

Kidlington Parish Council

Chair's report

April 2020

Councillors and office staff have been working at home since the lockdown. We are holding regular informal meetings on-line, and, starting from the Annual Council Meeting on 14 May, we will hold formal meetings on the Zoom platform with public participation. The Annual Parish Meeting has had to be cancelled, but we are producing an on-line version of the usual Newsletter.

The Council's grounds staff are continuing to maintain the two burial grounds in the village at St Mary's and Bicester Road. These are closed to the public between 9am and 4pm Mondays to Fridays while the staff are working. Residents are free to visit outside of those hours.

Ahead of the lockdown, we began collaborating with the **Kidlington and Surrounding Areas Community Hub (KASA)**, an extensive network of volunteers who provide help with shopping, picking up prescriptions and other tasks such as dog walking, signposting to other organisations or just a friendly chat. The Council provided KASA with a dedicated phone line, assisted with essential strategic planning and helped with a leaflet drop to every household in Kidlington letting them know about this and other services. The aim is to ensure that vulnerable people and those most at risk do not need to leave their homes and have a single point of contact.

The Council has been able to support the **Cherwell Community Larder** by opening up Exeter Hall weekly to allow for the distribution of food parcels to families across the district. We are also in constant touch with the **North Oxfordshire Food Bank** (based in Kidlington Baptist Church) to ensure that they have the resources they need to provide for those who find themselves in need of support.

These three organizations together are doing remarkable work to provide extensive and solid support for emergency-related needs.

We are now allowing the Fruit and Vegetable market stall to trade from Exeter Close car park so that residents can buy fresh produce without having to visit a supermarket. Full social distancing will be observed. In lieu of rent we have asked the stall to provide fruit and vegetables for the Community Larder's food parcels.

We have created a number of emergency information pages on the Parish Council website. Along with support contacts and other useful numbers, we have collated information about local food deliveries and home resources: see www.kidlington-pc.gov.uk.

Many informal groups have been set up around the village to enable people to help their immediate neighbours with shopping and other tasks. We are encouraging these groups to register on the Oxfordshire All In website (<https://www.oxfordshireallin.org/>) which helps us to understand what is happening around the village and look out for any gaps. We are also encouraging volunteers to feed information back about people who are having difficulty obtaining support. We are developing a joint communications strategy with Cherwell District Council, and coordinating our support efforts with theirs: a joint leaflet containing emergency support numbers will shortly be distributed in the village.

DAVID ROBEY