

## **Lighthorne Parish Council 8<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

### **County Councillor's Report**

Now that we are in September and many people have taken the opportunity to enjoy the hot summer that we have had but unfortunately after nearly six months of trying to live with the Coronavirus the number of cases across the district is starting to rise again so we must continue to take extra care.

#### **Covid-19 Update**

Across Warwickshire, the Public Health team are responding to an increasing number of single cases in workplace or other settings, as well as outbreaks where they occur.

Warwickshire went live on a 'backward contact tracing' project in Nuneaton and Bedworth, whereby officers speak to people with positive test results to track backwards through their movements to look for potential infection points. This is to expand to other areas in the County.

This should provide a different avenue for exploring infection patterns than the national contact tracing model, which focuses on who a person

with a positive test result might have infected. Learning from these pieces of work will be shared across Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire and with the national programme to inform good practice development.

The prospect of pupils returning to schools this week has prompted recent widespread interest in how test and trace links to education. Work is very well established with schools, and local teams have been working with them to manage positive tests and outbreaks right throughout the lockdown period, as well as advising on aspects of school risk assessments. No new work has been needed to be put in place to prepare for the reopening of schools, but WCC will increase targeted messaging to address some of the questions being raised.

#### **Unitary Authority**

Some of you might have heard that Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council have had discussions to propose a merger in the interests of financial stability. These discussions were in advance of the expected government white paper on devolution which is expected to be published in early October. Warwickshire County Council's Cabinet have already debated this prospect of devolution in advance of a full Council meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020 where the matter will be publicly debated.

The merging of district and county councils in a mid-sized county area could save £126 million for that council over five years. Across England most places operate under a two-tier system, with County Councils and District Councils both providing services to residents. County Councils are responsible for services such as education, transport and waste disposal, while District Councils are responsible for more localised services, such as leisure centres and rubbish collection.

It is thought that there may be significant economic benefit to local councils if they replace their two-tier system with a unitary authority. As far as Warwickshire is concerned even though the Cabinet supported the proposal for evaluating the project, consultation will take time to be carried out.

The consequences of Coronavirus for local government finances and the need to work quickly to support the economic recovery, means more councils want to look again at how local government is structured in their area. This government has already signalled that it wants to see many more unitary councils created and it is important that we get it right for our residents – we do not want to look back on this period as a missed opportunity.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Round of Community Grants**

The second round of the County Councillor's Grant Fund is available for applications. I have already allocated £2,000 of my original annual fund of £6,000 helping with Covid-19 issues. I now have some £4,000 to be shared between around 12 Parish Councils for any project which would help your local community especially where individuals' health and well-being can be improved. Money should not be considered as a bonus towards operating costs of the Parish Council but more for how any local groups would benefit from this award. No application should be for more than £400.

Any organisation or group wishing to apply to the Councillors' Grant Fund can do so online and the deadline for applications for the second round of funding is 5pm on Sunday 27th September. To find out more and apply go to [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/grants](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/grants) . If help is needed please contact Amanda Wilson-Patterson on 07926 413642.

**Cllr Chris Williams**  
**Member for Kineton and Red Horse Division**  
**06.09.2020**