

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

NEWSLETTER FROM KEN GULATI 22.5.20

COVID 19

The current estimate of the cost to Surrey CC of the pandemic is £68m of which the government has so far funded £46m. In the absence of further help from government there will be an effect upon the current year's finances despite having set a balanced budget in March . Accordingly the Council are proposing in the early autumn to look again at the budget, the strategies, priorities and purposes with a view to rebalancing for the year.

Locally the epidemic appears to have passed its peak. In Surrey the PHE estimates that we have had 2647 cases to date, over 261 in care homes. No new cases were reported in Surrey for the 24 hours 20-21 May. We have 27,000 " shielded" residents of whom 24,500 have been contacted. We have distributed 3.5 million PPE items and 2000 tests have been carried out including 521 in care homes. Adult social care providers in Surrey are receiving grants from SCC of £10m

Headley Court is open and functioning as a step up and step down facility staffed from Epsom District Hospital and there are hopes that it can be retained as a medical facility in the longer run. There are 300 beds available there. The project progressed from planning to opening in 35 days - one more example of how much more efficiently emergencies can be dealt with when they were managed on a local basis.

Do make a note of the helpline number which is 0300 200 1008

County Hall.

The property in Woking which was under discussion to become the new County Hall with the Borough Council was unable to proceed as a result of internal difficulties of the seller. The current emergency, in the meantime, has led to an acceleration of the policy of home working by staff which was underway as part of the transformation programme already. This, as well as government proposals for local government reorganisation (see below,) make it clear that the new Surrey Heart will need to be a very different building from that which was anticipated only a short time ago and the location in doubt. The search will therefore be temporarily paused which will lead to some delay beyond the projected moving date of the end of 2020.

Local government reorganisation.

The government has announced their intention to restructure local government. Serious consideration is to be given to the formation of unitary authorities throughout the country. A white

paper is to be produced in September and legislation may be in place very quickly after that. We do not know whether Surrey County Council as a single unit will continue to exist or whether there will be two authorities for Surrey . If there are two authorities we do not know whether the division will be North and South or East and West .

Community Investment Fund

Surrey has announced a fund of £500,000 (and likely to be renewed annually for a number of years) to be available to fund groups needing between £10,000 and £30,000 to complete a capital project of benefit to the community. Matched funding will be encouraged. The machinery and criteria for grants is currently under consideration and further information is awaited in due course. I am a member of the working group responsible. For further information please see

www.surreycc.gov.uk/communityimprovements

Keep well and keep your distance.