

where the community comes together

## THE LAMBOURN JUNCTION

01488 50 50 50

Lambourn, Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Dear Michael, Dear Councillors of the Lambourn Parish Council, Dear Parish Clerks,

We received your letter on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June informing us that the Lambourn Junction must vacate the Memorial Hall premises by the 19<sup>th</sup> June to allow the Lambourn Parish Council to concentrate 'on the much-needed work on backlog of outstanding account and other paperwork'. We have been considering if there has been a lack of information flow which may have brought about this sudden and entirely unexpected termination of the arrangement. It was regrettable that the discussion relating to the Lambourn Junction at the last LPC meeting was held in closed session without representation from the Lambourn Junction to give context and information.

The Lambourn Junction is a temporary service which supports vulnerable residents and was set up in a time of crisis. It is of course not intended to be a long term solution to addressing the needs of residents, this falls to statutory bodies as well as well established charities. Nor should the Lambourn Junction block the use of the Memorial hall for other community groups on a long term basis.

However, the Lambourn junction addresses the immediate needs in this pandemic of the residents of Lambourn and surrounding villages. The Junction provides vital food and groceries as well as support services to those most in need. The Lambourn Junction serves 150 households in the Valley of the Racehorse. We receive an average of 6-8 referrals to the Junction every day on the helpline number, upwards of 6 private messages daily via social media, and we have on average 8-11 walk ins every day needing food parcels. We are seeing an increasing number of families needing help, with the pressure and financial demand of having children at home 24/7 mounting. We can supply countless examples of cases where people have said we are a 'lifeline', that 'they don't know what they would do without us'.

We are working with West Berkshire Council Community Hub and have established a close relationship with the Spotlight Foodbank Charity. We collect from the Community Hub in Newbury and deliver their food parcels every week through the Lambourn Junction.

Many times a week the Lambourn Junction receives proactive referrals and requests from the Lambourn Surgery, West Berkshire Community Hub, Adult Social Services, West Berkshire Social Services as well as from the Citizens Advice Bureau. For these organisations the Lambourn Junction is a way of extending their service delivery to Lambourn, at a time when their services are stretched and restricted to an office based service. We provide local knowledge, a point of access both physically and through our 505050 helpline which is in

constant use. We have called on households that the agencies, listed above have concerns regarding their welfare. The Lambourn Junction is more than a place to distribute food.

The Covid-19 situation has propelled many households in Lambourn into a situation where they are unable to make ends meet. You will be aware that nearly 20% of the children at Lambourn Primary School receive free school meals which is an indication of the levels of hardship prior to the Covid-19 crisis. The situation has escalated, however not all those in need have been means tested and assessed by social services at this stage, due to the restricted running of these services. The usual methods of Food Bank referral are not easily available, through your GP, Health Visitor or Social Worker. Some simply require essentials to help them survive. One mother called the Junction Helpline in tears, after paying her rent and bills she was left with very little in her purse. She had a small amount food and no nappies for her family. The Junction helped immediately and pointed her towards the right organisations for long term support. Food banks and social services are unable to respond with such immediacy. We do not want residents of Lambourn to have to beg for food.

The Lambourn Junction is Lambourn's COVID-19 emergency response plan.

One of our aims is of course to connect individuals with long term support. We are not qualified to advise residents; however we do point out that there are professional agencies and charitable help available. We stock a range of leaflets about the support services available.

Individuals, companies and organisations in the parish have been most generous. The Junction receives donations on a daily basis from the kind residents of Lambourn. Some businesses make regular donations, contacting us to find out what we are in greatest need of this week. The outpouring of generosity and support from the community has been overwhelming. We sincerely thank Lambourn Parish Council for their help in allowing the Lambourn Junction to use the Memorial Hall – this was one of the most significant acts of support which launched the Lambourn Junction.

