

EARLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Full Council Meeting 25th November 2020

Town Clerk's Report – Covid Update Meeting 16th November 2020

Wokingham Borough Council held a Covid Update meeting on 16th November 2020 and invited representatives of all town and parish councils. Councillors David Hare and Clive Jones attended on behalf of Earley Town Council, along with the Town Clerk, Jo Friend.

WBC Leader, Councilor John Halsall, gave an introductory address, stressing the need for everyone to address the Covid situation together. The Borough's aim is to keep infection numbers down in the hope that we can return to the lowest tier when we come out of lockdown.

Susan Parsonage, CEO WBC, gave a brief address, explaining that 'Gold' meetings, involving all Directors and Assistant Directors, take place daily, and meetings of the Berkshire West Health Protection Partnership take place every 2 weeks. Discussions are under way regarding mass testing (also referred to as moonshot or lateral testing) but WBC need to consider the difficulties this may pose in terms of the high staffing resources required. Nationally, authorities are learning from the Liverpool pilot.

Attendees were shown the dashboard from the Berkshire Public Health website www.berkshirepublichealth.co.uk. This site contains detailed, up to date information on Covid infections and deaths in the local area, including Reading and West Berkshire. It is accessible to all and is a way of obtaining accurate information. (The link will be posted on ETC's website). Infections rates in the Wokingham area are rising but remain relatively low compared with elsewhere in the south east and nationally.

A presentation was given on the wide range of community responses currently in place. As well as large organisations such as Link Visiting and CAB being involved, this also includes local Covid community groups such as the Early Help Hub and the Whitegates community group. Reference was made to the Earley+ Mental Health project.

A further presentation was made on the support around businesses in the borough. The approach is very much 'Explain, Engage, Encourage, Enforce'. Generally, there is a high level of compliance from businesses (only one fine has needed to be issued). WBC has tried to maintain consistency of message in supplying signage across the borough.

Community Champions

WBC is launching this scheme soon, the purpose is to try to get effective and correct messaging to as many people as possible across the borough as a way of encouraging people to follow guidance and thus bring infection rates down.

Anyone can nominate themselves as a Community Champion. It could be a town/parish council, a community group, an individual, a school, a church etc.

Once registered the CC will be sent regular information re Covid from WBC which they should then disseminate amongst their contacts. The CCs can feed back queries, information, observations

directly to WBC who can then tailor the message if necessary. Ideally, WBC would like to have direct access to facebook groups etc so they can post their information directly on these pages. However, it may be that WBC will have to go through a group's administrator rather than having direct access. WBC keen to reach groups that they feel are currently not fully engaged, for example, young people and BAME.

The CC scheme will not replace any of the existing measures and will not have a compliance or enforcement role, it is there to try to ensure clarity and wide distribution of message.