

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, 1 MARCH 2021

Present: Dominic Boeck, Alison Parker, Graham Bridgman, Nick Carter, Shairoz Claridge, Lynne Doherty, Steve Masters, Meradin Peachey, Matt Pearce, James Townsend, Martha Vickers and Howard Woollaston

PART I

96 Apologies

There were no apologies received.

97 Minutes of the previous meeting dated 15 February

The minutes of the meeting dated 15 February were approved as a true and correct record.

99 CCG update

Shairoz Claridge and Meradin Peachey provided an update on the rollout of vaccines across West Berkshire:

- Cohorts 5 and 6 (ages 65-69 and 16-69 for those who were deemed vulnerable) were continuing to receive their first doses
- Cohort 5 (65-69) were receiving letters inviting them to attend a mass vaccination centre
- Cohort 6 were being contacted by their GP's
- She noted that confusion over this messaging was being addressed through practice websites and social media
- The mass vaccination centre in Reading at the Madejski Stadium was now up and running, 12 hours per day 7 days a week
- Cohort 7 60-65 should now be receiving letters to book a slot on the national system

Meradin Peachey provided further information on the vaccine rollout:

- 500,000 had been vaccinated across Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire
- There would now be even more vaccine doses available so the rollout should gather pace in the coming weeks
- The focus was still on cohort 6 and finishing that age group
- In terms of vaccine hesitancy in healthcare staff, there appeared to be more cases in younger age groups- she noted that West Berkshire was working with community activists to try and address the issue
- The CCG was looking into more mobile options of vaccine rollout to make it more accessible for people

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Councillor Bridgman asked why the ability to book a slot at the Madejski vaccine centre online was not advertised to the public before it opened.

Shairoz Claridge stated that her understanding was that it was about not setting expectations as there were a number of logistical issues with the set-up.

Meradin Peachey noted that the NHS were in-charge of communication and had asked for local authorities not to pre-determine when a centre may open.

100 Schools' return update

Alison Webster, Headteacher of Thatcham Park Primary School provided an update on the preparation for a 'full' opening of the primary school, scheduled for Monday 8th March 2021. She noted a number of key points:

- Everyone – home and school, were eager for all children to be back in the classrooms learning together and making connections with their peers, teachers and support staff
- Robust routines and procedures were the cornerstone of every school
- In January, the implementation of optional twice weekly LFD testing for staff was very reassuring
- Upon return – wellbeing and socialisation must be the priority; also anticipate a rise in need for safeguarding support
- Longer term, access to a vaccine for staff is crucial to ensure no further disruption to education.

She further noted that the school had taken extensive measures to minimise risk:

- Implications of independent and discrete functioning Bubbles on
 - Staffing
 - Teaching and learning
 - Break and lunchtime
- Ventilation- windows in classrooms were open frequently
 - Fluctuating temperature vs need to keep air flowing
 - Uniform
 - Risk to staff
- Restricting adults gathering on site
 - Parents- certain drop off and pick-up times
 - Staff and governors,
 - Contractors and visitors

The school had been supporting parents to prepare their children:

- They had encouraged parents to talk to their child about how they were feeling
- Reassure their child
- Re-establish a routine to help ease into school life
- The transition back to full time learning in school is likely to take sometime

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- Think ahead
- To seek support if they need it

Councillor Doherty asked if Alison Webster had found that there were any particular year groups or children that had struggled more than others in adapting to Covid-19 and the restrictions.

Alison Webster noted that for the younger year groups, life and school had been close to normal, just with more space to operate in. She also noted that the younger year groups only knew about sitting in rows and operating in a Covid environment. For the older children, she stated that they had been excellent in following the rules.

Councillor Boeck thanked Alison for her presentation. He also asked what the process was for assessing where the children's learning was and what she was most looking forward to when the children were back.

Alison Webster noted that it was about assessing the children without making them feel like they were constantly being tested. She said a range of little quizzes and questions would be used to assess where children were in their learning. Furthermore, she noted that teachers had been in constant contact with children and their parents to see where they were at. She was most looking forward to welcoming the children back at the school gate.

Councillor Masters asked how many children had been in school as children of key workers.

Alison Webster stated that there had been in total just over 100 children in, around 25%.

101 Covid-19 situational report

Matt Pearce provided an update on the Covid-19 situation in West Berkshire. He stated that all data presented was correct as of the 01 March 2021. He 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 1st March 2021):

- He 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 **6083** cases of Covid-19 in West Berkshire since the start of the pandemic and 113 of these had been in the last week.
- The rate per 100,000 has decreased and now stands at **71.3**. The positivity rate had dropped to **3.7%**.

Deaths:

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- In West Berkshire there had been **224** COVID-19 related deaths during the whole pandemic. 120 of these were in hospital and 88 were in a care home. In the last week reported (5th – 12th February), there were **5** COVID-19 related deaths recorded.
- Since March 2020, West Berkshire's all-cause mortality rate had been 19% higher than the previous 5 year average, which equated to 219 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.

Schools and testing:

- Schools would have access to LFT from March 8
- Three tests undertaken on school site for all secondary aged children
- Many schools were commencing testing on w/c 1st March to ease pressure and promote a staggered return to school
- Moving to home testing for families and support bubbles from March 15
- For home testing- a positive LFT would then also require a confirmatory PCR test, but isolation rules should be followed if a successful LFT
- Local authorities would help with providing home kit distribution (along with online ordering)- details to follow soon

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

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- 3. Range of video stories from people sharing valuable advice about the vaccination programme and the importance of getting vaccinated.

102 Communications update

Mandip Bilkhu provide an update on the work of the communications team in response to Covid-19. She noted that:

- The main focus was now getting across information and dissecting the 'roadmap' unveiled by the Prime Minister
- They were breaking down each step of the 'roadmap' as it happened
- Banners had been sent to schools to use on the gates to remind parents and pupils about covid-19 secure measures
- There had been communications around how to access LFT if individuals were a key worker
- A video on how to use LFT's had been released
- Councillor Doherty and Matt Pearce would be holding a Facebook Q&A on Thursday 4 March to answer any covid-19 related questions

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 7.01 pm)