

## Cllr Kim Forward Weekly Vlog Script 30.10.20

Hi, it's Kim here, with this week's update from Hastings Borough Council.

We are still living with the threat of the coronavirus and are having to be very resourceful as we make our way through this pandemic with no end in sight. I believe there are many opportunities that have been missed by this government that may have limited the spread of COVID-19 and am saddened to see the death rate rising across our country.

Our best defence remains the same maintain social distancing, wear a face covering and wash our hands regularly: Space, Face, Hands. Please continue to do this to protect each other and our town.

The borough's Act of Remembrance on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> November will be marked by the laying of wreaths at the war memorial in Alexandra Park by 30 invited participants (or fewer if further restrictions dictate) including the mayor and representatives of the Royal British Legion, serving military personnel, cadet groups, and the emergency services.

Other groups and organisations may lay wreaths at the war memorial from Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> November if they wish to.

There will be no parade or formal service, because of the restrictions in place and, should you wish to, the council is encouraging everyone to 'remember from home.'

Tomorrow is Halloween, and we want to take the opportunity to emphasise the importance of continuing to follow COVID-19 guidelines. We join Sussex Police and the NHS in encouraging you to celebrate from home this year.

If you are celebrating on November 5<sup>th</sup>, Bonfire Night please stay safe and follow COVID-19 and firework safety guidelines. East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service have some great advice which you can find on their website and on their social media channels.

Even before the coronavirus hit us child poverty was a big issue in Hastings, with 2018/19 data showing around 25% of children living in low income families, much higher than the rest of East Sussex, the South East and the country.

So, as the half term holidays approached, many of us were concerned that the most vulnerable children in our community could go hungry following the government's decision not to continue to provide free school meals during the half term holiday.

I have asked our MP who voted against supporting the poorest children in her constituency, to reconsider her position and to lobby her government to ensure that the provision of free school meals continues through school holidays.

The leader of East Sussex County Council would not agree to follow the lead of other upper tier councils (responsible for Children's Services) and issue free school meals vouchers through this holiday.

However, the care and kindness that people in our town continue to show towards each other has again become evident in the outpouring of support for those families living in poverty whose children were at risk of being hungry.

Local businesses, many of whom have been battling to keep going and are in financial difficulty themselves, came forward and offered a range of food to our town's children and our local voluntary organisations and charities continue their wonderful support and again stepped up to this challenge.

We also know that some of our schools paid for the vouchers from their own over stretched budgets.

At the council we are working the Education Futures Trust to help as well, and emergency food parcels were being collected as soon as we announced the scheme on Monday.

These are our children, our collective responsibility and when the government did not acknowledge their distress, our town came together to support and nourish them. Moving forward we must continue to do all we can to work together to eradicate child poverty which affects every aspect of a child's life and their prospects for the future.

At a recent council meeting a motion was passed (with conservative councillors voting against) committing us to developing a refreshed Equalities Charter and restating our position as a City of Sanctuary.

It was with great sadness and shame that we learnt earlier in the week of the heart-breaking news of more people losing their lives, including little children, while travelling across the sea to seek refuge in our country. With humanity and

compassion we must find a way to protect people who are driven by such desperation that they are willing to risk their lives in such a way.

Until next week please let's continue to show kindness and care towards others.