

Upton News



Vol 5 No.45 April 2020

These are indeed unprecedented times and I am sorry this is not the most exciting edition you have ever received but it is not all bad news.

WhatsApp Service

We are all aware that Upton has a high proportion of over 70s who have been asked to self-isolate which has meant that our younger residents have got themselves well organised to ensure that no one remains neglected and short of essential items and how lucky we are to live in a village with such a wonderful community spirit. On behalf of the 70+'s I would like to thank Sarah Carter and her friends for setting up the WhatsApp service as described in the emergency Upton News sent out to most of you on 15th March. The set up now has over 90 members split between those requiring help and the many volunteers who are doing such a fantastic job collecting prescriptions and other essentials—We thank all of the volunteers you are doing a great job which is much appreciated.

The scheme has had another advantage in that we now have quite a few octogenarians who had dismissed WhatsApp as another of the new-fangled ideas that was not for us and now we are all getting to be able to use it even though it gets frustrating when it does not go the way you want it to.

If you would like to join the scheme in either capacity just contact anyone who is already a member and they will add you to the list.

Printed Copies

We have unfortunately taken the decision to stop delivering paper copies of the Upton News due to printing problems and several of the good ladies who deliver the printed version are in self-isolation. We are in the process of trying to contact the 60+ households asking if they are happy to go on to the regular email list or receive the email version for the period until we can get back to paper copies but without going knocking on doors this is not easy. If you know of anyone who wants a printed copy please would you consider printing one off and delivering it but do not take any risks. If they are prepared for me to send them an email copy please ask them to send their email address to me at kameki39@btinternet.com

Advertisements

We have suspended the advertisement's page until further notice, it is not reasonable to advertise services that are not available or may soon not be available. In the meantime if any organisation or company is going out of its way to provide a service to our community please let me know and I will be pleased to include it in the next edition. (see Page10)

Editor

Parish Council

Following recently announced government guidelines and restrictions due to the Coronavirus situation, the Parish council has issued the following statement:-

All in person Parish Council meetings have been cancelled until further notice. The Parish Council is looking at how meetings may be hosted virtually. Any information to be disseminated to the community will be via Upton News, the village web site or the village noticeboard. Parish Council members will continue to communicate by email and phone.

All play equipment on the recreation ground is **out of use** with immediate effect and we ask that under no circumstances is any of it used until further notice.

The recreation ground will remain open for walking, bearing in mind the social distance of at least 2 metres (6.5 feet).

The Parish Council wishes everyone well during this difficult time and requests that restrictions are observed for the safety of all in the community.

Thank you.

Parish Clerk for and on behalf of Upton Parish Council.

District Council

Hello! We hope that all residents are managing to stay safe and well during these unprecedented times of the coronavirus outbreak. Over the coming weeks, there will likely be further challenges, but we are confident that as a community we can pull together and look out for one another to get through the difficult times ahead.

It has already been very heartening to see that all the communities we represent have had dozens of volunteers offering to help vulnerable neighbours, and that each area is starting to officially organise and co-ordinate these volunteer efforts. Thank you so much to everyone involved in these groups: Blewbury Good Neighbours, Harwell Helpers, Chilton Mutual Aid, Great Western Park Community Support and the Upton Village WhatsApp group.

The situation around the coronavirus outbreak is changing daily, and there is a lot of information coming through from various sources about how this affects aspects of our lives. With that in mind, we have put together this round-up of all the recent news from the Vale of White Horse District Council relating to how council services are affected, and how the council is supporting community volunteer groups and vulnerable residents.

Further updates will be posted on our councillor Facebook Page: [Cllrs Hayleigh Gascoigne & Sarah Medley](#), and on the Vale of White Horse Facebook and Twitter accounts. However, for the most up-to-date information on how the district council's services are affected, please take a look at the dedicated Vale webpage for updates: <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/news-events/coronavirus-covid-19-information>.

Shielding our most vulnerable - new support lines for those who need help

Local authorities across Oxfordshire have worked with the local Voluntary and Community Sector to develop a simple point of contact for those who have been told by government that they have been identified as extremely vulnerable, and who have no support network and would otherwise be completely isolated. This new, dedicated support line will provide our extremely vulnerable residents access to a central team who will be able to offer advice on a range of issues.

If you or someone you know has been identified as extremely vulnerable by the NHS and have nobody around to help with day to day tasks like shopping, please call 01865 897820 or email shield@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

Anyone in this situation that is not considered high risk can call 01235 422600 or email communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk

These support lines are open 8.30am to 8.00pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 5.00pm on Saturday and Sunday.

Volunteering for the coronavirus community support efforts

We recognise that many of you who can would like to support your local communities during these challenging times, whether that's delivering essentials, putting the bins out for someone, or being on the other end of a phone. To ensure that residents know where to turn, all community groups, community organisations and local businesses are being asked to include details of their initiatives on the Oxfordshire All In Response Map:

<https://www.oxfordshireallin.org/local-support-groups>.

