

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, 21 DECEMBER 2020

Councillors Present: Dominic Boeck, Graham Bridgman, Nick Carter, Shairoz Claridge, Lynne Doherty, Steve Masters, Peachey, Andy Sharp, Martha Vickers and Howard Woollaston

Also Present: Mandip Bilkhu (Communications and Marketing Officer) and Catherine Greaves, James Townsend

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Matthew Pearce

PART I

61 Minutes of the previous meeting dated 7 December 2020

62 Declarations of Interest

63 Covid-19 situational report and incidents

Meradin Peachey Pearce provided an update on the Covid-19 situation in West Berkshire. She stated that all data presented was correct as of Sunday December 20 2020. 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.

Changes to restrictions:

- Tighter restrictions were put in place on 20 December for areas with a rising number of infections
- The whole of Berkshire was put into tier 4: stay at home
- The local alert levels would be reviewed every 2 weeks
- Alert levels were informed by a number of indicators, such as incidence rates and NHS use

Situational awareness:

- She noted that the positivity rates per 100,000 had risen across all Berkshire authorities compared to the previous week and now stood at 244.2 per 100,000 population, which is higher than the week before and higher than the week before that.
- The number of cases per 100,000 in the 60+ age group stood at 169.1
- The positivity rate was 9.3%
- The number of new cases in the last 7 days was 387
- West Berkshire had now had 2,399 cases of Covid-19
- She noted that parts of Kent now had over 1000 cases per 100,000

Epidemiology of cases:

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- There has been a total of 20,376 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Berkshire. 77% of these cases have occurred since the beginning of October. Berkshire's weekly rate has continued to increase over this time, although it has remained lower than the national rate.

Deaths

- There have been 147 COVID-19 related deaths in West Berkshire during the pandemic.
- 3 deaths were recorded for the last week (28 Nov- 4 Dec).
- Since March 2020, West Berkshire's all-cause mortality rate has been 20% higher than the previous 5 year average, which equates to 180 additional deaths.

Hospital activity

- Hospital activity information was not available for Berkshire hospitals or residents in a format that can be shared publicly. The information on this page therefore shows the latest data for the NHS South East Region.
- On 18 December, 2,372 patients were in hospital with COVID-19 in the South East. 168 of these were on mechanical ventilation. The hospital admission rate was continuing to increase.

Outbreaks:

- 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.
- Number of new outbreaks in West Berkshire by setting (30 Nov – 14 Dec):

Setting	Exposures/Cluster/Outbreaks
Schools (inc early years, primary, secondary and HE)	5
Care Homes	6
Workplaces	1
NHS/Health	0
Other	1

Measures to prevent Covid-19

- The most effective method of stopping transmission of Covid-19 is to wash your hands regularly for 20 seconds, to use a face mask in shops and enclosed public spaces and to keep 2 metres apart from others.

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Councillor Doherty stated that the cases per 100,000 in age groups seemed to be stable across the pandemic, but that the number of cases in those aged 18 or below had decreased recently. She asked if there was any particular reason for this.

Meradin Peachey noted that most cases were in the 40-59 age group and the 18 and under had gone down a little.

Councillor Doherty asked if there were any reasons as to why particular wards in West Berkshire were seeing more cases than others.

April Peberdy noted that this was being looked into and she would raise it at the surveillance cell meeting.

Councillor Masters asked about the testing capacity in West Berkshire. He noted that he had received feedback of problems with getting a test at Newbury Showground. He also asked about the accuracy of tests. He also asked if the sudden increase was solely down to the new variant or whether there was a change in people's behaviour.

Meradin Peachey noted that the data had shown there is enough capacity, but that problems mentioned had been reported to the DHSC. She also noted that PCR tests were 95% accurate. She further stated that the new strain had played a large part in the spread across the south-east, but that it was still unknown whether the virus was in West Berkshire. She noted that the new variant was still transmitted in the same way so it was vital to continue with measures to prevent infection.

Councillor Vickers asked about private tests and whether they were legitimate. She also asked how the vaccine would be rolled out.

Meradin Peachey noted that any private tests done were validated by PHE to check that they had a licence. Furthermore, she noted that 30% of people with the virus were asymptomatic. Lastly, she stated that the best place to carry out vaccinations was in primary care.

Councillor Wollaston noted that given the complexities of storing the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine may mean some primary care settings were waiting for the Oxford vaccine.

