

DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

LOCAL OUTBREAK ENGAGEMENT BOARD (PUBLIC)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 15 FEBRUARY 2021

Present: Dominic Boeck, Nick Carter, Shairoz Claridge, Lynne Doherty, Steve Masters, Meradin Peachey, Sean Murphy, April Peberdy, Mandip Bilkhu, Melanie Best, Andy Sharp, James Townsend, Martha Vickers and Howard Woollaston

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Graham Bridgman and Matthew Pearce

PART I

89 Minutes of the previous meeting dated 01 February 2021

The minutes of the previous meeting dated 01 February 2021 were approved as a true and correct record.

90 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

91 Community testing update

Melanie Best provided an update on the rollout of community testing in West Berkshire. She noted that:

- Highwood Copse School and Thatcham Rugby Club sites were now up and running
- 257 tests were conducted at Highwood Copse in the first week, all were negative
- Newbury Weekly News had covered the opening of the sites
- Two more sites were opening at Burghfield Community Sports Centre and Hungerford Rugby Club, with booking slots being released later in the week
- Early years providers were a key cohort being targeted for testing, with many already using the sites
- The opening hours, especially early starts and late closures were being monitored to increase capacity
- The sites were continuing to be promoted on social media
- Surge testing- if there was a case of the South African variant, there was now a plan in place as to how this would be dealt with

Councillor Masters asked what the efficacy was of the lateral flow tests.

Melanie Best noted that efficacy had improved as they were done at the sites and supervised.

Councillor Vickers asked if shop workers were being invited for testing.

Melanie Best noted that currently the community testing was aimed at businesses with less than 50 employees, so large supermarkets were picked up through the Government

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programme. However, she noted that small retail shops within the cohort were being invited for testing.

Andy Sharp asked if residents were located to sites closer to Reading or Wokingham if they could utilise those.

Melanie Best noted that residents could use the sites in neighbouring authorities.

92 Covid-19 compliance and the role of marshals

Sean Murphy provided an update on business compliance through the Public Protection service and the role of Covid-19 marshals. He noted that:

- The service had been responsible for business and events provision since March 2020
- The service had approached the situation by proactively communicating with businesses and the public through the website/ social media and webinars
- Service requests and business advice for those in West Berkshire had been available online throughout the pandemic
- He also stated that there had been compliance visits to businesses at every legislative change point during Covid-19
- Enforcement action when required- although this had been a very small number
- Horizon scanning- looking as to what may come up in terms of legislation. He noted that this had been a key part of the Public Protection service and that it was awaiting further announcements for the roadmap ahead on February 22
- 6 marshals would cover the district (both urban and rural)- this was part of the Public Protection Service
- There would be a further two marshals at community testing centres
- The marshals would cover the district seven days per week
- The role of marshals would last initially for 3 months
- They would operate primarily on high streets, public spaces, markets and out of town shopping areas
- The role of marshals was to support the community- promoting safe Covid measures
- They do not have enforcement powers
- They would provide advice and assistance at a local level
- They would work closely with those responsible for enforcement
- Assist with lockdown restriction easing

Councillor Woollaston asked where the marshals were recruited from.

Sean Murphy noted that they were sourced from an agency.

Councillor Doherty thanked Sean Murphy and the Public Protection Service for its continued work. She also noted that it was important to note, as Sean Murphy mentioned, that the marshals did not have enforcement powers, but they were there to assist the community and businesses. She also asked for further detail on why the role of marshals was now being used.

Sean Murphy noted that the company used to hire marshals were providing marshals services all over the country and they had worked with neighbouring authorities so they

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knew the area well. He noted that they were very experienced and had a depth of local knowledge. In relation to why they were being deployed now, he stated that it was all about timing and utilising the marshals in accordance with restrictions hopefully starting to ease in the coming months and adapting once again.

93 Covid-19 situational report

April Peberdy provided an update on the Covid-19 situation in West Berkshire. She stated that all data presented was correct as of the 15 February 2021. She also noted that the slides being presented were now in line with the rest of Berkshire and would be published on the Berkshire Public Health website.

Restrictions:

- The whole of Berkshire remained in a national lockdown
- Further information could be found via:
<https://www.berkshirepublichealth.co.uk/covid-19-dashboard>

Situational awareness (data correct for the week 15th February 2021):

- She noted that over the last week case rates of Covid-19 had continued to decrease in all Berkshire local authorities.
- So far there had been **5,834** cases of Covid-19 in West Berkshire since the start of the pandemic and 213 of these had been in the last week.
- The rate per 100,000 has decreased and now stands at **134.4**. The positivity rate had dropped to 5.9%.
- Weekly case rates at 4th Feb show the highest rates in people aged 30-34 (437 per 100k) and 20-24 year olds (399 per 100k). Case rates have decreased in most age groups over the last week.

