

## District Governor's Monthly Newsletter

We are now one month into the new Rotary year. It is something very different from that planned when I developed my plan for the year. Nevertheless it is an interesting time and given the theme for the year –Rotary Open Opportunities - the new situation certainly does open opportunities, many that we would never have recognised.

I have had the pleasure of visiting a number of clubs virtually and at each one I have been warmly welcomed and we have been able to engage in some interesting discussions which I will feature below.

### **Face to Face Meetings**

One of the most frequent topics is the lack of face to face contact.

Rotary's mission statement:

Together we see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change across the globe in our communities and in ourselves

The mission statement begins with the word together and being together is where the magic of Rotary happens. When Paul Harris founded Rotary it was on the basis of fellowship and business networking that enabled good work in our communities to be undertaken.

Unfortunately the present pandemic has meant that we have lost that feeling of being together but our Rotary service has continued in spades both here in District 1210 and around the world. There are more connections being made than ever before via the internet and a great example is the regular international meetings organised by the Rotary Club of Walsall.

However a number of clubs have asked for guidance and advice about returning to face to face meetings.

Rotary's position at national level and at D1210 level is clear. It is a matter for individual clubs to make their own arrangements to meet their individual requirements strictly in line with Government Guidelines. These guidelines change with remarkable frequency and clubs must keep up to date.

It is essential that clubs carry out their own comprehensive risk assessment before returning to face to face meetings and this includes ensuring that any venue used for face to face meetings has also completed a proper risk assessment. Clubs should ask for a copy of the risk assessment for their records. A failure to comply with this will invalidate Rotary's insurance cover for your club.

To enable clubs to satisfy this requirement David Marklew, the District Health and Safety adviser, and Barry Picken, the District Compliance Officer have prepared a risk assessment template which is attached to this newsletter together with guidelines for clubs. These are generic documents and clubs can alter them to suit their particular circumstances. David has also provided the latest government guidelines for reopening an eating place. These are important documents and clubs must take them seriously

There will be an opportunity to discuss face to face meetings at the District Council on 7 September but I must stress there will be no guidance offered from the district team other than the need to comply with Government advice.

## **Sharing Good Practice**

Another frequent topic is finding out what others are doing regarding fundraising. Rotary Club Central was designed to enable clubs to post their good work for others to see. A number of clubs in D1210 are using Rotary Club Central well but unfortunately many are not. Rotary Club Central is relatively easy to use but it does need clubs to understand its purpose and its usefulness. To this end the District team will be developing a training programme for clubs over the next few months with a preliminary session for the District Executive Committee taking place during August. After that event AG's will be in touch with clubs to facilitate appropriate training for club members. It is important to stress that Rotary Club Central is not a mechanism for Rotary to police clubs or to spy on their activities. It is a useful tool for clubs to share good practice.

## **Cashless collections**

Several clubs have asked about cashless collection facilities. There are a number of ways in which this can be achieved and as society has been encouraged to move away from cash payments in supermarkets and shops it is highly likely that having an alternative particularly for street collections will be important.

With this in mind the District executive Committee have established a small working party to examine the facilities available and to prepare guidelines for clubs. This should be available in September.

Several clubs have asked whether the District has or will consider getting zoom professional licences to enable clubs to hold meetings longer than the 40 minutes available through the free version.

The District Executive Committee considered this a while ago and came to the conclusion that this was not a realistic way forward. 14 clubs meet on a Tuesday and 14 on a Wednesday. So that every club could have access and for District meetings that also take place on these days we would need a significant number of licences. The cost of these would inevitably have to be borne by the membership through their subscriptions and it seems fair to all that clubs should bear the cost if they chose to have the professional version.

However Rotary GB&I are currently in negotiation with Zoom about a range options which might change our thinking on this and shortly clubs will be asked to provide information on the use of Zoom to their AG's

## **Growing Rotary**

The first of Rotary's strategic priorities for 2020-21 is growing Rotary. Our Membership and Extension Committee have embarked on their task with considerable enthusiasm and have established focus groups looking at various aspects of growing Rotary. There will be a number of online seminars designed to help clubs with membership development over the coming months and clubs are encouraged to engage in these seminars.

I want to particularly direct members to the excellent blog that Les Goodchild our Membership and Extension leader, has established this can be found at <https://www.d1210membershipblog.org/>.

A topic that often arises in membership development is the cost of Rotary. I am working on a piece for my next newsletter which will set out the benefits that Rotarians get for their membership fees.

## **Polio Update**

The second of Rotary's priorities is ending Polio.

We have achieved so much but there is a long way to go and the last lap will always be the most exhausting. The Wild Polio virus is still endemic in two countries Afghanistan and Pakistan. Hopefully by the end of August Africa will be declared polio free. However the number of cases in the endemic countries appears to be growing:

To the end of July 2020 the number of cases reported is Afghanistan 34 Pakistan 60 (total 94)

To the end of July 2019 the number of cases reported was Afghanistan 12 Pakistan 47 (total 59) and the total for the year was 176.

For the year ended 2018 the number of reported cases was 33.

Rotary's contribution to polio eradication has been significant and we must not let all of the past efforts go to waste by not continuing with our support. The Rotary Foundation has for a number of years had a target of \$55 per member for donations to Polio and it is pleasing to note that many clubs in D1210 achieve or exceed this level of giving. However there are a number of clubs in the district who do not support this campaign and I ask that those clubs reconsider their approach.

Finally for this month

Keeping safe is our first priority. Let's keep an open mind and treat the current challenges as opportunities and use the district team to help and support club activities.