

UPDATE ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19):

775 confirmed cases in Newham, more and more deaths as well as economic disaster on the horizon - but hope also

FROM MAYOR ROKHSANA FIAZ

14th April 2020

Tonight marks the second day of week four living in lockdown. With a decision about whether the restrictions will be extended for another three weeks (or longer) to be determined by a meeting of COBRA this coming Thursday, we come back from the Easter break with news that the death toll from Covid-19 has risen sharply again.

Rising by 778 in the past 24 hours, a total of 12,107 Covid-19 deaths have so far now been registered in hospitals. In London, the numbers of those infected in the capital stands at 18,472 people and of those - 775 people are from Newham.

Among the victims of the virus was a man known and well-loved in Newham. Former Councillor and Civic Mayor Abdul Karim Sheikh died at the weekend and his funeral was held today. Abdul served as a councillor for 20 years between 1990 and 2010 and he served as ceremonial mayor in the 1998/1999 municipal year. During his time on the Council he variously represented Kensington, St Stephen's, Upton, and Green Street West wards. He served on various committees including Environment and Planning, and Housing. His distinguished service to the community was recognised with the award of the British Empire Medal.

Our thoughts and deepest sympathy go out to his family and friends at this sad time, as they do to all families who have lost loved ones. You can read the full tribute to him here: <https://www.newham.gov.uk/Pages/News/Tribute-to-former-mayor-and-councillor-Abdul-Karim-Sheikh-BEM.aspx>

We know that the number of deaths due to Covid-19 will be higher. Earlier today, the Office for National Statistics revealed that the actual number of deaths attributed to Covid-19 could be some 15% higher than the than daily Government figures. Its latest data for deaths involving Covid-19 in the week ending 3rd April, show an increase of 5,246 more deaths in England and Wales compared to the previous week, with a total of 16,387 deaths, 10% of which were registered outside of hospital.

We also know that in the coming weeks, another horrifying reality will become apparent: the number of deaths in care homes. Already, two of the country's largest care home operators have reported 521 deaths from Covid-19 across the country.

For all the victims' families life will never be the same again, and for the rest of us the seismic shock to our communities, livelihoods and economy will continue to have dramatic ramifications.

A report today from the Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) estimates that unemployment could rocket to over two million, as the UK economy shrinks by up to a staggering 35 per cent in the coming months because of this deadly virus. Suffering its worst recession for 300 years.

In line with our Community Wealth Building priority we are doing all we can to help support businesses and protect jobs. Having been charged with administering the Government's business support grants scheme, our officers processed an additional 815 applications over the bank holiday weekend, with a value of £12 million; and to date over a thousand businesses in the borough have been supported with grants totalling £15,425,000.

This morning, I also joined some councillors, leaders and Mayors in other parts of the country to discuss the economic challenges facing us and how through our Community Wealth Building approach to the crisis, we'll tackle inequality and poverty.

That's why our #HelpNewham Local Hub distribution network is so vital. So far our teams, made up of redeployed council staff, and a brilliant army of volunteers have distributed almost 2,000 parcels of emergency food and essentials to the most needy and vulnerable in our community. If you want to find more about the hubs, or would like to volunteer you can watch this short video here:
<https://youtu.be/MwtwsDyAbal>

Protecting the health of our residents and defending living standards has highlighted the importance of investing in our public services – but it can't be done on the cheap. Simply put, councils already struggling from ten years of austerity need more money from central government to deal with the severe economic impact being predicted.

I'll be demanding that in my discussions with the Government, as well as pushing for faster supplies of personal protective equipment for our NHS and care workers; and monitoring plans the Government announced over the weekend about a Covid-19 tracking app that could help with easing back on the restrictions.

In the meantime, please keep up the #StayAtHome requirements and stay safe. We are going to be in this together for the long haul.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rokhsana Fiaz' with a flourish underneath.

Rokhsana Fiaz
Mayor of Newham

People at the Heart
of Everything We Do