64 Communications update

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

- Social media posts (Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook) updating residents on the rules in tier 4
- Newsletter out to residents on new restrictions
- The website had been updated with the new restrictions
- Lots of messaging around Christmas, childcare support bubbles was being sent out and advertised for residents to have a look. She noted that these covered some of the main questions from residents
- Messaging around potential covid-19 testing scams was being sent out
- Messaging around the prevalence of the virus was continuing to be advertised to remind people that the virus was growing in West Berkshire

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Councillor Doherty noted her thanks to the communications team for keeping up to date with the ever-changing circumstances and changes in tiers.

Councillor Bridgman also noted that care home visitation guidance had also been sent out, particularly paying attention to the questions around lateral flow testing.

65 Update on Covid-19 measures from the hospitality industry

Karen Dawson, from the Vineyard Group, provided an update on the work of the hospitality industry over 2020 and how the Vineyard Group had coped with Covid-19:

- She noted that covid-19 had been devastating for the group and the new restrictions were another hurdle to overcome
- She stated that there had been a huge loss of revenue
- It had been an on-going challenge to adapting to the new rules
- Closed in March for 3 months, Vineyard opened on 4 July and the golf courses opened in late June
- She noted that a lot of work had gone into making experiences covid-19 secure for guests and the changing restrictions were a challenge to keep up with
- Special risk assessments had to be taken out, such as extra cleaning of rooms. She noted that these protocols were reviewed weekly
- She noted that staff were routinely trained to keep up with the restrictions
- Lots of consideration of staff's mental health during the year
- Lots of money spent on PPE, protective screens, sanitiser, wipes- all of which were costs never experienced before
- Bought a number of 'fogging' machines that disinfected rooms
- Extra staffing provisions were taken in order to ensure public areas were routinely cleaned
- She noted that the summer and 'Eat out to Help Out' scheme was a real help in terms of revenue
- She stated that revenue had also been diminished from a loss of function and hospitality bookings
- Reduced number of guests in restaurants had also exacerbated this
- Christmas bookings were now cancelled and had to be refunded

Councillor Doherty thanked Karen Dawson for her update and for the hard-work of the whole hospitality industry over the year. She also noted that it was crucial to continue to support local businesses when it became possible.

Councillor Boeck thanked Karen Dawson and noted it was sobering to hear the challenges of the industry. He asked if the industry would be looking to build up their staffing levels again post-Covid, especially in the younger age groups.

Karen Dawson noted that they certainly would be looking to do so and would've hired more people over the 'Eat out to Help Out' period if they had known the demand would be so high. She noted that school pupils and students were a key part of their workforce, particularly over the holidays, so they would certainly be looking to bounce back in that area.

Councillor Woollaston passed on his thanks to Karen Dawson and all the work of the hospitality industry over 2020.

66 Any other business

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Meradin Peachey provided an update on the information on support bubbles:

What is a support bubble?

- A support network which links 2 or more households
- You might be able to form a support bubble to have close contact with another household. You have to meet certain eligibility rules to form a support bubble. Find out more about [making a support bubble with another household](#).
- You must avoid seeing members of your childcare and support bubbles at the same time, unless otherwise permitted by gatherings limits in your tier.

Who can make a support bubble

- Not everybody can form a support bubble. However, on 2 December the rules changed to widen eligibility for forming one.
- You can form a support bubble with another household of any size if:
 - you live by yourself – even if carers visit you to provide support
 - you are the only adult in your household who does not need continuous care as a result of a disability
 - your household includes a child who is under the age of one or was under that age on 2 December 2020
 - your household includes a child with a disability who requires continuous care and is under the age of 5, or was under that age on 2 December 2020
 - you are aged 16 or 17 living with others of the same age and without any adults
 - you are a single adult living with one or more children who are under the age of 18 or were under that age on 12 June 2020

You should not form a support bubble with a household that is part of another support bubble.

Can my childcare bubble continue in Tier 4?

- Yes, a childcare bubble can continue in Tier 4

My partner and I are both separated, can we both see our children on Christmas Day?

- If one or both parents live in a Tier 4 area, children may continue to move between their parents' households, as long as they do not form a support bubble with another household.

I provide support to elderly relatives in Tier 4 such as food shopping, can this continue?

- Yes, leaving home to support vulnerable people is an acceptable reason

Meradin Peachey noted that support for vulnerable people can continue, but socialising can't. She also noted that all this information can be accessed at GOV.uk.

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Mandip Bilkhu noted that this information would also be made available on the Council's website via FAQ's.

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 6.59 pm)