

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 – 3rd August 2020

'A change is as good as a rest' was just one of mother's sayings. I hardly think, however, that it applies to the pandemic, which has made us feel tired from worry and quite stressed. Much of this is down to uncertainty and being unable to plan for the future. We also don't like being told what to do and are irritated by those who ignore the rules. The loss of freedom seems to be making our society less considerate and almost to be encouraging an attitude of rebellion.

We have had evidence of this in Chichester, with high-performance cars racing along Oaklands Way - even in the Northgate car park - and with motorcycles roaring on the A27 late into the night. There has also been a big increase in the inconsiderate dropping of litter at beauty spots; and we are beginning to see facemasks and other PPE carelessly discarded or left in supermarket trolleys. As usual, blame lies with a small number of individuals, but in these pandemic days the impact on us of such behaviour is far greater than usual. I hope this is not the 'new normal' everybody keeps talking about.

It must be said that the ever-changing Government advice is a recipe for confusion. Let's take an analogy from the film *Jaws*. Simple advice at first: stay out of the water, there is a shark out there. No problems with that. Next, with the local economy suffering, we must get people back onto the beaches and we think the predator is now a long way from the shore. So the message is: it's safe to go into the water, but stay alert because the shark could still be around (and, as in the case of Coronavirus, invisible). Wearing a bathing-hat (face-mask) might be advisable, although we didn't recommend that before as we didn't have enough to go round, particularly for the lifeguards (NHS).

No wonder most of us have decided not to go into the water unless it is absolutely necessary. Thinking about it, the bathing-hat my mother used to wear would have stopped a Great White in its tracks!

Face-coverings are now compulsory on public transport, in shops and from 8 August, in museums, galleries, cinemas and places of worship. Casinos and bowling alleys and ice rinks will now not open until 15 Aug. Also wedding receptions of up to 30 people will now not be able to take place as previously advised. Readers of my letters will know I have long advocated the use of masks in confined spaces or where social distancing is difficult. As I reported in my last letter, the wearing of face-masks in Japan is a way of life. The Japanese do so not so much to protect themselves as to show consideration towards others in order that the infection does not spread. It does not make people complacent. Quite the contrary: it sends out a message to others that there is an infection about and they should take extra care.

One of the most frequent questions I am asked is: How safe is Chichester? Accurate local data has so far been hard to obtain and that from county and hospital trusts is not particularly helpful. The Office of National Statistics has now published the latest

Twinned with Chartres, France and Ravenna, Italy



information specific to Chichester (all five City wards). It states that from the beginning of June until 20th July no death in Chichester was attributed to Covid-19. The data on the level of infection is less precise, but it is clear that the incidence is very low. Despite this positive picture, there is no room for complacency: ours is a centre for tourism and we must remain vigilant in social distancing.


I have persuaded The Wife that it is time we ventured out a little more than the weekly shop to Waitrose and we should do our bit to help the economy with the money we saved during lockdown. We were determined to celebrate our anniversary and my birthday with more than a takeaway and a bottle of supermarket wine. So, with some trepidation, we set out for a shopping expedition in the city centre, booked two slots for West Dean Gardens, and reserved a table for two at Purchases restaurant.

We had little to worry about. The welcome everywhere was friendly and we were impressed with the social-distancing measures. It was the first time in many months that we felt we could relax and enjoy ourselves. So if you have been reluctant to step beyond the threshold of your home, this might be the moment to 'put a toe in the water' – remembering, of course, to use your common sense and keep your distance. Maybe, after all, a change *is* as good as a rest.

Finally, I believe that as time goes on there will be more calls on **The Mayor's Hardship Fund** (Telephone: **07740-621812**). This has now helped many who, as a consequence of the virus, were left with nothing. If anyone reading this letter needs help, do not be too proud to call.

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