

**CHICHESTER**



**CITY COUNCIL**

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Mayor of Chichester: Councillor Richard Plowman

## An open letter from the Mayor – 27 April 2020

'We are fine' is my usual response to those welcome telephone or video calls from family and friends. I am sure most of us in Chichester are answering in the same way. We have mastered the new regimes in the supermarkets for social distancing and are taking regular exercise. Thank goodness for the spell of magnificent weather.

Mentally, however, it is proving really tough for some - particularly those living alone. The unrelenting news and casualty statistics make things worse. If you are finding it tough, do speak to **MIND (Adults: 07495 077341. Young people: 07949 963757)**.

We are all worried, but after several weeks some of us are frightened even to leave our front doorstep for fear of catching the virus, let alone go to hospital. It is vital that in an emergency, such as a stroke or heart attack, you dial 999. As I write, St Richard's has spare capacity in its intensive care units, and other wards are not busy. Ours is a wonderful hospital and its staff excellent; the necessary safeguards are in place; you have nothing to fear on that score.

Life is especially difficult for those instructed to stay indoors for 12 weeks. Westgate Leisure Centre has some great online exercise classes. For the remainder fresh air, sunshine and exercise have never been more important. The parks are open. For those living in or near the centre of Chichester, the City Council is sanitising the benches and bicycle racks on a regular basis. The Council has also started a Mayor's Hardship Fund for those people who have no money or resources to cope. Contact me on **07740621812**

For many of us in lockdown, every day of the week is the same. The diary is blank and there seems little to look forward to. A good routine helps, but we are all missing our trips out. The Festival Theatre, Pallant Gallery, Novium and South Downs Planetarium are offering entertainment and enjoyment online: just Google their websites. The Facebook concerts and entertainment from our lovely local songbirds, Dawn Gracie and Sylvia McEwen, have been fun. I have also enjoyed the Andrew Lloyd Webber musicals every Friday at 7pm on YouTube, but I have to watch these alone as I cannot resist singing along with them.

The one day of the week I do remember is Thursday, for the splendid 'Clap for Carers' at 8pm and my chance to dress up as Town Crier as we all express our gratitude to those who are keeping us safe and well. They truly are our heroes. The city's residents are playing their part, too, and the reports I have had suggest people are sticking to the government guidelines by social distancing. Thank you so much, it will help shorten this pandemic.

**Twinned with Chartres, France and Ravenna, Italy**



All of us are hoping for an early release and a return to some form of normality, but it cannot happen until there is a vaccine, a cure or mass testing. This is particularly true for those who, like myself, are over 70 and therefore considered to be at risk. The pandemic will pass, as they all do, but there can be no doubt that with Covid-19 we are in for a long haul. Even if the signs are promising, the premature relaxation of social distancing could bring a devastating second wave of infection, as it did with the 1918 Spanish 'flu epidemic.

Covid-19 and its effect were underestimated. It was thought to be similar to other coronaviruses. Recommendations and preparations were made accordingly, with governments concerned at what might happen to the economy and scientists giving their best guess at the time.

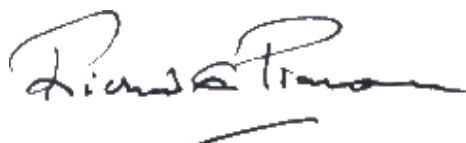
What we know now is that Covid-19 can be considered to be the Perfect Storm of pandemics. Compared with others it is easily transmitted and very rapidly spread. The fact that NHS workers are catching the virus when to them strict hygiene is second nature demonstrates this; hence the need for maximum PPE. The virus exists longer outside the body than originally thought. It can be transmitted without the person showing any symptoms. The survival rate is higher than in other pandemics, which means more people survive longer to spread the virus. The infection has two phases: a mild one, from which most recover, but then a fast, critical phase often requiring ITUs and ventilation with only a 50% chance of recovery. These survivors seem to have longer-term complications. Had we known all this at the beginning, the strategy would have been far different. It is wrong to blame either the politicians or medical experts. They, like everyone else, are doing their best. Together, and united in purpose, we will defeat this coronavirus.

Essentially, as the City Council Clerk Rodney Duggua put it, we are at war. This is not a skirmish and we must be very careful as we are in unknown enemy territory. The government is rightly cautious and people who believe that social distancing will be abandoned once the peak of deaths has been passed should not be planning for that soon. Experts say that Chichester's peak is about two weeks behind London, so this is the time for maximum vigilance. We hope for the best but must plan for the worst.

Many people have stepped up to the mark to help. Chichester is in good shape and we should be proud of what we have achieved. Particular praise is due to the staffs of our local authorities, many of whom find themselves working from home in roles to which they are not accustomed. The **WSCC HUB** (Telephone **033022 27980**) is working well. If you need help or information do call them. And, remember, you can always ring me on **01243 787663**.

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

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Richard Plowman  
**The Mayor of Chichester**