A person smiling for the camera

Description automatically generated Hello,

**County Councillor Phillippa Williamson**

Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Schools

**Lancaster Rural North** -*Arkholme, Borwick, Capernwray, Carnforth, Docker, Millhead, the Kellets, Priest Hutton, Silverdale, Warton, the Yealands.*

**Email**: [Phillippa.Williamson@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:Phillippa.Williamson@lancashire.gov.uk)

We are living in extraordinary times and I thought you would be interested in the work that has been going on across the County Council to support the nationwide efforts to tackle the spread of CoVID-19.

Lancashire is the 4th largest county in the country, covering over 2903 sq. kilometres (1120 square miles), has a population of around 1.2m people and the County Council’s priorities at this time are to protect the most vulnerable and make sure our most vital services continue to be delivered.

In the current lockdown situation to achieve those goals the Council has completely transformed the way it delivers services and how key council meetings work. It is no longer a location-based organisation but one that works remotely. As one of the largest employers in the county, many of the Council’s staff are now working from home (unless their job means that is not possible), with many of that workforce now taking on different roles supporting services to our most vulnerable residents.

The County Council has been central to ramping up Lancashire’s Local Resilience Forum. This is the coordinating hub for the county’s multi-agency response to the pandemic. Its meets remotely daily involving organisations such as the NHS, Police, Fire, Environment, Health & Safety to ensure all Lancashire residents have the support, advice and information to keep themselves and their communities safe.

So, at this time, all non-essential meetings at the County Council have been cancelled with plans underway to hold virtual meetings in the future. In addition, all but essential services to the public have been closed. Consequently, many of the day to day enquiries we would normally make to the County Council are taking longer to deal with, some simply being logged to be dealt with once we get through this emergency.

To give you an idea of just some of the priority work the County Council has been focussing on and making a real difference to our communities:

* **Education** -Working with Head teachers and school Governors:
* More than 500 schools have been open throughout the lockdown period including the Easter weekend to support the children of key workers and our most vulnerable families.
* The Council sends a daily bulletin to schools and updates their database known as ‘the schools’ portal’ so they have the most up-to-date information and advice from the Department of Education.
* Over 25K families receive free school meals across the County. Most of the children and young people in these families are now at home but the Council has ensured they are all provided with a meals service until the national school meal voucher scheme has been fully implemented.
* **Adult Social Care** - There are more than 400 care homes across Lancashire (some run by the County Council and others charitable or privately run):
* The Council is providing frontline care in its own homes and support to those run by other providers.
* The Council has created a new portal on their website and host weekly online care provider conferences attended by hundreds of providers to consider the latest advice from Public Health England and the Department of Health is highlighted.
* **Children’s Social Care** - For children, safeguarding remains the primary consideration, so
  + Children's Social Care teams continue to visit families in their homes taking necessary precautions and social distancing.
  + There are also over 2000 children and young people in the care of the local authority in Lancashire. The County Council continues to provide a safe and secure environment for each one of them.
* **Supporting Key Workers** - Over 2,500 rooms have been secured at hotels and other facilities across the county for key County Council and NHS workers where they can’t stay at home or it is impractical for them to do so.
* **Supporting Business** - Boost, Lancashire’s Business Growth Hub has refocussed all its efforts from business ‘growth support’ to business ‘resilience support’.
* The #AskForHelp campaign has been launched and they have access to hundreds of world-class business support professionals who can guide worried owners.
* There is also a dedicated #AskForHelp helpline, and they've created a dedicated hub for all the latest guidance from government and the wider business support community.
* **Libraries & Archives** - Although all libraries, the mobile library service, home library service and school library service have been closed, online services are being maintained
* The number of eBooks and eAudio downloads have been reduced to 4 eBook and 4 eAudio downloads per borrower, but renewals have been increased from 1 to 2.
* There are around 8000 eBooks and 5000 audiobooks available to download using [BorrowBox](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/ebooks)
* The [online reference resources](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/libraries-and-archives/libraries/digital-library/) including information, facts and figures, family and local history, newspapers old and new, school homework and study, music and literature is available.
* The Archive Service will answer enquiries without access to the collections and catalogues can be searched online using [LANCAT](https://archivecat.lancashire.gov.uk/calmview/). Many Lancashire parish registers are available online at Ancestry.
* **Highways** -To operate with reduced staff and minimise contact between people where possible:
* Teams will concentrate on tasks such as winter gritting, fixing potholes, and repairing traffic signals and streetlights to help manage the need for minor issues which are not vital to safety, and planned work such as resurfacing of roads and improvements to bridges, has been suspended for now.
* The way potholes are repaired has been temporarily changed to protect supplies of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Usually repair teams cut around a pothole to create a neat patch which creates dust. So, an 'infill' method of clearing the existing hole as far as possible before a bonding coat and new bitumen is applied is being used.
* **Household Waste Recycling Centres** - The government advice is to close our recycling centres to prevent unnecessary journeys and help stop the spread of coronavirus. Many of the staff who were working at these centres are now supporting their local council’s collection of waste and recycling, so we can make sure those collections still happen while they face staffing challenges. The potential increase in fly-tipping whilst the centres are closed is being monitored closely and if you spot any, please report these to Lancaster City Council on 01524 582000 or online at <https://www.lancaster.gov.uk/forms/ShowForm.asp?fm_fid=228>
* **Coroners Service** - Like many other places in the country, the County Council must prepare for all contingencies and sadly this means the anticipated increase in deaths. Therefore, a temporary facility has been built on BAE Systems' site at Warton with capacity to house 1,000 deceased. This is both a sensitive and in many ways quite upsetting development but will ensure that the deceased and their families will be treated with dignity and respect. Clearly it is hoped that the facility will not need to be used, but we have to face the reality that it may be likely to be required.
* **Supporting District Councils** – There are 12 district councils in Lancashire and the County Council has helped set up 12 community hubs to provide support to our most vulnerable residents, ensuring their work links into the county council’s existing arrangements for adult and children's social care.

