DORCHESTER PARISH COUNCIL 8thJULY 2020.

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR’S REPORT robin.bennett@southoxon.gov.uk

**Playgrounds and outdoor gyms advice**

The government has just published this [guidance and practical advice](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-playgrounds-and-outdoor-gyms/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-playgrounds-and-outdoor-gyms) on how outdoor gym and playgrounds can be reopened and managed effectively to enable their use while minimising risk of transmitting COVID-19.

We are currently considering how and if we can re-open each of our own play areas safely, including any new signage we may need to put in place.  Where we can re-open a play area, we will encourage people to wash their hands before and after they visit, maintain social distancing, and to come back at a quieter time if the area looks busy.

We will only re-open play areas when we have done our safety checks and put clear signage in place.  We continue to urge people not to use any play area equipment or enter play areas that are out of use or closed off.

**Leisure centres update**

 As things stand, indoor gyms and swimming pools must remain closed and we are still waiting for the government to confirm the timetable for them to reopen.  In the meantime, we are continuing to work on potential reopening plans to ensure we are ready once we’ve been given the go-ahead.

**New signage**

Over the coming days we will be placing new signs around our public toilets to remind people to maintain social distancing and to wash their hands.  Our 'Stay Safe, Give Space' message will also be stencilled at key locations in our car parks, parks and mobile home parks.

**Shielding guidance relaxed**

You may have seen the government is relaxing the guidance for residents who are currently shielding from today (Monday 6 July).

We want all of our shielding residents to be aware that even after the guidance has been relaxed, we’re still available to provide support and advice – they can continue to call 01235 422600 or email communitysupport@southandvale.gov.uk.  Lines are open 9am to 6pm Monday to Saturday.

If you weren’t aware – the changes that come into place on 6 July state that people who are shielding:

* can meet in a group of up to 6 people outdoors, including people from different households, while maintaining strict social distancing
* no longer need to observe social distancing with other members of their household
* can form a ‘support bubble’ with one other household – all those in a support bubble will be able to spend time together inside each other’s homes, including overnight, without needing to socially distance.

You can find the full details about how shielding arrangements are changing on [the government’s website](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19).

**Virtual meetings update**

We are currently testing a system to allow you, the general public and other organisations to take part directly in our online committee meetings.

The meetings are currently working well, and many town and parish councils and members of the public have contributed by providing a written statement, although

officers hope to have the new system up and running very soon.

Cabinet takes place online this Thursday (9th July) followed by full council on 16th July. All meetings can be streamed via meeting links on the SODC website.

The Examination in Public of the Local Plan is also due to be streamed live, starting on 14th July. Berinsfield issues are due to be discussed at 2pm on 30th July.

**New Thames Champion for South Oxfordshire**

Cllr Jo Robb, ward councillor for Woodcote and Rotherfield, is taking on the newly created role of Thames Champion.  The River Thames is one of our most precious natural assets and Cllr Robb will be networking with river users, councillors and neighbouring councils to improve access to the river, and to protect and enhance its biodiversity and cleanliness.

**Open for Business**

Through our various social media profiles, following work from SODC licensing, environmental health and business support teamns, we’re helping to spread the word that town centres, shops and businesses are now open, and how shoppers can get involved while – importantly – staying safe. We’re joining the national social media campaign #OpenForBusiness to show the extra hard work staff in the shops and parishes have put in to reopen and protect their customers and staff.

Local shops and businesses can join in using the hashtags #OpenForBusiness #ShopLocalStaySafe and tagging @southoxon.

We’ll retweet or share your post to help spread the word that the shop has opened and is ready for customers.