

Slough Outbreak Engagement Board – Meeting held on Wednesday, 16th September, 2020.

Present:- Councillors Pantelic (Chair), Swindlehurst (Vice-Chair), Bains, Carter, Mann and Nazir.

SBC Officers: Joe Carter (Director of Transformation), Cate Duffy (Director of Children, Learning & Skills Services), Stephen Gibson (Interim Director of Regeneration), Kate Pratt (Communications Manager), Alan Sinclair (Director of Adults & Communities), Richard West (Interim Director of Place and Development), Josie Wragg (Chief Executive of the Council), and Dr Vanita Dutta (Public Health Representative)

Partner Agencies: Tracey Faraday-Drake (ICS Place Lead), Jamie Green (Voluntary and Community Sector Representative, substitute for Ramesh Kukar) and Superintendent Gavin Wong (Thames Valley Police Representative)

Apologies for Absence:- Neil Wilcox (SBC Director of Finance & Resources) Ramesh Kukar (Voluntary and Community Sector Representative) and Colin Pill (Slough Healthwatch Representative)

PART 1

8. Declarations of Interest

None were declared.

9. Minutes of the Last Meeting Held on 5th August 2020

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 5th August be approved as a correct record.

10. Public Questions

No public questions had been received.

The Communication Manager presented a summary of responses to the Council's Covid-19 Recovery Survey. She cautioned that the majority of respondents (61.07%) identified as White British, and therefore did not reflect the demographic of Slough.

In addition, it was explained that a proportion of responses had been prompted by some residents' discontent with the implementation of a major road change in Slough.

The Chair invited comments and questions from the Board.

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During the course of the discussion, the following points were raised:

- The importance of engaging with the 'hard to reach' residents of Slough was discussed. It was noted that the distribution of information directly to households was the most effective method of communication, but also the most expensive option. The Communications Manager was requested to review: the costs associated with different methods of communication; and the Council's channels of communication to ensure information reached a wide cross-section of the community.
- It was highlighted that the #OneSlough Community Champions network empowered Slough residents to remain up to date with the latest Covid-19 advice. Factual information was shared widely by Champions and printed information was displayed in prominent places to disseminate the key public health messages.
- As part of the Council's Covid response planning it was suggested that a 'tool kit', collating useful information and contacts be prepared. Therefore, in the event of a second lockdown, information could be swiftly distributed to residents. It was agreed that the pack should be co-created with partner organisations, including Slough Council for Voluntary Service (CVS). The Communications Manager was requested to explore options to create an information pack.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Communications Manager be requested to review the following and provide an update at the next Slough Outbreak Engagement Board meeting:
 - the Council's channels of communication to ensure information reached a wide cross-section of residents; and
 - the costs associated with different methods of communication.
- (b) That the Communications Manager be requested to explore the options to co-create with partner organisations an information pack to assist residents in the event of a second lockdown, and to provide an update at the next Slough Outbreak Engagement Board meeting.

11. Local Covid-19 Status Report

The Public Health Programme Manager introduced a report providing data that had been presented to the Slough Local Outbreak Management Cell on 15th September 2020.

The following key points were reported:

- The rate of new cases in Slough continued to plateau with a seven-day rolling average. The number of new cases was higher in

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Slough than the rest of the South East, but lower than the England average.

- There had been a rise in 111 calls but no rise in 999 call rates. This was due to patients with sessional coughs and colds seeking reassurance and trying to access Covid testing appointments.
- There have been no Covid outbreaks in schools or other high risk settings since the last meeting. All single case incidents were being managed in-line with Public Health England guidance.

The Chair invited comments and questions from the Board.

During the course of the discussion, the following points were raised:

- Concern was raised regarding testing at both the drive-through and walk-in at the Montem centre changing to appointment only. It was explained that lab capacity to process tests was limited and there were issues around delayed data. Implementation of the appointment only system sought to lessen the processing backlog by restricting the number of tests carried out. Testing laboratories across the country were experiencing similar issues.
- The Public Health Programme Manager reported that in limiting the number of tests carried out it would become more difficult to identify upticks of infection and to contain transmission. It was highlighted that conflicting messages, encouraging people to be tested and then limiting the availability of tests, generated confusion and had a detrimental impact on public health communications.
- It was reported that GPs had seen a huge surge in demand for appointments, due to the limited availability of Covid testing. Winter Planning was being rolled out earlier than normal and additional resources to support GPs were being put in place.

The Chair reported that on behalf of the Slough Outbreak Engagement Board she had sent a letter to Rt Hon Matt Hancock expressing dismay that the Government had designated the testing centre at Montem as an 'appointment only' site and concern regarding the lack of laboratory capacity for the South East. An update on any response received would be provided at the next meeting.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

12. **Communication with Community Pharmacists**

It was reported that the Clinical Commissioning Group's Communications Team had undertaken work with community pharmacists and consistent key public health messages were being driven through pharmacist to residents.

Resolved – That the update be noted.

13. National Key Messages

New laws prohibiting social gatherings of more than six people had come into force on Monday 14 September 2020, as the Government called on the public to remain vigilant in the fight against Coronavirus.

The new 'rule of six' sought to simplify the rules on social gatherings; however the Board was informed that many residents remained confused about which authority was responsible for carrying out enforcement action.

Superintendent Wong reported that Thames Valley Police primarily adopted an 'engage, explain and encourage' approach before issuing any fine. He explained that enforcement of the 'rule of six' was challenging due to the number of caveats included in the legislation.

Resolved – That the update be noted.

14. Local Key Messages

The Communications Manager reported that the Council operated a regular programme of communicating national messages to local residents.

Resolved – That the update be noted.

15. Attendance Record

Resolved – That the Attendance Record be noted.

16. Date of Next Meeting - 7th October 2020

Resolved – The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 7th October 2020, unless it became necessary to hold a meeting sooner.

Chair

(Note: The meeting opened at 5pm and closed at 5.58 pm)