

The Riverporter

On-line Issue 5: 29 May 2020

A TOTALLY INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER • UNCONNECTED WITH ANY GROUP OR ORGANISATION

Election date to be set later

Following the resignation of Brian Luter as a Town Councillor, which we reported a fortnight ago, today is the deadline for people to request an election for the vacancy.

Ten (10) requests from South Ward voters are needed to be sent to the Returning Officer at Huntingdonshire District Council by this Friday for an election to be held in May next year, which is likely to be at the same time as elections for county councillors.

If less than ten letters are received in time, then the Town Council will be able to co-opt someone to fill the vacancy straight away.

STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS

The Riverporter understands that an election will be called as ten letters have been received by HDC. The Coronavirus Act 2020 has postponed all polls until Thursday 6 May 2021 and the date of the election will not be fixed until the public health situation becomes clearer.

Is Huntingdonshire a hotspot?

This week local social media reported the following statement from HDC.

'The overall admission rates at Hinchingbrooke Hospital related to Covid-19 are not declining at the rate we would, at this stage, expect and there are some hotspots emerging from patients with symptoms who are presenting at primary care (largely GPs and community pharmacies). These concentrations are found in Huntingdon, St Neots and Sawtry.'

The message also re-inforced these measures, namely:

- Stay at home as much as possible
- Work from home if you can
- Limit contact with other people
- Keep your distance if you have to go out – (2 metres apart where possible)
- Wash your hands regularly
- Do not leave home if you, or anyone within your household, have symptoms.

There was some concern whether this was a genuine report but Dr Nik Johnson a District Councillor and Hinchingbrooke Hospital Consultant suggested it was, although he was unaware of the hotspot information.

The Riverporter tried contacting HDC and the Hunts Forum to establish details about the hotspots, but neither organisation returned our call and the receptionist at HDC couldn't find who had issued the statement.

Local TV highlights the issue

A BBC East broadcast on Thursday evening also reported the issue and quoted the letter as having been sent by HDC Managing Director, Jo Lancaster. The headline suggested that Huntingdonshire could be a pandemic hotspot.

The piece went on to say that the issue was about the number of people contacting local surgeries with virus symptoms. It said that these were not necessarily people with the virus and it was not a rise in actual cases.

Figures suggest that the number of virus admissions at Hinchingbrooke had plateaued and weren't declining as expected. We were concerned that such a blanket statement might put people off coming to Huntingdonshire just as businesses are about to reopen.

Will shoppers avoid going to Huntingdon, St Neots or Sawtry resulting in the spreading of the virus as people travel to other destinations further away. Will St Ives benefit?



Corona Crafts

The Riverporter has received some examples of our Covid 19

Lockdown Challenge, showing just how artistic and inventive people have been over the past 9 weeks.

It's not too late to send us a picture of anything you may have created during lockdown and hopefully we will have enough to arrange a small exhibition of the entries for our Town Mayor to pick a winner who will receive *The Riverporter* Trophy to mark their achievement.

Top: Sandra's crocheted 'Poldark' blanket. Although originally started a couple of years ago, lockdown has prompted Sandra to finish it.

Above right: A unicorn head made from card stock sent in by Sam. Below: A paper mache swan by Sue. We're not sure if it fooled the real swans!

See more examples on page 2.



Left:
One of the wittier comments found on social media about the Dominic Cummings incident.

The slow march back into life

As the restrictions for traders slowly relax *The Riverporter* thought we'd take a look at the preparations some of our local shops and businesses are making for the great reopening which is likely to be on 15th June.

One thing for sure is that for the foreseeable future some things may never be the same. Even with a total relaxation of trade the need for social distancing could be with us for years. So, for a small restaurant to be restricted on the number of diners at any one time could well mean that they can no longer turn over enough money to pay staff. We may be entering a period where entrepreneurial spirit may be required for businesses to go forward. We spoke today with Joanna from the Zzohanna Indian restaurant, which is very highly regarded for the quality of their food. They are rearranging their layout to open a second entrance to allow a single file pass-through for takeaways.

Dean, the owner of Oana's in Bridge Street (top left) has taken advantage of the good weather, and more people out and about, to do a good trade in ice creams and shakes served at the door. He has installed screens to protect staff and is looking forward to getting things going as the past 10 weeks have been very difficult. However he remains full of ideas going forward.

