

Village Green

The Parish Council met on Saturday to consider how the government regulations and guidance should apply to the Village Green. It is clear that the use of the Village Green is more important in the coronavirus crisis than ever as people venture out each day for local exercise. We also noted how supportive the residents of the village have been of each other during this crisis and respectful of social distancing rules.

The Parish Council does not believe that the current government guidance requires the Village Green to be closed. Government last night confirmed that all parks and green spaces should remain open. However, social distancing rules should be adhered to. As the Village Green is used by a wide range of residents, adherence to social distancing is important. We want to ensure that all residents and families and especially teenagers will continue to have a safe place for their daily exercise which we acknowledge is very important.

The government guidance still currently requires sports pitches such as the cricket and football pitches to be closed (see links [here](#)). The guidance states: *“Parks will remain open but only for individuals and households to exercise once a day. Communal spaces within parks such as playgrounds and football pitches will be closed”*. To adhere to the government requirements, whilst facilitating safe continued use of the village green for all exercise purposes, we have asked the football team to remove the netting from the posts and we will be taping off the cricket practice nets to discourage use as a playing field. We also reconfirmed that guidance to keep dogs on leads continues to be applicable to the Village Green (see [link](#)), and we therefore recommend people to follow that guidance. See further [government guidance on access to green spaces](#).

We will be posting the following signs on the Village Green, as recommended by the Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association, in line with advice we received from the Oxfordshire Association for Local Councils, and in line with overall government advice.

When using the Village Green, we kindly request and recommend that residents follow government guidance related to coronavirus:

- *Observe social distancing and keep at least 2m away from other people*
- *Please keep dogs on a lead to avoid unnecessary contact with other users of the space*
- *The Cricket and Football pitches remain closed until further notice*

As soon as government guidance changes, our recommendations regarding the use of the village green and its facilities will be updated accordingly.

We also re-confirmed that the Police are responsible for enforcing government regulations so residents should contact them with any concerns about lack of social distancing. The Parish Council will not be attempting to enforce government guidance other than the actions described above. Residents should raise any concerns related to social distancing incidents to the Thames Valley Police.

We understand that whilst the Village Green remains open, closing the sports pitches within the Village Green will be disappointing news for many who enjoy using the facilities, but at this time the Parish Council believes we must adhere to the national rules during this national emergency. However, we continue to encourage people to use the Village Green for exercising, and we will re-open the pitches fully as soon as possible.

Whitchurch Parish Council, Sunday 19th April 2020