Council Services - General update

Due to the ongoing public health risk from the virus, the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire district councils have closed their offices to the public. Residents can continue to access information about council services, and make payments, or make an application or a report via the council website: www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/. The councils' phone lines will remain open, but anybody that needs to contact council staff is encouraged to go online first or use email as this is likely to be quicker and will help the councils respond to those most in need first, during a difficult time. Anybody with an appointment at the council building from Monday 30th March onwards should contact the relevant team if they haven't been in touch already.

Council Meetings and events

As a precaution, the following have been postponed:

All formal council meetings and committees have been cancelled until the end of April.

South and Vale Business Awards will now take place in the autumn.

The Police and Crime Commissioner Election has been postponed and will now take place in 2021.

Community sports activities for the over 60s that are part of our "Go Active Gold" programme and activities run for those with diabetes have been cancelled.

Waste collections

Most waste collections are running normally. Our waste contractor, Biffa, has suffered some staff shortages due to illness and self-isolation and so some bins might not be emptied on their usual collection day. Critical waste services are being prioritised, so we will not be taking on new customers for the Garden Waste Service until further notice

The advice for residents is as follows: if the bins in your street are not emptied, please leave them out for up to three days (including weekends) and we'll try to catch up. If still not emptied, bring them back in and we will empty them on the next planned collection day. We're also recommending residents wash their hands before and after taking the bins out to practice good hygiene for themselves and our bin crews.

If you have the virus or suspect you or someone in your household have it, please follow these guidelines from Public Health England about how to dispose of your waste: Personal waste (such as used tissues) and disposable cleaning cloths can be stored securely within disposable rubbish bags. These bags should be placed into another bag, tied securely and kept separate from other waste. This should be put aside for at least 72 hours before being put in your usual external household waste bin. Other household waste can be disposed of as normal.

Advice for businesses and job seekers

For the latest coronavirus advice for business owners, self-employed and job seekers, please see our South and Vale Business Support website <https://www.svbs.co.uk/coronavirus-guidance-and-support/>

Council tax

If you are having any difficulty paying your council tax for any reason, including if you have lost work or now have a reduced income, contact us as soon as possible on 0345 302 2313 or vowh.counciltax@secure.capita.co.uk

Parking charges suspended

All parking charges in our council-owned car parks are now suspended until 1st June 2020, to support key workers and those needing to shop for essential food and medical supplies. You do not need to display a ticket. For all enquiries please email carparks.southandvale.uk@sabagroup.com or call 01235 470118.

Leisure and community centres, parks and play areas, and The Beacon

All our leisure centres, community centres, children's play areas, sports and exercise areas, and The Beacon are now closed until further notice.

Taxi licensing

We cannot offer licensing appointments until further notice. For more information head to the webpage: www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/business/licensing/taxi-licences

Planning and building control

There is some disruption to our planning and building control services. Please

see our planning and building control pages for the latest information: www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/make-planning-application and www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/building-control-1

Charity Support

AGE Concern Oxfordshire has set up a new helpline to advise anyone worried about the Coronavirus. You can find out more by visiting their website <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire/about-us/news/coronavirus/>

SOFEA

The Didcot-based food charity SOFEA, has also announced that it is offering free food deliveries to vulnerable residents. They're looking for volunteers to help and have set up a Just Giving page for donations towards the service: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/sofeacommunitylarder>

Take care, stay safe, stay home!

We will endeavour to keep you updated on the council's response to the Coronavirus COVID-19 through future newsletters and our dedicated councillor Facebook Page: [Cllrs Hayleigh Gascoigne & Sarah Medley](#). Please do not hesitate to get in touch with any issues or concerns - our email addresses are hayleigh.gascoigne@whitehorsedc.gov.uk and sarah.medley@whitehorsedc.gov.uk.

Sarah and Hayleigh

County Council

Before I start this report I must applaud the work done by the volunteer groups working in the parishes, towns and cities throughout the County and beyond, who have sprung into action during this emergency to ensure the elderly and vulnerable are not alone and are receiving assistance when needed. All our volunteers are much deserving of our praise and appreciation and if you feel you can give even a small amount of support to your local volunteer group, please do so.

These are unprecedented times; we all need to take care and follow the latest Government advice. Staff at the County Council are working flat out as we cannot simply close down or ask everybody to work from home, we are there to support and protect Oxfordshire's residents particularly the vulnerable. We are prioritising our work and where possible staff are working from home. There are some areas that will see an increase in demand at a time when some of our staff will become ill with the virus. There will be some changes as we have to prioritise our work to key areas.