Thinking to the future, the County Council are also making plans for when we start to move out of the current lockdown, whatever form that may take. However, as I am sure you appreciate, with change on this scale, not everything has been plain sailing. One of the major challenges is the supply of PPE for key workers. Over the Easter weekend, the County Council and the Local Resilience Forum received large orders of PPE so they can continue to provide kit to all their staff and help the wider care sector to source what they need. But there is no doubt this national issue continues to be a challenge.

**Finally, please get in touch -** It is a huge privilege to be your County Councillor. It is also a great pleasure to work with residents and Parish/Town Councillors who do so much to support the community and improve amenities in the area. I have outlined some useful contacts and sources of information at the end of this note but if there are any issues you would like my support with please let me know and I will do my very best to help.

**Finally… Stay Home, Saves Lives -** This is an extraordinary situation and the most important thing that we can all do is to follow the advice on handwashing, social distancing and self-isolation and stay safe.

**Phillippa Williamson**

**Some Useful Information and Contacts for you**

**Lancashire County Council**

T: 0300 123 6701

Minicom: 01254 220 666

E: enquiries@lancashire.gov.uk

Website: <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/your-health-and-wellbeing/coronavirus/>

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/lancashirecc>

twitter - [@LancashireCC](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Ftwitter.com%2Flancashirecc&data=02%7C01%7C%7Cc88089463849485ff0fb08d7e08885ab%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637224749277092289&sdata=5J4QUJlkbuPU7TrKksKV0lt5R6tkf2k2qkqyMTS8jb4%3D&reserved=0).

**Lancashire Resilience Forum** - you can follow them [@LancsResilience](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Ftwitter.com%2Flancsresilience&data=02%7C01%7C%7Cc88089463849485ff0fb08d7e08885ab%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637224749277082293&sdata=o%2F8GkElriCDOXHBADvV%2FBmClEyuUG9eI6twoFUzIglY%3D&reserved=0).

**Public Health England** is continuing to publish confirmed cases of coronavirus, and give specifics for each part of the country, including Lancashire, on their [gov.uk website](https://nam03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fpublications%2Fcovid-19-track-coronavirus-cases&data=02%7C01%7C%7C13a1f78a5e2046a4e90008d7e087df34%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637224746480427706&sdata=ketvEyPZdwNAeMkEB7SleH%2BiOm%2FDNfkqoL9dnIArduE%3D&reserved=0).

**Lancaster City Council**

T: 01524 582000

E: customerservices@lancaster.gov.uk (for residents)

E: econdev@lancaster.gov.uk (for businesses)

**NHS Status Checker** -The [Coronavirus Status checker](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nhs.uk%2Fcoronavirus-status-checker&data=02%7C01%7C%7C4f015c4b8f2f43afdcb908d7e0a095b4%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637224852613131890&sdata=ee%2BZkvKbJYqXIhJ69BA5VsT5vTvy7xTHHtJAQ6yms2U%3D&reserved=0) was launched on the 4 April 2020. The information gathered will help the NHS to plan its response to the outbreak. You can more at [https://www.gov.uk/government/news/nhs-asks-people-to-share-their-coronavirus-symptoms-to-help-others?](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fnews%2Fnhs-asks-people-to-share-their-coronavirus-symptoms-to-help-others%3Futm_source%3Daf08c443-3347-4209-83a4-4c33b262014f%26utm_medium%3Demail%26utm_campaign%3Dgovuk-notifications%26utm_content%3Dimmediate&data=02%7C01%7C%7C4f015c4b8f2f43afdcb908d7e0a095b4%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637224852613141885&sdata=DbZGpeGeuhGPqcUg9xQodXnm9uLbyPkauAUiunkTCik%3D&reserved=0)

