

Ladies & Gentlemen,

The Leaders of all the Political Parties want to show our sincere appreciation to you all for the huge efforts that you have put into keeping the Council functioning during these troubled times.

As we are now in the second period of “Lockdown” it seems a good time to reflect on how we, as a Council, have adjusted and to thank our staff for the tremendous efforts they have made under very difficult circumstances.

Covid-19 has had an unprecedented impact on this country and of course the residents of Waverley. Whilst there is a cross-party Administration (being a cooperative partnership between the Farnham Residents, the Liberal Democrats, the Green Party, the Labour Party and Independent Councillors) during this unforeseen and unpredictable national crisis it is pleasing that the Conservative Opposition have temporarily joined forces with us to form a wholly non-political approach so that the whole Council is united with our hard-working officers to focus on delivering our core objective of supporting our community and mitigating, as far as we are able, the effects of this deadly virus.

As your elected Borough Councillors, we are indebted to all Waverley employees and contractors (including, for example, the dedicated teams of individuals collecting our bins), who have gone the extra mile in these challenging circumstances, working long hours and taking on unfamiliar roles in different surroundings to maintain the Council’s key priorities. As a result of their dedication Waverley Borough Council has been able to:-

- maintain essential services in the face of a reduction in staffing due to the virus and other constraints arising from the pandemic;
- take steps to protect and support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our community, working closely in partnership with other public and private sector bodies and the voluntary sector;
- communicate to individuals and local businesses how they can get help if they are affected directly or indirectly as a result of the pandemic;

Since the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) declared a Major Incident, the staff of Waverley Borough Council have:-

- Dealt with a 5-fold increase in support claims and directed numerous people to Universal Credit;
- Maintained the frequency of the Household Refuse, Green Waste, Food & Recycling collections;
- In conjunction with Guildford introduced a bulk waste collection service;
- Contacted over 1,200 of our vulnerable tenants and initiated regular contact with those in our Social Housing;
- Kept our Parks open (but closed their car parks to discourage long-distance travel);
- Massively increased our phone line capacity to deal with increased calls and accommodate remote working;
- Introduced remote systems for meetings of the Council and its Committees;
- Continued to deal with planning applications using a remote streamlined working system;
- Received and processed over 1,000 calls for help from concerned residents;

- Found accommodation for 14 Rough Sleepers and prevented another 80 Households from becoming homeless;
- Introduced daily phone calls and weekly visits to those in our Senior Living Schemes;
- Assisted *Voluntary Action for South West Surrey* by taking over many of their calls;
- Delivered almost 3,600 meals via our Community Meals Services (1,000 meals in one week) to those in need;
- Contacted and assisted over 2,200 residents on the public '*shielded*' or vulnerable lists;
- Set up a *Stay-at-Home Service* to inform residents of available contactless delivery services;
- Re-billed 1,500 local businesses giving them £20 million relief from their Business rates;
- Scrutinized 1,450 applications for Small Business Grants and paid out over £18 Million;
- Continued to chase the extra 800-odd small businesses which we think may be eligible for Grants;
- Processed council tax support for almost 2,400 households via the Government's Hardship Fund;

We have worked closely with and also commend the excellent efforts of local Town and Parish Councils, who have been working so effectively at the level of local communities across Waverley. All of our resources are limited and so we have had to re-deploy many of them to the highest priorities and we are grateful to our residents for their patience and understanding.

We applaud (**every day**) the work of our local NHS and Care Sector workers who continue to face the most challenging circumstances as a result of the spread of the virus and the volume of hospital admissions, hampered by the shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE); their dedication and bravery is an example to us all.

We believe that the officers of Waverley Borough Council have, as outlined above, responded magnificently to this crisis, being an exemplar of how Local Government has served the community during this period. Let us hope that a ray of light is appearing so that soon we can together build a better Waverley for our residents.

Signatories:

Waverley Borough Council Group Leaders

Cllr John Ward

Leader of Farnham Residents Group

Leader, Waverley BC

Cllr Steve Williams

Leader of the Green Party Group
Executive Member, Waverley BC

Cllr Julia Potts

Leader of the Conservative Group
Leader of the Opposition, Waverley BC

Cllr Paul Follows

Leader of Liberal Democrat Group
Deputy Leader, Waverley BC

Cllr Nick Palmer

Leader of the Labour Party Group
Executive Member, Waverley BC