The main area of work in Social Care both adult and children's has to continue on a 24/7 basis protecting around 7,000 residents. We expect the number of people requiring care to increase as informal carers become ill and are unable to continue care. This work is vital as it's important we keep as many people as possible out of hospital.

We are working closely with the NHS to provide care and facilities for those patients that do not require acute care to be cared for away from hospitals

or at home freeing up beds for those that most need them. This includes the group that we need to shield from the virus who are thought to be most at risk across the county.

The Government are shielding the extremely vulnerable approx. 1.5 million across the country full details can be found on the website: Extremely vulnerable.

Currently those people identified by the NHS as extremely vulnerable will be contacted by the NHS by letter, email, text or all 3 to say that they need to isolate themselves at home for the next 12 weeks. They will be asked if they have any help to collect prescriptions and food, this may be supplied by one of the brilliant local groups that have been set up. If they don't have any help then they will be told to contact the council who will arrange a contact which again may come from one of the local groups. As you will see from the document these are certain groups within the population but there may be others that need help such as those in self-isolation which is where all the volunteers will help. If somebody thinks they should be on the list and haven't been contacted by Sunday 29th March, then they should contact their GP or hospital clinician.

To assist in the logistics across the country there are Local Resilience Forums, we are in the Thames Valley Based around the Police authority area. These are where the blue light services link in with the NHS and local authorities to consider the high-level strategy. These then delegate down to the County to work with WODC and other Districts to coordinate the local hubs. The Government have seconded military planners to assist in the hubs which is where all the local community groups come into the local networks. This is about all working together to ensure that we do not duplicate provision or even worse miss a vulnerable resident.

The organic growth of the community networks or hubs that we are seeing being set up is fantastic. These groups are providing some excellent services to local residents who are self-isolating or do not have relatives locally. It's important that they are community led but we need to avoid duplication, so the County Council and Districts are working with Oxfordshire Volunteers to list them all and provide support where needed.

If you are approached by people wishing to volunteer, they can register at: <https://oxonvolunteers.org/vk/volunteers/index.htm>

Unfortunately, there are some cases of people taking advantage of the vulnerable residents so Trading Standards are working with the Police monitoring the situation and will take action should there be a need. Should you be aware of anything please do not hesitate to contact me.

This is a very fast-moving situation so please use the OCC, NHS and Government websites for the latest information.

I would like to say a big thank you to all the residents who continue to work to help us get through this difficult time. Above all please take care, stay safe and follow the advice. **Together we will beat this!**

County Councillor Mike Fox-Davies

Upton 50 Club

Prize Winners in the March draw were as follows:-

1st	£25	No.76	Tony Durbin
2nd	£20	No.94	Katherine Langley
3rd	£15	No.172	Judy Robertson
4th	£10	No.105	Frances Burrows

Congratulations to all the winners

Please accept our apologies that during this time we won't be able to deliver winnings direct to you. This also applies for a few January and February winners who weren't in to receive their prizes when I called. We will of course deliver them as soon as Government guidance indicates it is safe to do so. In the meantime if anyone wishes to receive their prize via bank transfer please contact me at jacqui.reid@hotmail.co.uk or on 07973818171.

The end of March represents the end of an Upton 50 Club year with a new one due to start in April. However again due to the current situation, with our volunteers not being able to go door to door to collect subscriptions, we are going to suspend the start of the Upton 50 Club until further notice. Hopefully this will not be long as this remains a vital funding source for the Village Hall. If you have already paid your new subscription on line we will simply hold it until the we resume the Upton 50 Club. Alternatively if you would like a refund please contact me as above.

Jacqui Reid

Upton Village Hall

It will come as no surprise to villagers that last week, following Government guidance, Upton Village Hall has had to temporarily suspend any hire of the hall. Obviously we hope that this will not be for too long, however as with any kind of community facility we will keep following the guidelines and regularly review the situation.

We have been proactively contacting people who have booked the hall for events until the end of April for now and offering to move dates to later on in the year or offer a refund. We will then look at May bookings if this situation appears to be likely to continue into that month.

Obviously all regular weekly events such as Yoga, Brownies, Dog Training, Art Club, Kinetic Gymnastics, the Drop-In and Karate are all suspended until further notice.

If you have any queries please email bookings@uptonvillagehall.co.uk

Thank you.

UVHAT Trustees

Rector's Note



Your Churches, Our Communities

It will hardly be a surprise. This month, I'm going to write about the Coronavirus, and what it will mean for the life and work of your churches in our communities.

Churches exist to serve others. How are we going to serve our communities in the months ahead?

To start with, we are focussing on safety. We are endeavouring to ensure that all that we do is done as safely as possible. To this end, we are following the specific guidance provided by the Diocese of Oxford and

national government. In accordance with the current guidance, all midweek and Sunday services have been cancelled until further notice. We will be looking to see how we might be able to provide opportunities to worship online. The clergy will be continuing their work in the parishes, provided of course that it is safe to do so; and I should add that the clergy will self-isolate, should this become advisable or necessary.

