social-distancing rules and only 134 cases of coronavirus have been recorded in Chichester District. The number of deaths has not been reported, but it is understood to be very low.

For me, however, there was a poignant moment when the number of those in the UK who had died from Covid-19 passed that of the entire population of Chichester.

The lack of clarity in the Government's latest recommendations has made people anxious that our efforts and sacrifices during lockdown will be lost. Realistically, little has changed and still the best advice is to stay at home if you can manage to do so. For information or advice, contact the **WSCC HUB** (Telephone: **033022 27980**).

As a community we can feel proud of what we have achieved. The **Mayor's Hardship Fund** (Telephone: **07740621812**) is working well for those left with nothing as a consequence of the virus. Please do not be too proud to call: we are all in this together.

The better understanding of how we catch the virus means we can with greater confidence exercise out of doors, but need to take more care indoors and in confined spaces such as on public transport where it is likely there will be a much longer exposure to the virus and more contaminated surfaces. Thanks to my wife's skills as a seamstress my blue tee-shirt has yielded a stylishly fashioned mask. I wear it now in the small shops and on public transport. The mask is not so much for my own protection, but rather to reduce the risk that I might unknowingly spread the virus myself.

The number of people who have coronavirus but show no symptoms is probably much higher than thought. In Iceland, a large proportion of the population was tested and, of those infected, half had showed no symptoms of the virus whatsoever; but they probably contributed significantly to the spread of the disease. Testing is so important.

My neighbour took the test in Portsmouth after showing some coronavirus symptoms. She said how smooth the procedure was and, fortunately, within 48 hours she was given an all-clear result. However, she missed the wonderful front-garden, socially-distanced, VE75 tea parties. It was a glorious sunny day and many of the houses had made a special effort, with flags and bunting marking the immense wartime sacrifice, while bringing the community together in the same way as the heartwarming 'Clap for our Carers' every Thursday at 8pm.

Twinned with Chartres, France and Ravenna, Italy

The re-opening of the garden centres is both a relief and a help to our horticultural industry here in Chichester. The waste-disposal centres, too, are open again. You can now also buy and sell houses and go back to work, but social distancing will pose a major challenge. I am not sure that Stay Alert is quite the right message. It should be simply: **Use Common Sense and Keep Your Distance**. That is what I shall be doing, while remaining at home as much as possible.

Like all pandemics, this one will eventually pass.

My best wishes to you all - and stay Strong, Safe and Well.

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