

Report for Parish council – Cllr Margaret Dewsbury (Norfolk County Council)

We are living in unprecedented times. In the past we have been able to see and understand our emergencies eg. Snowed in, flooded, electricity cuts, and have been able to dig our way out, go and get sand bags or get the generator going and heat water to fill flasks so people could have hot drinks to keep them warm.

With this Coronavirus we do not know if it is around our villages or not, we have many residents who are vulnerable due to their age, medical condition or family circumstances and the usual pool of local volunteers is different because people who would normally help out in these circumstances have had to self isolate for a variety of reasons.

Having said that, although large numbers of volunteers have come forward across the country there does not seem to be a great demand for their help in local villages. Local people and communities seem to be fairly self-sufficient and are looking after each other, whilst still 'keeping their distance'.

In Norfolk we have two main groups co-ordinating the support work. Gold Command co-ordinated by a senior NCC officer, Tom McCabe, and Silver Command co-ordinated by Chief Police Officer, Simon Bailey. They are co-ordinating staff and volunteers to support residents by:

- 1, moving bulk supplies, delivering food, Personal protection Equipment, etc,
- 2, assisting NHS in clearing wards and moving patients to safer venues to make way for Coronavirus victims, preparing buildings for possible overflow from Coronavirus wards and setting up mortuary space.
- 3, supporting schools who are opening for children of key workers but also providing homework and activities to keep children who are locked down at home occupied and supplying 'school meals' to those who need it.

Many staff whose roles have ceased for the time being have been redeployed helping customer services to answer phones (some days we have had 800 calls) assisting social workers, helping wherever demand is increasing.

Libraries, museums, theatres and individuals are streaming all sorts of entertainment and activities to try to keep children and adults occupied and active and provide distractions from anxiety, stress and loneliness. Adult Learning, previously Adult Education, is currently offering over 100 different courses on line with support from tutors. Courses range from vocational and qualification to hobbies, learning new skills and IT/technology. Some courses are free whilst others offer free taster sessions.

Norfolk County Council Cabinet meets electronically every week plus each member is in touch with their services to help in any way possible.

What a difference from the previous year or even the previous month.