



SUNNINGDALE PARISH COUNCIL

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Letter from the Chairman

Dear Sunningdale Residents

Let me start with compassion for all those families and friends who have been affected by the COVID-19 virus. We are in exceptional times with many of our neighbours still isolating at home or just emerging back into a different “outside” than the one they left in March this year. I sincerely hope that we can all keep our families, friends and neighbours safeguarded throughout the coming months.

As you may know, many Parish Councillors come into the role when they have retired from their careers and therefore are within the most vulnerable group amongst us. This is true for Sunningdale Parish Council, where more than half of our councillors have not been outside their homes other than for necessary shopping since March. This, in combination with the clear government advice received in late March, was the deciding factor for the suspension of council meetings until we were able to meet in a safe manner. The updated government advice in June allowing online meetings was carefully considered by the council and indeed may well be brought in for the meetings from August if face to face meetings cannot proceed.

The Parish Council, however, has continued to be busy throughout. The council team who would normally work from the office at the Recreation Ground, based themselves from home, taking the VOIP telephones home with them to provide a seamless service to our residents. During this period, they have answered many calls from concerned residents and either provided immediate solutions or directed them to the relevant support services provided by RBWM. Whilst working from home, the team has continued with the management of the cemetery; the allotments which have provided a great outlet for the 67 plot holders and their families and kept the Recreation Ground open for users of the field throughout.

One positive outcome of the enforced closure of the Playground, Teen Scene and Green Gym at the Recreation Ground has been the opportunity to carry out a refurbishment project with the result that all three are not only safe for re-opening, when that comes, but also in better condition than they have been for years. At the time of writing (10.7.20) we have yet to open the play areas, and although they may be open when you

read this I would like to take this opportunity to answer the question of why we are yet to re-open. The government advice received is quite extensive and clear on the expectations they have for the owners and operators of outside playgrounds to keep users safe: limited numbers through utilising either a booking system or active monitoring; regular cleaning; no food or drink; increased signage; only one parent per child group and one way system of users. An extensive risk assessment has been carried out and until the advice on being able to limit the numbers is relaxed, the decision remains to keep our playground areas closed for the safety of all our users. To illustrate our risk for limiting numbers, on the morning of July 4th there were 87 vehicles who visited our Recreation Ground wishing to enter the playground. Our risk assessment identifies no more than 15 family groups could access the main under 12s playground at one time.

With our tennis courts we had different restrictions. In compliance with government restrictions and LTA requirements, we were able to re-open the tennis courts on the 13th May, and they have been well utilised since. It has been very encouraging to see so many new faces at the park enjoying our refurbished courts and to see our coaches working once again with people of all ages getting enjoyment out of their tennis. We continue to monitor the usage; provide hand sanitiser; maintain our increase in cleaning, and will relax the rules and regulations as and when we receive further advice.

In January this year, the council became the managing trustee for the Charity which operates the Village Hall, and in April the Village Hall team came into Parish Council employment. The enforced closure of the Hall has given us the opportunity to bring forward some planned maintenance work and a 3-week refurbishment project, which would not be possible without significant disruption in normal circumstances. This work will be carried out in the summer holidays, once the Pre-School have completed their shortened term, and we are looking forward to welcoming back all hirers and users in September.

Planning within Sunningdale has continued to be high on the council's agenda throughout this period, with the Co-Chairman of the Planning Committee taking the lead in active reviews of the planning applications; gaining feedback from the members of the committee and residents alike; submitting comments to the Planning Authority at RBWM and writing letters of objection including considerable details on how certain proposed planning applications contravene the current Neighbourhood, Borough and National Plans. If you wish to see any of the planning comments or letters submitted, please look at the Planning page on the council website.

Due process of council has continued with the annual accounts and internal audits taking place remotely. The 2019 2020 AGAR (Annual Governance and Accountability Return) is approved by the Auditor, includes the externally verified accounting figures and is ready for approval by the council at the council meeting on the 18th August.

The month of May saw our village looking a little wild and overgrown. The team contracted by RBWM to maintain the verges and green areas around the village were

struggling with personnel issues due to COVID-19 and so the Parish Council park team, in co-ordination with RBWM, headed out to provide an interim service. This was greatly received by many residents walking around the village. I am pleased to say that RBWM has now resumed its normal schedule.

As in previous years, the month of May saw the renewal of the Bloom baskets around the village centre. The baskets are now in full bloom and the council has received many positive comments on their ability to brighten the village.

Looking forward, the Parish Council team of elected members and employees will continue to deliver day to day service remotely until it is safe to do otherwise. Our plans to hold our August council meeting – either by Zoom or face to face in a larger hall – will then extend to our planning committee meetings and other committees. Please be assured that any decisions on where and how to hold meetings will be taken in conjunction with all current government advice on social and other gatherings.

Our council team are planning to return to the council office from September and currently working on plans to re-open our community room to hirers from then. When possible, we will once again receive visitors to our offices, but the plan initially from September is for visits by appointment only.

I appreciate this has been a different and sometimes difficult period for many of us. We are always pleased to hear feedback from our residents, positive or otherwise, so please feel free to get in touch.

Keep safe and well.

Anne-Catherine Buxton
Chairman of Sunningdale Parish Council

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