Corrine at La Muse is preparing to open on 15th June and has said that she will be following the government guidance. This will mean only one sales person in the shop and a maximum of two customers at a time. Facemasks and hand gel will be available and screens to protect the server. Corrine is not sure yet whether items can be tried on in the shop or will have to be purchased on a sale or return basis. It seems that any clothing returned or handled will be kept aside for 72 hours and steam cleaned before being put out for sale again to ensure any virus will have gone. Despite the obvious difficulties for future trading Corrine is keen to reopen.

Can councils get on board?

Elsewhere we see stores and restaurants preparing themselves by getting repairs and paintwork smartened up, ready to face the challenges of the new normal (or at least that's what the government call it!).

It does appear that the government, and local councils, could lend some of these businesses a hand, not this time with money but with their support in relaxing some of their red tape. They could, for example, give permission for restaurants and bars to position some tables and seating outside of premises during the fine weather. This at least gives the smaller businesses a chance at survival. We are told that Cambridge County Council, who are responsible for street licences, have proved very difficult in this respect in the past and normally charge a very high fee for the licence.

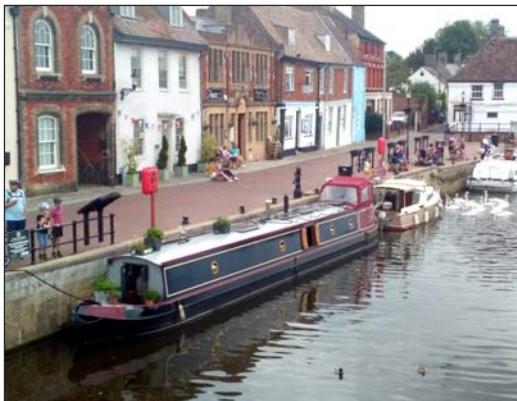
St Ives with its beautiful Quay, Bridge Street and the many Mews and Alleys could really benefit from council support for this idea. I can't imagine some of our European neighbours failing to capitalise on these obvious opportunities.

So, come on Mr Mayor and our town councillors, let's all start writing some letters and get our streets smartened up, parking better controlled and support our traders.

Left: *The River Terrace* have reconstructed their terrace wall beautifully.



The Flower Bar getting a new lick of paint.



More Corona Crafts



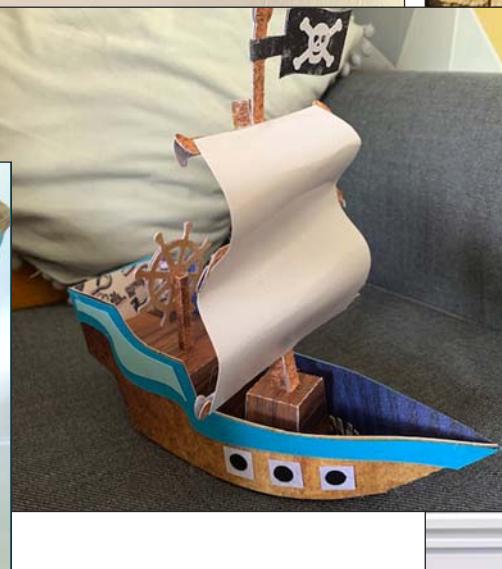
Here are some more craft examples.

Left: More heads made from card by Sam and below a card ship - all of which helped amuse Sam's two year old son.

Below: Dominic Weaver sent us this funny window display produced by him and his children Annie and Lenny.



Left and below: Items made using Balsa wood, papier maché and earrings.





having your say ...

The Riverporter

Get it off
your chest,
email Erik
at:
editor@
theriverporter.uk

Milly is looking forward
to seeing her friends and
relatives again next Monday!



Town Council office to reopen

As from 15th June the Town Hall will be open to the public again. The six staff will be operating a rota system to open the offices, until such time as social distancing is no longer required. Staff will continue to work from home when not in the building.

Council can help with contacting family or doctors services

An initiative to help those without internet access is the loan of 'computer' tablets and 4g wifi units to allow people to see family members or speak to their doctor face-to-face using Zoom.

A grant of £500 from the County Council allowed five units to be purchased and these can be borrowed by anyone who does not have their own smart phone/tablet or laptop/pc. They are very easy to use and come with full instructions. So if you want to borrow one or you know of someone who would benefit from using one please do get in touch with the council on 01480 884343.

Is the lockdown causing more violence?

This post (right) appeared on social media, which is a worry for Houghton residents.

Reports of violence seem to be occurring more frequently in our region according to reports. Some streets were shut down in Peterborough and there appears to have been incidents where weapons have been used.

Could this be a result of the prolonged lockdown?