Secondly, service. Jesus teaches us that we should seek to serve others. Our churches will continue to seek to serve our local communities, to the best of our abilities, and working in partnership with others. Do be in touch if you think we might be able to help in any way.

Finally, there is spirituality. Whether you do Christianity or not, whether you would consider yourself "religious" or not, we are all living through difficult and unsettling times. Everyone's circumstances will be different. Some will be worried about their own health or the health of a family member. Some will be worried about the financial implications of the virus. Some will be worried about the social and mental health implications of self-isolation. The Christian faith has rich resources to help us to face the challenges of being human in a time of crisis. I will be sharing some of these resources in a short, daily Rector's Reflections, starting from Sunday 22nd March. Do get in touch if you would like to receive a copy, whether by email or hard copy.

The months ahead will be challenging indeed. But we shall get through them, supported by each other's prayers and acts of service.

Father Jason

Christian Aid Week (10th to 16th May)

Christian Aid have announced there will be no House to House Collections this year for obvious reasons. They have also told us they are considering inventive and creative ways of encouraging donations instead, but haven't been given any details yet. We will let the village know when they do.

Elisabeth and Malcolm Wright

Upton Parish Council and UVHAT Need Your Help

It has been wonderful to witness the village coming together during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly whilst we are in the “lock-down” phase. It is a great reminder why Upton is such a lovely place to live. From the great WhatsApp help group set up by Sarah Carter which is helping get supplies and prescriptions to those who are vulnerable or can’t get out to the wonderful applause from doorsteps in thanks for NHS and health workers who continuing to work so hard, some of course who live in the village.

Following a meeting between Upton Parish Council and UVHAT (Upton Village Hall Amenities Trust) we wondered if there is more we can do in the future as we move through different phases which might be useful to villagers. For example a food bank, a session from experts on how to navigate Government financial support you may require, setting up a temporary crèche facility in the hall to help mums and dads. Obviously anything we come up with will have to work in line with Government guidance at that time however I think we all recognise it will take the country some time to get back to a “new normal”.

So if you are interested in joining a small steering group to brainstorm some ideas which we can then get the village’s view on what may or may not be useful please contact Jacqui.reid@hotmail.co.uk and she will set up a conference call.

Thank you.

Upton Parish Council and UVHAT Trustees

Theatre Group

I haven’t heard from the Playhouse that “A Load of Amateurs” is off , but it may well be cancelled in due course. Meanwhile if any optimist would like to reserve a seat I have 3 more stalls seats available at £28.50 each. I have to pay up by the end of April, and you may well have noticed I haven’t cashed your cheque yet. If it is cancelled, I will of course return your cheque or your cash.

Malcolm Wright 850705

Astons Online

The volunteer team now provides free IT advice to computer users in our local communities remotely instead of in the Astons Village Hall. Due to unprecedented demand in the Covid19 crisis we are asking you to request help by email to theastonsonline@gmail.com or, if this is impossible, by phone to 07780958249

When you contact us, please tell us about your specific issues in order to match you with the right helper and how you would like to be contacted, with phone numbers and email addresses in order to give us more options if we need them.

Special Services During Self-Isolation

I am aware there are local companies who are offering special services to the residents of Upton who are currently in self-isolation. I am hoping over the next few weeks many of these companies will get in touch with me such that this list is at least a full page by next month. So far I have heard from just two such companies:

Savages are taking orders for fruit and veg boxes (cost £10 up to £30) but unfortunately nothing specific due to availability. They are able to deliver to Upton at a cost of £3.95 but their delivery services are in high demand so there is at least a weeks delay, alternatively you can collect next day from the shop in Blewbury.

They are asking customers to please order only by phone on 01235 850352 please note that they cannot accept any orders left on voice message you need to speak to a member of their team. Apologies but there may be a delay in getting through.

LJD Bell Plumbing & Heating Services are offering an emergency repair service and will follow the contact guidelines as set down by the government
Mobile: 07555100848 Email: ljd-bell-plumbing-heating@outlook.com

Waste Facility

Please be aware that the Household Waste Recycling Centre at Drayton will be closing for two days to carry out a deep clean and essential maintenance on April 28th and 29th.

Didcot U3A

It is with much regret that, during the ongoing and unfolding concerns of COVID-19 throughout the UK, the Didcot & District U3A in conjunction with current government directives, has had to postpone the Monthly Meetings, Interest Groups and planned trips until further notice. Once the situation recovers and the government instructions advise 'normal service can be resumed' details will be distributed at the earliest opportunity.

Submissions for *Upton News* should be sent to
kameki39@btinternet.com
Deadline for the May edition is
Sunday 25th April