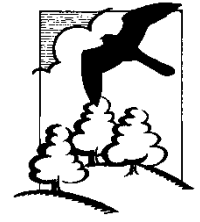


Hello!



Following on from my words of encouragement last month for you to stand in the Parish Council elections, it looks like there won't be an election until next year, which gives you plenty of time to think about it.

I imagine all of us are wondering what the impact of the coronavirus will be and worrying about our friends and families. None of us knows what will happen, but I can be pretty certain that any advice I could write now would be out of date by the time you read this. As a Parish Council, we are constantly reviewing the situation so that we are in the best possible position to help. We have a link on the Parish Council website to the latest government guidance. This guidance is being updated daily. In such a rapidly changing situation, all I can do is urge you is to do your best to keep yourselves and each other safe.

KEEP INFORMED - Please watch out for incorrect information and scams. Use trustworthy sources to get your information such as the guidance on the government and NHS websites, and the television news. As I write this, the government has just announced it will be running public information adverts. If you want a different perspective, you could try the World Health Organisation (www.who.int).

STAY SAFE - We know that coronavirus is more serious for people over the age of 60 or with pre-existing health conditions. That is about a third of our village. We all need to do our best to look after ourselves and each other in order to minimise the impact. Advice is changing all the time, but the one thing that seems to be consistent over time and across the world is the importance of washing our hands thoroughly (for 20 seconds) and frequently. There are plenty of videos online showing how to do this. We probably all think we know how to wash our hands, but it can't hurt to spend a few moments watching a video.

LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER - Over the past few days, I've seen some really thoughtful posts on Facebook and Nextdoor about looking after vulnerable neighbours. We absolutely do need to look out for each other. But, crucially, we need to make sure we are following the most up-to-date advice on how to do this so that we do not inadvertently spread the infection. The guidance I have read has focused on the importance of using phone and social media rather than face-to-face contact. Perhaps, the best thing we can do is make sure that we have phone numbers for our neighbours, especially those that do not use social media, so we can check up on each other.

Be kind to each other and stay safe.

Clare Escombe
Chairman, Hawkhurst Parish Council
March 2020