**Highways** -If you want to report a Highways fault you can do this on line at: <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/roads-parking-and-travel/report-it/>

**Household Waste** -If you spot any fly tipping, please report this to Lancaster City Council on 01524 582000 or online at <https://www.lancaster.gov.uk/forms/ShowForm.asp?fm_fid=228>

**Supporting Business** -Businesses can find out more about the #AskforHelp online at [www.boostbusinesslancashire.co.uk/askforhelp](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.boostbusinesslancashire.co.uk%2Faskforhelp&data=02%7C01%7C%7Cf8a1027ad71441358c6d08d7e0888182%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637224749193751047&sdata=Uxz6iSwYS6UcvbpcvD4BvBm%2FestHtiJlru0uGKgMUNU%3D&reserved=0), or call 0800 488 0057.

The Government has several financial support schemes to help businesses pay their bills and pay their staff. These include grants of £10,000 cash grant to small businesses, grants of £25,000 to those in the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors (subject to rateable value), increased Business Rates Relief, a Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, and support for the self-employed.

More information and links on how to apply for financial support is available on Lancaster City Council’s website or you can contact their business support team at

[econdev@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:econdev@lancaster.gov.uk) or 01524 582000.

**Libraries** - You can renew items on line at [renewing online](https://capitadiscovery.co.uk/lancashire/login) or using the automated phone line 0300 123 6704.

**Help Paying Bills** -If you’re struggling to pay your council tax the council can help, including restructuring your payments. You can do this by emailing [ctax@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:ctax@lancaster.gov.uk). There is also a council tax support scheme for residents on low incomes. You may get up to 100% support in paying your bills. Residents in receipt of Universal Credit, are also likely to be eligible for full council tax support, More information is available from the customer services centre 01524 582000 or [customerservices@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@lancaster.gov.uk).

**Emergency Food** – If you are aware of someone who needs help, you can find the contact details of people and organisations who can make a referral on [www.lancasterdistrictcovid19.org.uk](http://www.lancasterdistrictcovid19.org.uk). If you don’t have access to the internet you can telephone the food hub on 01524 932001.

If you are just struggling to get out yourself to buy essential food, drink and household supplies, you can find a list of local retailers that are able to deliver at [www.lmds.co.uk](http://www.lmds.co.uk) or phone 01524 932001.

**Scams** -Events such the coronavirus outbreak, bring out the scammers and fraudsters. Advice on scams is available on the Action Fraud website at [www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk) or you can contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 2231133.

**Volunteering** - There are many organisations that would welcome you as volunteers, either individually or as part of an organised group. Lancaster District CVS are coordinating volunteers to support community organisations across the district. To volunteer, you can phone the CVS or visit [www.lancaster.gov.uk/cvsvolunteers](http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/cvsvolunteers) and fill in the form to register your interest.

If you are part of group providing mutual support at this time, and it hasn’t connected with either the CVS or the city council, please email [civilcontingencies@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:civilcontingencies@lancaster.gov.uk) so that they can support you in your work.

The County Council has published a new [7 minute briefing](https://nam03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.lancashiresafeguarding.org.uk%2Fmedia%2F58185%2FCOVID-for-Volunteers-7mb.pdf&data=02%7C01%7C%7C4eb8af630ac0402cc4c208d7e0886d96%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637224748861707022&sdata=DDlslox7ty0%2BYwmhRvXwKIE9LpLbQHHxUjIklI6tsj4%3D&reserved=0) for use during the COVID-19 pandemic intended as an introduction to safeguarding guidance for volunteers at:

<http://www.lancashiresafeguarding.org.uk/news/covid-19-and-safeguarding-for-volunteers.aspx>

**Job Opportunities** - **T**he County Council has launched a [campaign](https://apc01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.lancashire.gov.uk%2Fjobs%2Fcarers%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7Cfd03aece510e48aff70008d7e085af12%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637224737085918985&sdata=iB4p33csXEmZyvBToPNee9lQyRMbqgmlq89kLhVsgkE%3D&reserved=0) to recruit more social care staff for Lancashire to meet the extra demand that the coronavirus crisis is creating. This will run over the next couple of weeks. If you know anyone who may be interested, information is at: [https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/jobs/carers/](https://apc01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.lancashire.gov.uk%2Fjobs%2Fcarers%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7Cfd03aece510e48aff70008d7e085af12%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637224737085928996&sdata=oGoLNeHLikWK%2BU2edZXVAu7cbGfJAczOLj6QnUbwWoM%3D&reserved=0).