

Levelling up

The government should move on from lockdown to levelling up.

The response to CV 19 has accelerated trends to more on line shopping, more homeworking and more remote delivery of services and entertainment.

This will require a renewal and revision to the policy of levelling up.

The great towns and cities outside London and the south east will need more help in rebuilding and transforming against the background of the damage done by lockdowns and closures.

The government needs to think about how it can assist the Councils and encourage the private sector to undertake the transformational work needed in town and city centres.

It is working on ways of making it easier for building owners to change the use of their property or to knock down and rebuild something better geared to the new circumstances.

It could propose partnerships with developers and property owners to remodel areas of towns and cities scarred by past and recent events, and to utilise any planning gain for the betterment of the area and the success of the project.

It is also going to take a better package to encourage self employment and the growth of small business. The Treasury's instinct to tax them too much should be restrained.

It also needs more roll out of the government's training and educational offers. The UK above all needs to encourage a new generation of technology specialists and entrepreneurs, as the future is digital.

Does a vaccine offer a way out?

It is fascinating that a possible vaccine is announced as producing good test results shortly after the US election. Apparently there needs to be more time to evaluate it, with a possible appeal for Regulatory approval starting before the end of this month. The method used is new, and the team developing it will need approval to go to accelerated production and roll out as the request will be before usual testing procedures are exhausted.

The company will need to file details of side effects and the results of their safety tests, as well as latest evidence on how effective it is at preventing people catching CV 19. Apparently people need to be vaccinated

twice over a 3 week period to gain reasonable immunity. No-one yet knows how long the beneficial effects will last.

I have some questions about this. How willing would you be to take such a vaccine if approved soon? Should the early doses available go to the most vulnerable and to health workers at risk, as is suggested?

At what point can governments then relax their controls and allow us to return to more normal lives? As it has been the wish of many of the scientific and medical advisers of governments to use vaccines to end this crisis they should now spell out to us how long we have to wait for them to be satisfied that enough vaccine has been administered to fulfil their wishes. They have been reluctant to offer us a Plan B, so the least they can do is to tell us what are the timings and trigger points for declaring success on the vaccine route.

Mr Trump's lawyer sets out challenges

Today Mr Trump's lawyer stated they had good evidence about people trying to vote in person only to discover their vote had already been cast. In Nevada they think votes were cast by people not living in the state. There are also in some states issues about delivery and dates of postal votes.

This confirms the likelihood of a month of rallies and court cases to seek to reverse Mr Biden's current lead prior to certification of the vote. It is most important only valid votes are counted.

When the evidence changes the policy should change

The government's advisers this year from the scientific and medical professions have concentrated on one main preoccupation, getting the numbers of deaths down at any given time from CV 19.

This has resulted in a policy which does not give much weight to getting deaths down from other causes by ensuring a full service NHS that can handle all the other conditions that can become dangerous or fatal if they go untreated. I have highlighted how treatments for other conditions have fallen off markedly. I have also drawn attention to the danger of cross infection all the time CV 19 patients are treated in General hospitals or are sent back to Care homes prematurely after treatment.

It has also meant much greater priority has been given to delaying CV 19 infection spread rather than consideration of the impact on jobs and livelihoods, which in turn can have a knock on effect on mental health. There have been no government published graphs and charts chronicling the likely loss of jobs, bankruptcies of companies and withdrawal of self employed services when lockdowns strike.

The scientific and medical professions have made important strides in understanding the virus and its spread, and have found some treatments that help. They have not been able yet to find a vaccine that will prevent the disease in the future, nor treatments that ensure most people getting the serious form of the disease will recover. This makes it important that the Cabinet asks what is the point of a lockdown if it merely delays rather than stops the progress of the virus? How does a rolling lockdown help, given the way that will do more damage to livelihoods and business?

I will take up again with the government a number of ways of helping us live with the virus and blunting its spread and impact as have to do so. These include

1. Establishing Isolation hospitals or Isolation wings with separate entrances and strong infection control for CV 19
2. Further evaluation of existing drugs and vitamin treatments that can prevent, abate or cure the disease in more cases
3. More advice and help to private sector building and events managers on setting up the space and airflows to cut the risk of infection
4. A renewed drive to help the NHS get back to pre March levels of work in non Covid activity.
5. Freeing the private hospitals from public contracts that may be holding back the amount of work they do, whilst buying slots in them for specified patients where that offers value for money and extra capacity is still needed
6. Easing restrictions on road travel so more people can get to work or the shops by car more easily, given the government's statement of risks on trains and buses.

The lock down should be lifted soon. case numbers were levelling out before it was imposed.

Remembrance Sunday

Today we remember all those who gave their lives so we could live in freedom in a democratic country.

I delivered my wreath to Wokingham Town Hall last week to be placed on the War Memorial in the Town Hall. I was told we could not present them today in a ceremony as it is inside.

I recorded a reading for the Wokingham Service at 3pm this afternoon, and will watch the service on the link supplied by the All Saints Church website. I am grateful to those who have organised this memorial Service.

The best way we can show our appreciation for the suffering and loss of those who were killed or injured in conflict is to uphold and use the freedoms they fought to defend.