

# **LOCAL OUTBREAK ENGAGEMENT BOARD (PUBLIC)**

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 2 AUGUST 2021**

**Present:** Councillor Dominic Boeck, Councillor Graham Bridgman (Chairman), Councillor Lynne Doherty, Councillor Alan Macro (as substitute), Councillor Steve Masters, Meradin Peachey, Matt Pearce, Jo Reeves, Andy Sharp and Councillor Joanne Stewart (Vice-Chairman)

**Also Present:** Martin Dunscombe (Communications Manager) and Sean Murphy (Public Protection Manager), Amie Wilding (Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust)

**Apologies for inability to attend the meeting:** Councillor Martha Vickers

### **PART I**

#### **189 Minutes**

Councillor Alan Macro noted that he was present as a substitute at the meeting. The amendment was accepted.

The amended minutes of the meeting on 19 July 2021 were accepted as a true and correct record.

#### **190 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **191 Nursing and Covid**

Amie Wilding of the Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust gave a presentation sharing her experiences as an NHS nurse on the front line during the Covid-19 pandemic (Agenda Item 10). Key points from the presentation were as follows:

- In Wave 1:
  - Feelings of nursing staff were: anxiety, fear of unknown, fear of PPE availability, fear of life, fear for loved ones at home, emotional rollercoaster, being overwhelmed and tiredness.
  - Her personal experiences were: stepping up to an advanced nurse practitioner, steep learning curve, rapid discharges, different staff wearing different PPE, patients dying alone, leaving home to protect her family, having Covid, not taking leave.
  - Team outcomes were: staff unity, end of life boxes for patients who died, redeployed staff, recognition of new / developing signs of Covid, evidence of most effective medications, positive feedback from patients and their families, weekly briefings from directors.
- In Wave Two:
  - Feelings were different to Wave One.
  - Staff felt better prepared.
  - Technology was in place to prompt and support decisions.
  - Rigid swabbing process and record keeping in place.
  - Covid symptoms recognised and promptly acted upon.
  - Better stocks of PPE.

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- Recognition of staff achievements.
- Families allowed to visit dying loved ones.
- Current situation:
  - Secured an Advanced Nurse Practitioner post.
  - Life changed professionally and personally.
  - Loss of a loved one brought home the huge impact of Covid.
  - The team was closer and more supportive of each other.

The Chairman noted that some Members had the same experiences and felt the same emotions in response to the pandemic, either directly or through knowing those who had served as nurses during the pandemic.

Councillor Steve Masters thanked Amie Wilding for her presentation and for her service.

Councillor Dominic Boeck thanked Amie Wilding for her service and asked what lesson she would want everybody to take from the experience. Amie Wilding responded that the important message was that the response was only possible through teamwork and through the collective strength of the NHS, particularly in the support offered between colleagues.

The Chairman noted statistics about the lack of hospitalisation needed for vaccination, and asked if that was an observation she had made. Amie Wilding noted that her work was community-based and therefore she was not involved in the treatment of the very ill, and that her area had been Covid-free from some time.

Councillor Alan Macro thanked NHS staff who had given up personal time, lost annual leave and moved away from home in order to treat patients.

*[Amie Wilding left the meeting at 18:17.]*

### 192 Covid-19 situational report

Matthew Pearce, Service Director – Communities and Wellbeing, presented the report, giving a weekly update on the Covid-19 situation (Agenda Item 4). Key points from the presentation were as follows:

- The percentage of individuals testing positive had fallen to 7 percent.
- Cases per 100,000 had fallen to 222.8 - below the regional and national averages.
- Cases per 100,000 for those aged 60+ had fallen to 39.8.
- The weekly rates were highest amongst those aged 15 to 29, but had gradually risen amongst higher age groups over the weeks.
- On a ward level, case rates were dropping in at least half of wards, and stabilising in the others.
- There had been a reduction in the testing rate, particularly amongst 11-16 year olds.
- Hospital admissions remained low - in the Royal Berkshire Hospital, there were 17 Covid-19 patients, with 3 on mechanical ventilation, vastly below previous waves.
- No new deaths from Covid-19 were reported in the last week.
- A range of explanations had been offered for falling rates, such as high levels of immunity, schools closing for summer, hotter weather meaning more people outside, and the end of the European Championships. The data suggested a decline in community transmission, but one in 65 in the community had Covid-19.

Andy Sharp asked if there was an indication of when herd immunity would be achieved. Matthew Pearce did not know of any data. Meradin Peachey added that herd immunity was highly unlikely due to vaccines stopping people from catching Covid.

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### 193 Vaccination programme update

Jo Reeves, Locality Manager for Berkshire West CCG, presented the Vaccination Programme Update (Agenda Item 5). Key points from the presentation were:

- The latest data showed that 117,454 West Berkshire residents had received their first doses and 96,849 had received a second dose.
- 87 percent of adults in West Berkshire had received at least one vaccination and 69 percent had received both doses.
- At least 70 percent had received at least one dose across all eligible age groups.
- There was little change in take-up amongst ethnic minority groups.
- Amongst at-risk groups, most activity was in second doses.
- Take-up by young people living in more deprived wards was lagging that in other areas of the District.
- Pop-up clinics had been promoted using posters and social media and would continue through to 5 September.

Councillor Lynne Doherty asked whether the eight week gap between the vaccine doses could be reduced. Meradin Peachey responded that the longer the time between vaccine doses the better – while other countries had shorter intervals, this was not based on clear evidence.

Andy Sharp asked whether people were delaying or not taking up the second dose. Jo Reeves responded that she did not have any data, and Meradin Peachey noted that there was no evidence of people not taking up a second dose, and that the main issue was people moving between different areas of the UK.

Councillor Alan Macro asked for information on the pop-up clinics to be provided so that he could share this. The Chairman asked for the information to be made available on the Council's website.

### 194 Public Protection Partnership update

Sean Murphy was unable to give an update on the Public Protection Partnership (Agenda Item 6) due to technical issues. The Chairman asked him to update the Board via email.

Matthew Pearce informed the Board that contact tracing numbers had increased in recent weeks, but were starting to drop off. Preparations were underway for autumn and winter to ensure that sufficient resources were in place. The Partnership had been reviewing a number of summer events ensure that they were safe and compliant with guidelines.

### 195 Communications update

Martin Dunscombe, Communications Manager, presented the Communications Update (Agenda Item 7). The main activities were:

- Promotion of vaccination and testing options, specifically the pop-up clinics and the new Mobile Community Collect route.
- Good choices, such as wearing masks, were being encouraged - most people continued to be responsible.
- A Facebook Live briefing with the Leader was held in Newbury.
- New animations were being created to inform people on Long Covid, as well as promotion of vaccinations for pregnant women.

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**196 Future meetings and agenda items**

The Chairman noted that the next meeting was planned for 16 August. This coincided with further lifting of Covid restrictions.

It was agreed that a further meeting would be provisionally scheduled for 31 August and this would be reviewed at the meeting on 16 August.

**197 Any other business**

Councillor Alan Macro noted that he struggled to find the agenda or details of the meeting on the West Berkshire Council website. Martin Dunscombe noted that he would look into it and that they were looking at a way to make things easier to find.

*(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 6.45 pm)*

**CHAIRMAN** .....

**Date of Signature** .....