

11<sup>th</sup> September 2020



**Chief Executive**

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Good afternoon,

Coronavirus is something we have all learnt to live with for some time now. Here at West Berkshire Council this issue continues to touch an awful lot of what we do to help protect the district, and although it's been busy, it feels that this week the developments in Covid-19 have come thick and fast.

The week started with news of an increase in cases nationally, which serves once again as a reminder that we cannot become complacent. Social distancing, face coverings and self-isolation all remain crucial if we are to continue controlling the virus. On Wednesday the Government announced new measures in response to this and from Monday you can only meet with people from other households socially in groups of up to six people. It includes indoors and outdoors, and private homes. These new rules will make it easier to understand and remember.

There are a limited number of exemptions to this rule including Covid-secure venues, such as places of worship, restaurants and hospitality venues. Groups of up to six people can still meet but these groups cannot mix. These exemptions will no doubt be welcomed by our local hospitality sector who have worked hard to open safely and you can continue to dine out with confidence.

So, we started the week with reports of an increase in cases nationally and we end it having had a confirmed case of coronavirus at Kennet School. In West Berkshire we're not insulated from the virus – there will be cases on occasion and it's something that we have planned for through our local outbreak planning. Where positive cases are identified we work closely with Public Health England to ensure that advice is given to manage risks appropriately.

National testing also had its share of the headlines this week following a period of particularly high demand on the Covid-19 testing system. Broadly speaking, this has been caused by capacity at the labs rather than at local testing centres. Testing is run by the Department for Health and Social Care who at the moment are prioritising tests in areas with higher rates of Covid-19.

The situation has nevertheless prompted some questions from residents about what all this means and what they should do. The answer is simple; residents are being asked only to have a test if they have Covid symptoms or have been asked to get a test for another reason.

If you have symptoms or been asked to get a test do go ahead by calling 119 or booking one online at [www.nhs.uk/coronavirus](http://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus).

In other Council business we have this week launched a consultation on the London Road Industrial Estate in Newbury. As part of our plans to regenerate the area we've published a draft development brief and are asking how the community wants to see the area developed. It will deliver a mix of office and light industrial space and possibly some housing too. Redevelopment has been a long-held ambition for the Council and it will also support our economic recovery from Covid-19. It's really important that we hear the views of our communities so do have your say if you want to contribute.

As part of the consultation, our consultants Avison Young will run a series of Zoom webinars at the end of the month – details will be available at [www.westberks.gov.uk/draftdevelopmentbrief](http://www.westberks.gov.uk/draftdevelopmentbrief).

Yours sincerely,



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