My fellow citizens,

we are experiencing extraordinary and difficult times currently. The corona virus has a lock on Germany and we in Bottrop too have seen citizens catch the virus and sadly also succumb to it. In order to contain the corona pandemic, far reaching measures have been taken. Numerous restrictions, e.g. a ban on public assembly, which were implemented to protect the population, have drastically reduced or even brought public life to a complete halt.

I am glad to say that until now we have only noticed a small number of violations of the behaviour rules. Nonetheless, I again want to point out the most important rules of conduct: Avoid social contacts as best as possible and reduce them to an absolute minimum. If you are out and about, keep a safe distance to other people around you. Keep in mind the rules of etiquette when you sneeze and wash your hands thoroughly for at least twenty seconds. Only if we abide by these rules, we can slow down the spread of the corona virus.

Amidst all the repeated reminders and bad news, which reach us at the moment, there is also good news. In Bottrop, we experience great solidarity and helpfulness within our community. Many volunteers come together in these times of crisis and help where they can. Through our campaign “Bottrop hilft“ we are pooling the many offers of help we receive. This allows us to optimally coordinate our capacities. As Lord Mayor, I am unbelievably glad to see how many different offers of help are reaching the city’s administration. This great commitment makes me proud. It shows that we in Bottrop can rely on each other, in good and especially now in hard times. I thank every volunteer very much for their work. You keep our city going.

The corona virus is an especially great challenge for our health system. Hospitals, fire brigades and resident doctors have, in close collaboration with the city’s health department and administration, prepared themselves for an increasing number of corona patients. This seamless cooperation secures health care within our city.
Our school system is also affected by the corona virus. Since all schools and kindergartens in North Rhine-Westphalia have been closed as a means of protection against the spreading of the virus, many parents have to find ways to organise day care for their children. Families who have to manage their daily life mostly from and at home now, can find information centres, contacts and telephone numbers that answer questions about life at home on the city’s websites, under the title “Familie zu Hause.”

The restrictions in our daily routine concern all aspects of our lives: our work life, our social life, but also fields like culture and religion. For many religious communities, important holidays lie ahead. Our Jewish citizens are awaiting the Pessach celebrations, for Muslims Ramadan begins in the near future and for Christians Easter is just around the corner. These holidays are usually celebrated with great festivities, but against the backdrop of corona, we have to find new ways in our religious life, too. I know that for many of you these religious festivities are also important family gatherings. Still, I ask you strongly to put the safety of family above the wish for community this year and under these circumstances. Follow the rules and minimise social contacts.

My fellow citizens of Bottrop,

all our lives are characterised by restrictions and waiver currently. Liberties that we take for granted, cannot be enjoyed as usual. This situation is an extraordinary strain for all of us. But there are also silver linings. The protective measures we have taken produce results. However, this success will be compromised if we loosen the restrictions too soon. Therefore we must not lessen our efforts, but must keep going and do all that is in our power to further slow the spread of the corona virus down. Let us together give all we can, for our city and for our fellow citizens. Every effort we now make, brings us closer to the return of our normal everyday life.

I thank everyone, who either through full-time or volunteer work, ensures that life in our city goes on. Each and every one of you, be it in the health system, retail sector, rescue forces, fire fighters, police, aid agencies, postal service, public transportation sector and the
municipal administration, is a real hero and heroine of our everyday life. Beyond the occupational groups named, there are many more heroes and heroines who give everything they have got. I thank you, too!

I am convinced that we will find our way back to normality and when that happens, the success will belong to all of us. Until then we have to be strong and stay strong, together and for each other!

All the best and Glückauf!