The situation regarding the virus is fast moving and almost as soon as something is written it’s out of date. This was shown by the decision at the end of October to announce the National Lockdown. This was based on the scientific advice and data that was presented showing an increase in COVID cases across the country.

In Oxfordshire since the middle of October all the councils and Health partners had seen the spread of the virus from the younger age groups to the older age groups across all the Districts not just in the City. That is why OCC and partners were recommending that all of Oxfordshire be placed in Tier 2, to reduce the spread of the virus. The recommendations were sent to government however they did not implement the change in Tier level for the week 24th Oct then for the week 31st Oct it was only for Oxford City. This was disappointing as the recommendations were based on the data and good local knowledge to reduce the spread across the Districts. By acting early to reduce the spread of the virus it would have reduced the impact on the local economy.

The national lockdown will have an impact on the economy but its important that we reduce the spread of the virus so we all need to work together and to adhere to the rules.

There are some changes for this lockdown with household waste recycling centres (HWRCs) and registration services still able to operate.

Oxfordshire County Council’s libraries have had to close but the library service will continue to offer an array of online resources at [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/libraries) and residents will still be able to benefit from the home library service. The county council is also investigating the possibility of a click and collect service in some libraries in addition to limited access to public network PCs.

The overwhelming majority of Oxfordshire County Council’s services will still be delivered without interruption. We will continue to provide care and support to vulnerable residents through home visits and our community support services; and our formally organised support groups that provide mutual aid or therapy will continue, with a maximum of 15 participants.

The over 60s and the clinically vulnerable people have been recommended by the government to minimise their contacts with others during the lockdown period. Those who are clinically extremely vulnerable are encouraged to stay at home as much as possible, including working from home.

If anyone has a received a letter from the government about receiving additional support, they have been identified as being extremely vulnerable. In order to benefit from this support, they need to register themselves on the [national system](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-shielding-support) if they have not already done so. If they require additional support WODC will be informed and will contact them to identify their needs in more detail. If they need urgent support, then they can contact their WODC directly.

If residents do not have the means to register and have no one who is able to assist, they can call us on the number below.

• Call 01865 897820

• Email shield@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

• The service is open 8.30am - 5pm Monday – Thursday, and 8.30am - 4pm on Fridays. Closed Saturday - Sunday and Bank Holidays

The government’s [business support](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support) webpages set out the COVID-19 support available to businesses such as loan schemes designed to support UK businesses that are losing revenue and seeing their cashflow disrupted as a result of the pandemic.

Information about the additional financial support announced by the Chancellor on Thursday 5 November to help support businesses and workers during the challenging times ahead is available at [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-extends-furlough-to-march-and-increases-self-employed-support).

The county council’s COVID-19 [support for businesses webpages](https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council/coronavirus-covid-19/support-business) are also useful source of information.

The pandemic won't stop Oxfordshire's roads from being gritted as temperatures start to dip, the county council’s winter weather response springs into action, becoming one of our key frontline services that keeps almost half of the roads across Oxfordshire free as possible from winter hazards. The pandemic will not stop our efforts - we are ready to go. This year we have trained 15 extra drivers, will have 25 gritter lorries on the road at any one time, and will use approximately 220 tonnes of salt per treatment.

Council meetings continue remotely, details of all virtual public meetings can be found on the [meeting details](https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx?GL=1&bcr=1) page on the county council website – simply click on each meeting in the calendar to view the link. Recordings can be viewed after each meeting.

Its important that we continue to hold meetings such as the North Cotswold Line Taskforce as we plan for the future to enable us to have a more frequent rail service from Hanborough with 4 trains an hour.

We are also in the budget setting process which has been made more difficult this year with the increased expenditure relating to the COVID situation. The Government has provided significant funds for the County Council but this year there was still a £15 million gap that we have had to solve. The outlook for next year is difficult as we’re only receiving a 1-year settlement and there will still be additional expenditure regarding the COVID pandemic.

Please do not hesitate to contact me and keep safe.

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