Following her recent visit to the Lambourn Junction, Laura Farris commented: "The community response has been incredible - the very best of us - and I am truly grateful for all their hard work." It was a boost to be recognised by someone from outside the Valley of the Racehorse.

The tragedy of COVID-19 is that even as the infection levels decline the use of the Lambourn Junction is increasing. We have seen families who have used their savings and hope that work will pick up soon however in the meantime they are truly struggling to make ends meet, especially with children off school.

We do understand that the Lambourn Parish Council has a statutory obligation to carry out its administrative business and in no way wish to inhibit this vital function. We are convinced that working together, we can find a way in which safe office access for LPC staff can be arranged whilst continuing the services of the Lambourn Junction. The LPC office has been used in the past weeks and in the attachment to this letter we list measures we would

like to discuss which we believe could lead to a successful collaboration for increased safe use of the office space.

We live in unprecedented times where community spirit, selfless altruism and a determination by residents not to let the COVID-19 virus beat us have been exceptional. This social cohesion has transformed lives, created hope and addressed exceptional needs during these unprecedented times of global pandemic.

In your code of conduct councillors are reminded that they should “serve only in the public interest and should never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.” Please do not take away the small but vital lifeline of those in need in Lambourn at this critical time.

We are three local women trying to help our community. On behalf of the 12 members of the Lambourn Junction team, the local network of 73 volunteers, the individuals and businesses donating, the Agencies and Organisations who collaborate with us and most of all the 150 households who use the Lambourn Junction, we beg you to reconsider your decision to expel us from the Memorial Hall on 19<sup>th</sup> June.

Please allow us to enter a positive dialogue and find an amicable transition plan which serves the needs of the community as a whole. With only 9 workdays left before the 19<sup>th</sup> of June we would really appreciate if LPC could consider our request as a matter of urgency.

Yours most sincerely,

*Anna Field, Helen Noll, Julie Blogg*

Copy to: Laura Farris, Howard Woollaston,

## Suggestions for consideration and as a basis of a constructive dialogue

The fact that the LPC office is separated from the main hall and does not require LPC staff to enter the hall itself is of course a start, however we are keen to discuss implement additional measures which will enable safe access to the LPC employees who cannot work from home including:

- Restricting the hours of the Lambourn Junction to Tuesday to Saturday: 10am to 12. We will ensure that the building is vacated punctually and LPC staff can access the building / office at all other times.
- If through exceptional circumstances hours need to be varied then a request will be made 24 hours in advance to a nominated representative of LPC stating the reason for the request.
- The Lambourn Junction could close on Mondays. This means that after the Lambourn Junction closes at 12:00 on Saturday to Monday 10:00, 70 hours will have passed without anyone in the building. Government guidelines state that “the amount of infectious virus on any contaminated surfaces is likely to have decreased significantly by 24 hours, and even more so by 48 hours”. LPC staff can then access the office Monday and Tuesday morning in the knowledge that the risk is minimised.
- We could discuss opening the Junction later on Tuesday to allow the full Tuesday Morning for vital Council work.
- All surfaces, especially door handles and other surfaces which may be touched in the entrance lobby will be wiped with disinfectant on a daily basis. This procedure is already in place and is augmented with mandatory hand disinfection for all people entering the hall.
- The Lambourn Junction will retain the policy that only one person at a time is allowed in the hall in addition to two volunteers.
- No access to the toilet facilities in the building (locked and sealed) for junction volunteers. The facilities (both male and female) can be dedicated for LPC employees use only.  
It would be most kind if LPC would consider making the key to the public toilet which is outside the premises available to Junction Volunteers however if the LPC considers this a health risk then the volunteers will make other arrangements. The toilet will be kept locked and will be cleaned daily.
- The kitchen, if required by LPC to prepare food, could also be sealed and not accessed by Junction Volunteers. However, as a further risk reduction, it may be an option for LPC staff to bring their own bottles and flasks of beverages as well as food. This procedure is being implemented by a number of companies to reduce risk of contamination.