

24th July 2020



Chief Executive

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Good afternoon,

This week councils have been given new powers to support a rapid response to outbreaks of coronavirus.

Events in Leicester have shown us that outbreaks can and will happen and that a swift response is needed to contain the virus and protect residents. These new powers will allow us to close shops, cancel events and shut outdoor public spaces if we need to – although we hope we don't need to use the new options available to us.

In West Berkshire the number of cases is low, which is positive, but we won't be complacent and work continues in earnest on our local outbreak plan. To ensure residents know about the plan and how it affects them we will soon be delivering a leaflet to every home in the district. It explains what might happen if an outbreak occurs, how they might be affected and what they can do to help prevent an outbreak here in West Berkshire.

It's worth reflecting at this point on how some of the terminology can make a situation sound worse than it is. In government guidance cases, clusters and outbreaks are defined as follows:

- **cases** refer to individual cases of COVID-19
- **clusters** refer to 2 or more cases associated with a specific setting in the absence of evidence of a common exposure or link to another case
- **outbreaks** refer to 2 or more confirmed cases associated with a specific setting with evidence of a common exposure or link to another case

In addition to this, you may hear talk of 'community spread.' This refers to both sporadic or linked cases and could be either limited or extensive in terms of scale. Again, there is no need to panic. If there's an issue which affects a large community we will put out messages so everyone will know what is happening.

As part of the national efforts to tackle coronavirus it becomes compulsory from today to wear face coverings in shops and supermarkets. Please do remember to take your masks with you to the shops, and if you forget please don't be offended if staff remind you to wear one. It's to keep you, them and the other shoppers safe.

Our shops have had a difficult time lately and from speaking to local business owners we know they are pleased to be open and trading again – and in many cases trading well. The use of facemasks will lead to even greater protection, on top of those measures already in place, and will give shoppers extra confidence as they go out and about from today.

Please don't let the requirement to wear facemasks put you off a visit to your local shops – we're lucky to have some fantastic businesses here in West Berkshire and they need our support.

We have been proud of the way residents have followed guidance and done the right thing in helping to keep themselves safe. We're sure it will be the same again with face coverings – we've already seen people embracing the change with the sewing machines coming out and some wonderful homemade creations on display. We look forward to seeing more when we're out and about in the next few days.

Aside from coronavirus, in last week's Weeknote an update was provided on the launch of a new 'climate change bond' to give residents the chance to invest in environmental projects across the district. It is the first scheme of its kind in the UK and the role West Berkshire Council has played in bringing in such a pioneering scheme has attracted interest from across the country. In the first week more than £300,000 has been invested in the scheme which is an excellent start and demonstrates both a confidence in, and appetite for this new scheme.

Finally, another bit of good news to share with you. We have had another £2,000 winner in the West Berkshire Lottery. It's great to hear of residents winning prizes whilst supporting local charities – in this case it was a supporter of Dingley's Promise. Since we launched the lottery last year it has raised tens of thousands of pounds for charities and good causes in the area. Now, more than ever, it has a valuable role to play with charities finding it hard to hold events and carry out face-to-face fundraising. Some of these causes have in their different ways been supporting the community response to Covid-19. If you're not already playing the lottery then why not give it a go? You might win some money but you'll definitely make a difference to the wonderful good causes we have in the area.

- *The first meeting of West Berkshire Council's Local Outbreak Engagement Board is at 10am on Friday 31 July, 2020 - [you can watch it live on YouTube](#).*

Yours sincerely,



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