



ONE OF THE BEST DECISIONS

"I missed not seeing you during the Coronavirus lock down Grandpa. After you had finished all those jobs that Grandma had been waiting for you to do, what did you do then?"

"I made one of the best decisions in my life" you replied.

"What was that Grandpa?"

"I'd been thinking about it for a while but with all the time in the world to consider what to do with my life, when this lock down eventually ends, I decided to join the Probuss Club of Basingstoke."

"What do they get up to, Grandpa?"

"Well, I had read in the Rabbitter magazine about this group of like minded retired men who get together regularly for social interchange and meetings where they have interesting speakers and good lunches."

"Won't Grandma mind you going out all the time without her?"

"They also have social occasions most months that I can take your Grandma to and have trips to interesting places that she and I can attend."

"Was it difficult to apply, Grandpa?"

"As those meerkats on the TV advertisements say, Simple. I phoned their Secretary and had an exploratory chat about what their plans are when these social distancing regulations are lifted and it all sounded like something that suited my style and life's experiences. It was really easy and I felt that I would be made most welcome. I can't wait to go to their meetings when they start again."

If this sounds like you, then phone Jonathan Ratcliff on 07501 271547, for an informal chat. It really is that simple.

See www.probusbasingstoke.club

Letter... to the editor

I read with interest in the April Rabbitter that the Council has introduced fines for motorists found letting their engines idle. The worst offenders in this respect are not even mentioned by the Council's announcement. Those offenders are not cars, but buses. Across the town buses stop at certain stops to 'loose time', with engines idling for up to five minutes.

Stagecoach has reassured the council that the new buses we're now seeing in service would solve the problem. These buses are fitted with so-called 'stop start' technology which should mean that buses at rest do not idle their engines. However, the stop-start function only works if the driver applies the parking brake.

And guess what? The drivers are not applying the brake, so engine idling continues just as before. Wasting fuel, polluting the atmosphere and creating noise. Time for a few fines on bus drivers I think...

Regards, Phil

COUNCILLOR'S UPDATE

Lockdown information: These are difficult times for all of us, so I thought I would start by offering some web addresses where you may be able to seek help or information.

- Hampshire County Council webpages are at <https://hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/coronavirus>
- Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council information is at <https://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- Basingstoke Voluntary Action have a lot of useful local information at <https://www.bvaction.org.uk/covid-19/>
- The latest government information is at <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- NHS information is at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

A helpline has been set up for frail or vulnerable residents who do not have support from families, friends or their local community, and who need urgent assistance with essential food or household supplies, collection of medication, or who are at risk of loneliness.

- The Coronavirus Hampshire Helpline – HantsHelp4vulnerable - can be contacted on 0333 370 4000. It is available seven days a week, from 9am-5pm.

Refuse Collection: The Borough Council moved to fortnightly grey bin collections from 20th April. It has emphasised that this is a temporary measure to protect crews during times of operational difficulties. For now, we need to put out our green bins on the normal recycling days, and the grey bins the following week. The Council advises wiping bin handles each time they are moved.

County Councillor Devolved Budgets: because the local elections were postponed this year, the Councillors' devolved budget scheme was able to restart earlier than usual. This year the amount of money available to each County Councillor has been increased from £8,000 to £10,000 to help with the COVID-19 pressures. Two colleagues and I have allocated £1,000 each to Basingstoke Voluntary Action to help the local hubs who are distributing help to vulnerable people.

Clapping for the NHS: Residents across Hatch Warren and Beggarwood have been joining in giving thanks

to our NHS staff as they tackle the biggest challenge they have ever faced. Expressions of support are everywhere, including messages that children have chalked on the pavements.

Anaerobic Digester: despite works undertaken by Biogen to change the configuration of the biofilter and other associated improvements, residents continue to report odour pollution. The Environment Agency is receiving reports from the affected families and will, no doubt, be asked to take further action if the improvements it demanded do not solve the problem.

Thank you: Thank you for keeping to the government's lockdown guidelines. Isolating is not easy but it is good to see people enjoying walks around the estates and keeping their distances when encountering others. Making a positive out of the difficulties, this is an opportunity to see our neighbourhoods at their best; greatly reduced traffic, clean air and only birdsong and insects to be heard at times.

Stephen Reid
County Councillor,
Basingstoke South West