

UPDATE ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19):

**OVERRUN BEACHES AND RAVES IN PARKS AS PEOPLE IGNORE SOCIAL DISTANCING IN A WEEK
WHEN TRACING NUMBERS ARE DECLINING**

**FROM MAYOR FIAZ
FRIDAY 26 JUNE 2020**

Dear Newham Resident,

In a week where we heard from the Prime Minister that now is the right time to begin a further relaxation of the lockdown rules, we have also seen disturbing scenes from parks, beaches and open spaces around the country. In Bournemouth, a major incident was declared after thousands of people defied pleas to stay away and headed to the beaches; and closer to home, Southend was also inundated with visitors. In Newham, police and parks staff have also been called to deal with illegal 'raves' in some of our open spaces.

Earlier today, the Chief Medical Officer for England Professor Chris Whitty urged people to continue sticking to the social distancing rules even in this hot weather, otherwise Covid-19 transmission rates will rise again. Today, figures from Public Health England underline the fact we are not done with the virus, when it published its latest daily update. It showed that another 186 people have lost their lives and 1,006 people have been tested positive; bringing the total of lab confirmed tests across the UK to 309,360. Of these, 27,582 are in London including 1,016 Newham residents.

Earlier this week, the Prime Minister announced all schools must open in September, and the Government is expected to announce plans next week that social distancing will not be applied as whole class 'bubbles' will be introduced to enable all pupils to return to school full-time in September. But we also found out today that the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) had warned the Government that without significant improvements in the national test and trace system, fully re-opening schools could risk a new surge in Covid-19 cases. Their report highlighted that unless a national test and trace system is established that consistently reaches 80 per cent of contacts within a 48 hour period, relaxing the restrictions in place and increasing school pupil numbers was risky: *'if all schools are reopened, some kind of social distancing would still be required'*. You can read the SAGE report here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tfc-comments-on-sequencing-of-social-distancing-measures-schools-20-may-2020>

Yesterday, news emerged that the weekly national test and trace figures show that in the seven days to 17 June, there's been a reduction of 9 per cent (from 91 per cent in weeks 1 and 2, to 82 per cent in week 3) in contacting the close contacts of people that have been tested positive for Covid-19. The weekly data also shows that in the

seven days to June 17, some 26 per cent of people who had been transferred to the tracing system after testing positive for Covid-19 were not reached, up from 22 per cent in week two.

As the Black Lives Matter movement continues to rightly impact the national debate, disturbing news has emerged from the Metropolitan Police regarding the behaviour of two police officers from the North East Command, which covers Newham and Waltham Forest. A criminal investigation has been launched by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) after it was discovered that the two officers had shared photographs from the scene of the double murder of sisters Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry who are of Black African-Caribbean heritage, and took selfies by the bodies.

Two weeks ago, these accomplished women of colour were found stabbed to death in a park in north-west London. Their mother, who has already complained about the initial response of the police when the family reported the daughters missing, has said today that *'this has taken our grief to another place. If ever we needed an example of how toxic it has become, those police officers felt so safe, so untouchable, that they felt they could take photographs of dead black girls and send them on. It speaks volumes of the ethos that runs through the Metropolitan Police'*.

The officers involved have been arrested on suspicion of misconduct in a public office and have been suspended from duty while the IOPC investigation takes place, and they have confirmed that they will also assess if racial bias influenced the police officers behaviour. You can read more here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-53198702>.

While these shocking allegations have rightly been condemned by senior officers in the Metropolitan Police, including Borough Commander Richard Tucker who leads North East Command, this will do little to build the confidence of London's Black and Ethnic Minority communities, including those living in Newham.

The Borough Commander, who feels very let down and shocked by the behaviour of these two police officers, is keeping me updated with developments. I've already asked that we meet as soon as possible to discuss issues of culture and practice in the North East Command because this incident will seriously dent the trust our communities have in the police; and institutional racism must be tackled in all its guises.

Today to celebrate the life of one of Britain's most significant Black women, a Google doodle of her was featured on the home page of the global search engine. Olive Morris, who moved to London from Jamaica, would have been 68-years-old today. She became a fearless campaigner for racial justice, race equality and women rights, having founded the Brixton Black Women's Group in 1973. She also challenged police racism. Tragically she lived a short life, as she died from cancer aged 27. In 2018 she was rightly named by the Voice newspaper as among eight black women to have made a significant contribution to the development of Britain. You can read more

about Olive here, and gain inspiration: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-53191543>.

As we approach the weekend, please remember that Covid-19 has not gone away, it is still with us and we can't allow it to get a second hold in Newham because of the vulnerabilities and risks in our borough. So whatever your plans, please keep safe and stick to applying social distance with people around you.

Best wishes,

Rokhsana Fiaz OBE
Mayor of Newham