Dear Erik,

Usual Suspects = Same Culprits

What's going on in dear St Ives and now neighbouring Houghton? Week after week the Police report incidents of gatherings, drink and drug induced disorderly conduct and fighting: whether on The Quay, The Waits or in London Road and now this week at the Battle of Houghton Mill.

The Police say they have adopted a softly, softly 'Four E's' approach to dealing with large gatherings outdoors: 'Engage, Explain, Encourage and, only as a last resort, Enforce'. That's all well and good for normal folk. But for all gatherings of drunks and druggies and fighting why not change to a different toughly, toughly 'Four E's' approach? EXTRACT, EXCLUDE, EXPEL, ERADICATE Doberman

A word from the Mayor

As we reported in the last issue Cllr Jonathan Pallant was elected Mayor. Here is a list of his chosen charities: PinPoint, St Ives Day Care Centre, CalmTown and St Ives Food Bank.



Houghton & Wyton Community

5 hrs ·



You might have noticed or heard that recently there have been large groups (youths and +18s) congregating in the mill / lock area in the evenings. There have been many reports of antisocial and abusive behaviour, vandalism, drug taking and that beautiful area being left in a mess. Recently there have increasingly been incidents of violence too, which on Monday erupted into fighting between large groups. The police arrived quickly to find that bottles had been used as weapons and as a result some being taken to hospital for treatment. There were also unconfirmed reports of knives being used. This is becoming a no-go area in the evenings. For the unfortunate residents of Mill Street they have no choice.

The Great Chicken Run

St Ives Vicar stopped by Suffolk Police with a car load of chickens.

Father Mark Amey, the Vicar of All Saints Parish Church, whilst dressed in dog collar and with a car full of chickens was stopped and questioned by Suffolk Police.

Father Mark, who had been waiting for the lockdown to ease so he could collect his new flock, clearly aroused the suspicion of the local constabulary.

Wondering if they stopped him because of the corona virus situation, it turned out they wanted to check his insurance, which their computer indicated didn't appear to exist.

The Vicar said 'They were very polite. As it turned out it was a computer error and I was able to show them that the vehicle was insured'.

Father Mark keeps a coop of hens in his garden at the vicarage on Westwood Road and will probably be looking forward to a new batch of eggs each morning for his breakfast.

Of course this raises the question.

What came first? The Chicken or the virus?

NEWS UPDATE

Police Update

The weekly summary of offences and incidents affecting St Ives for the period 15th to 21st May shows several incidents of gatherings and disorderly conduct and fighting.

London Road – Police were called to commercial premises on London Road on Saturday evening, 16th May, following a report of a fight in the street involving two males, one of whom subsequently needed medical attention for head injuries. A suspect was detained and investigations are continuing. (Ref 35/31913/20)

London Road – On Tuesday afternoon, 19th May, police arrested a suspect who made three hoax calls reporting non-existent crimes in the Bridge End/London Road area over the weekend, wasting police time and resources and misusing the 999 emergency call system. Investigations are continuing. (Ref 35/32434/20)

The Waits – Police received a report of a group of eight or nine people gathered at The Waits on Thursday afternoon, drinking and being noisy as well as breaching the Covid-19 regulations. When officers arrived most of the group had dispersed, but two who remained were spoken to and given words of advice. (Ref CC-21052020-0331)

Shakespeare Road – Police discovered approximately 9 cannabis plants being cultivated at an address on Shakespeare Road on Thursday evening, 21st May. One person was arrested on suspicion of being concerned in the production of a Class B drug. (Ref 35/33053/20)

Covid - 19 Update

Police have responded to more reports this week of groups apparently ignoring the Government's Covid-19 regulations and having large gatherings.

We are now allowed to spend much more time outdoors, but we need to do this within the terms of the legal regulations. We are still not allowed to gather with groups not from our own household, and we can still only leave the house for one of the designated 'reasonable excuses'. However, there are some things, such as the two-metre rule on social distancing, that are just advice rather than a legal requirement, and the police have no powers to enforce things like this. The police will always use common sense and discretion to determine what is reasonable, and will use the "Four E's" approach in any Covid-19 situation:

Engage, Explain, Encourage and only as a last resort Enforce.

As always, if you have information relating to any offence, or are concerned about any suspicious activities, please contact police by using any of these methods:

call '101' non-emergency telephone number;

use the on-line web-chat tool on the new Cambridgeshire Constabulary web-site - click on the green icon;

alternatively, you can use 'Crimestoppers' to make a report anonymously by calling 0800 555 111 or by using their on-line contact form.

In an emergency, or if you witness a crime in progress, always use '999'.

