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**All Surrey Members & Councillors
All Leaders of Districts & Boroughs
Partners of LRF Executive Group**

Dear Surrey Partners and Leaders,

With many more children returning to school this last week, there is a feeling of a new term in the air and indeed a new phase for all of us, still finding our way through the COVID-19 response and recovery. It feels like an opportune time for me to provide you with a further update of the Local Resilience Forum work in Surrey.

Our key focus in the LRF over the last few weeks has been monitoring and restricting the spread of the virus in the county. Surrey's public health team are constantly monitoring the Surrey data regarding cases of COVID-19 and acting fast to try and contain any notable increases in any local areas.

In early August we saw some increasing numbers in Woking, and issued targeted communications encouraging increased vigilance in that area. Working with partners in Woking, including the Borough Council, local members as well as community and faith groups such as the Shah Jahan Masjid mosque, as well as sophisticated geotargeted social media messages and traditional local media engagement, we were able to spread the messages quickly and effectively, nudging people in their behaviour and saw numbers subsequently fall back down. This was a prime example of our preparedness and our excellent partnership working really paying off.

As time goes on, especially as more people return to places of work, and schools and universities return, these light touch local interventions may well become more common and we will ensure that, through the Local Outbreak Engagement Board, we will keep relevant partners informed and up to date.

Of course, the best way to keep rates of infection down is to continue with the most basic public health measures of thorough hand washing, social distancing where possible, wearing face coverings when instructed and coughing and sneezing into a tissue. Thank you for helping us to continue to spread these basic but important messages, which will become even more important as the winter comes.

Across the South East there has been some recent issues around testing capacity, with some instances of residents being guided to testing centres considerable distances from their home. This is a national testing capability issue. I, and our partners in their own right, have all raised concerns and experiences directly with central government. Please help us feedback any local issues by raising specific concerns and examples with the LRF leadership, including myself, so we can further inform central government of the situation on the ground.

I also want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the great work of the District and Borough Councils in Surrey throughout the COVID response. They have been a key part of the partnership working across the county right from the beginning of this emergency in March and it's important to highlight their contribution to supporting the shielded with welfare calls, visits to vulnerable people, meals on wheels, food parcels, medication collection and regular befriending; supporting our own known Surrey vulnerable people (not on the shielded lists); housing and supporting rough sleepers; the implementation of the different types of business grants and council tax relief schemes; Environmental Health outbreak management planning, business advice and enforcement; economic development support including the restart of the Town Centres; licencing managing Covid event inspections; huge voluntary sector engagement through CVSs and Local groups; and supporting LRF work including Excess Deaths in the Crematoria and Burial sites and Emergency planning. Thank you to all the District and Borough leadership teams and hard-working officers for this work, much of which is ongoing.

This continued partnership working of all the public agencies in Surrey, led by the LRF, is going to be crucial going into what could be a very difficult winter period. We must be prepared. We know the COVID-19 virus will most likely thrive in colder weather and spread more aggressively through the population, which will increase risk at the time of year that we usually see spikes in flu and increased vulnerability, particularly amongst our elderly population. Any particularly cold or wet weather can also cause problems in our communities, with ice and snow and the threat of flooding.

On top of these winter pressures we also have the looming prospect of Britain's exit from the European Union, and the associated logistical and civil risks that comes with that. An exit deal is yet to be agreed, so again we find ourselves planning for a no-deal exit scenario.

As an LRF we have held planning exercises over the last few weeks to ensure we are prepared for all the worst-case scenarios and have had a good attendance and contributions from all partners. Next week we are undertaking regional winter exercises too. Bringing our expertise together, sharing resources and building on the learning from the last six months will all stand us in good stead, and I have every confidence that through this partnership working, the LRF will again guide Surrey through any major incident and a difficult winter successfully.

Thank you again for all your hard work, open lines of communication, and partnership during this unprecedented challenge.

Yours sincerely



Steve Owen-Hughes

Chair of Surrey Local Resilience Forum