Epidemiology of cases:

- There had been a total of 51,428 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Berkshire. 72% (36,817) of these cases have occurred since the beginning of December 2020.

Deaths:

- In West Berkshire there had been **209** COVID-19 related deaths during the whole pandemic. 111 of these were
- In hospital and 83 were in a care home. In the last week reported (23rd -29th Jan), there were **14** COVID-19 related deaths recorded.
- Since March 2020, West Berkshire's all-cause mortality rate has been 20% higher than the previous 5 year average, which equates to 216 additional deaths.

Hospital activity:

- The number of admissions for Covid-19 patients is starting to slowly decrease in Royal Berkshire Foundation Trust hospitals. There were 11 admissions on 31st January.
- On 2nd February, 201 patients were in RBFT hospitals for COVID-19 and 28 (14%) of these were on mechanical ventilation.

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Outbreaks:

- She noted that an outbreak is defined by PHE as two or more cases with highly probable or confirmed epidemiological links. For care home settings one case counts as an outbreak.
- Over the last 14 days (25th January to 7th February 2021), PHE has informed us of 29 non-residential COVID-19 outbreaks in Berkshire. 5 occurred in West Berkshire.

LA	Care Home	School	Work Place	Other	Total
Bracknell Forest	0	0	1	4	5
Reading	0	0	1	1	2
Slough	0	0	2	1	3
West Berkshire	0	0	1	4	5
RBWM	3	0	1	2	6
Wokingham	1	0	0	7	8
Berkshire	4	0	6	19	29

The following table provides additional information on the location of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in West Berkshire. These are broken down to show the last 14 days (25th January to 7th February 2021) and all cases prior to this date (up to 24th January 2021).

Property classification	All weeks prior	Mo 1
Residential dwelling	91%	
Care Homes	4%	
House in multiple occupation (HMO)	<1%	
Other	1%	
Undetermined	3%	

Summary:

- The confirmed Covid-19 case rates decreased in all Berkshire local authorities over the last week. In West Berkshire there have been 5,834 cases of Covid-19 in West Berkshire since the start of the pandemic and 213 of these have been in the last week. The rate per 100,000 has decreased and now stands at 134.4. The positivity rate has dropped to 5.9%.
- West Berkshire's rate for people aged 60 and over has decreased by 42% in the last week to 62.2 per 100,000 population.

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- The number of daily hospital admissions for COVID-19 is slowly decreasing in Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust hospitals.
- Sadly there had been 14 deaths from Covid-19 in the last week (23rd – 29th Jan) and 209 COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic.

Measures to prevent Covid-19

- Following simple steps could make a significant difference in reducing the transmission of COVID-19 and help protect you and your friends, colleagues and family from the virus:
- Follow Government Guidance
- HANDS FACE SPACE
- This emphasises important elements of the guidance we want everybody to remember - wash your hands regularly for 20 seconds, use a face covering in shops and enclosed public spaces and try to keep 2 metres apart from those not in your household.
- Testing and Self Isolating: If you have symptoms, Isolate and book and test

Local information and communications:

- **New Vaccination Webpage:**
- To help drive awareness and provide support to local residents of Berkshire, we have created a new vaccine section on our website which features a wealth of information and engaging visuals which you can visit here:
- <https://www.berkshirepublichealth.co.uk/vaccinations>
- **The new page is split into three key sections:**
- 1. What you need to know about the vaccines
- 2. Questions and answers
- 3. Range of video stories from people sharing valuable advice about the vaccination programme and the importance of getting vaccinated.

Councillor Doherty noted that the information on the Council's website around vaccinations perhaps needed changing given the latest guidance around those aged 16-64 with an underlying health condition.

Meradin Peachey noted that it was still key to let their GP contact them first.

94 Communications update

Mandip Bilkhu provided an update on the work of the Communications team in relation to Covid-19:

- She noted that they were continuing with national lockdown messages through social media and various other channels
- A webpage for lateral flow testing had been set up for residents and businesses
- On vaccinations, they were supporting the messaging from NHS colleagues and were continuing to provide updates as and when they were released
- She had spoken to Berkshire West CCG about the messaging on vaccination and ensuring those updates were in-line with the national picture

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- They were preparing for the roadmap announcement on 22 February and would be explaining the route ahead to residents when it was announced

95 Future agenda items

Councillor Doherty asked if a local primary school teacher would be able to provide an update on 1st March in anticipation of the schools returning.

(The meeting commenced at 18:00 pm and closed at 18:53 pm)