

Mayor of Chichester: Councillor Richard Plowman

An open letter from the Mayor – 21st September 2020

I hope you were not one of those people whose holiday was ruined by the Government's hokey-cokey advice on travelling and self-isolating. I know many had been looking forward to a break after enduring so much during the pandemic.

Having some relaxation, sunshine, rest and fresh air is going to be even more important. We all need to be in good shape for this winter, as the most recent infection figures suggest that the feared second wave may be on its way. Now we have the 'rule of six', which differs in England, Wales and Scotland. No wonder we are confused. Mum and Dad with three kids can't meet up with their grandparents – that doesn't seem right.

The senior microbiologist at St Richard's gave me the best advice: stay away from crowds indoors and avoid any close contact with anyone else for more than 15 minutes. Such situations can deliver a high dosage of virus and the greatest risk of infection.

The other advice I was given was to do outside your home only what you have to do, and what you feel comfortable with. I am not sure that applied to my visit to the dentist, but it was interesting to see how well they had coped with Covid-19 restrictions, even if it meant them going back to earlier dental techniques. I did glance at the door handle to see if there was a piece of string, ready for a quick extraction. But everything was fine. One good result from the pandemic is the ingenuity shown in surmounting problems.

Without an end in sight, I am sure we are all finding it difficult mentally. As I watched the consistently depressing news, a poem sprang into my mind. It can be found at the end of this letter and might resonate with you.

On a more positive note, we in Chichester are so much better prepared for a possible second wave: not only the NHS and the excellent St Richard's Hospital, and the local authorities, but also the wonderful voluntary organisations. The ending of furlough, increased unemployment and the loss of eviction protection will surely see a big increase in those needing help. The Chichester Community Network, which I mentioned in earlier letters, has a number of initiatives to cope with both physical and mental-health issues. Also:

The Mayor's Hardship Fund (Telephone: **07740 621812**) has now helped many who, as a consequence of the virus, were left with nothing. More than 40 people in desperate circumstances have been given assistance and we believe that two, who felt they had nowhere else to turn, were saved from suicide.

Chichester Connects (Telephone: **07425 321860**) collects unwanted laptops, tablets and smartphones for refurbishment and gives them to those without access to the Internet, together with support on how to get started.

Chat Cafés (Telephone **01243 790077**) offer the chance for a coffee and conversation.

Twinned with Chartres, France and Ravenna, Italy

Open House at Chichester Boys' Club (Telephone **01243 779065**) will be available from 10.30am to 4pm each Wednesday from 7th October. Drop in for a free coffee and to meet up with friends.

COMING SOON: The Chichester Restaurant (Telephone **07740 621812**). In 1940 British Restaurant communal kitchens were created to help people who had been bombed out of their homes, had run out of ration coupons, or otherwise needed help. Eighty years on, once again many are struggling. So a similar service will be offered at the Boys' Club, and it is hoped that the WI and catering students from Chichester College will be brought on board. It should be up and running in a few weeks.

'Good morning Chichester' Cornflower stickers.



The cornflower has been the patron flower of Chichester and was worn during Gala days.



It is a symbol of hope and friendship.

In some ways the pandemic has brought the community together, but for many it has meant increasing isolation and loneliness. Masks and face-coverings have made it more difficult to recognise people and must keep our distance.

A cornflower sticker has been produced for the people of Chichester to show you are part of our community. It might encourage a simple good morning, a hello, a smile (with the eyes), or just a wave. There is also a special sticker for children. Shops and cafés will recognise you as a local, showing your support for them.

Sheets of stickers will be distributed through the residents' associations and promoted in the local press and social media.

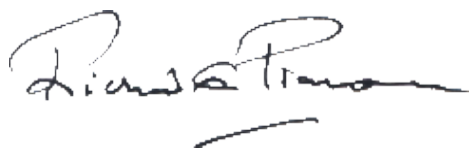
Christians Against Poverty (CAP) Helpline: 0800 328 0006.

For the many who have been left with debts by the pandemic, help is available from CAP. It gives advice and provides extra support in sorting out your finances. The video link is: <https://capuk.org/connect/more/video/413957480>.

Finally, a reminder that Covid-19 will eventually pass, as all pandemics do, and then we will have celebration party to end all parties. I promise.

Please stay safe, well and strong.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Richard Plowman
The Mayor of Chichester

Pandemic Poem

*Talk down
shut down
close down
lock down
break down
melt down
pour down
blown down
marked down
masked up.
Fed up.*

