

CHICHESTER



CITY COUNCIL

The Council House • North Street • CHICHESTER • West Sussex • PO19 1LQ

Tel: 01243 788502

Email: mayor@chichestercity.gov.uk • Website: www.chichestercity.gov.uk

Mayor of Chichester: Councillor Richard Plowman

An open letter from the Mayor – 27 January 2021

Most conversations with those of my friends who are over 80 begin: ‘Have you had your jab yet?’

Despite the slow start, more and more are answering: ‘Yes’. About 3,000 - 60% of the over- 80s from the GP surgeries grouped together as the Chichester Alliance of Medical Practices - had their vaccination by 22nd January and these continued just in Selsey over the weekend. There is bit of a gap while new supplies of vaccine arrive, but everybody who is 80-plus and able to get to a centre should be inoculated by 30th January.

From the reports I have received it is clear that at both Tangmere and Selsey the procedure is smooth and the volunteers are acquitting themselves admirably. However, there have been traffic problems near the centres and some patients had to queue outside for an uncomfortable length of time.

Following the discussion I mentioned in my last letter, the NHS reacted rapidly and useful information was posted on the surgery websites as a guide to what to expect at each centre. You are encouraged to look at this once you have an appointment. Most are being arranged from Worthing by telephone or text, and it appears they are in alphabetical order by GP surgery and patient. As Mrs Y said to me, ruefully: ‘It has been like that for most of my life!’

In Chichester’s care homes all residents and staff have had the jab, unless there has been a recent Covid outbreak there, in which case the NHS has to wait 28 days before it can vaccinate. I have been in touch with several care homes and know of just one in this situation. Throughout the sector the dedication of the staff is truly admirable. It has been such an ordeal for them.

We all found it difficult to understand why there was no vaccination centre in Chichester itself, and thank you for all your suggestions and comments. The NHS has listened carefully and is exploring various sites. Some were not considered in the first instance because they were not available to use in the long term. However, the present lockdown situation has opened up further options. The process is complex and final approval has to come from NHS England, but we are expecting an imminent update.

One alternative is the large vaccination centre which opens in Brighton this week. If you are eligible to use it, you will receive a letter. If you do not want to travel to one of these nationally-run sites, or are unable to do so, you can of course wait until the local GP-led service is able to administer the jab – and, with any luck, that will be here in the city centre. I am not sure what to decide for myself but expect I will take up the first that I am offered. Friends have told me of their relief when either they or their loved ones have some protection.

Twinned with Chartres, France and Ravenna, Italy



We are still on track for the first four top priority groups, including the Mayoress and me, to have the first jab by 15th February. But it will be some while before the second and, with it, the fullest immunity the vaccine can deliver. As I write this, the hope that Easter will see the lifting of at least some restrictions seems to be receding.

When I was young, the radio was really the only form of entertainment at home. Every Saturday morning we listened to Children's Favourites and invariably the most requested record was 'The Laughing Policeman'. It was followed closely by 'The Runaway Train' – the one that went: 'The runaway train came down the track and she blew . . .' It sometimes seems that the pandemic, like that runaway train, is almost out of control.

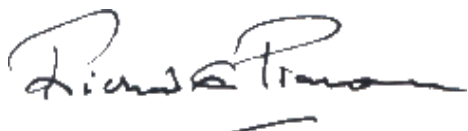
The only way a runaway train can be stopped is for it to break down or run out of fuel. The new virus strains suggest that the engine is far from breaking down and that people gathering together is the fuel. That is why staying at home and avoiding crowds is vital. If all goes well, the vaccine will slowly apply the brakes and relieve the pressure on the NHS, and the pandemic will pass. For now, though, the Mayoress and I will be staying at home, venturing out only for our daily exercise and the weekly shop.

Meanwhile the **Mayor's Hardship Fund** (Telephone: **07740 621812**) continues to recognise those on whom the pandemic has had a devastating financial impact. It is stepping-up its fundraising and if you can contribute, or need help yourself, please contact me.

The good news is that snowdrops are coming up in the garden. So Spring and better times are not too far away.

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