

Slough Outbreak Engagement Board – Meeting held on Tuesday, 12th January, 2021.

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

SBC Officers: Tessa Lindfield (Director of Public Health), Suzanne Foley (Public Health Representative), Kate Pratt (Communications Manager), Alan Sinclair (Executive Director of People (Adults)), Joe Carter (Director of Transformation), , Josie Wragg (Chief Executive of the Council)

Partner Agencies: Superintendent Gavin Wong (Thames Valley Police Representative), Ramesh Kukar (Slough CVS), Dr Jim O'Donnell CCG) and Tracey Faraday-Drake (ICS Place Lead)

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillor Strutton

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Akram

PART 1

41. Declarations of Interest

None were declared.

42. Minutes of the Last Meeting Held on 8th December 2020

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th December 2020 be agreed as a correct record.

43. Public Questions

Three questions were put and answered at the meeting and the responses are summarised as follows:

- What is lateral flow testing?
It was form of test for coronavirus that used a swab from the nose and throat that delivered results in around 30 minutes. Faster results were possible because the samples did not need to be sent for laboratory analysis like the main PCR test for coronavirus. These rapid tests were being used in communities and for specific purposes to identify infected people who did not have symptoms. Any residents who had symptoms should arrange for a test in the usual way through the gov.uk website and would be test at Montem.
- Do lateral flow tests work?
The tests were not as sensitive as the 'gold standard' PCR test but they were useful if identifying asymptomatic cases that would otherwise

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go undetected and could therefore help change behaviour and break chains of community transmission.

- Can asymptomatic people still transmit the virus in the community?
Yes. It was estimated that 1 in 3 people with the virus did not display any symptoms and this was a significant cause of transmission.

44. Communications Update

The Communications Manager gave an update on the key communications activities and messages since the last meeting.

The Board considered and discussed the following update:

- There had been significant changes to the level of restrictions over the period including the introduction of Tier 4 in December and the third national 'lockdown' announced on 4th January. This had been a focus for communications activity to help try to explain the new and changing regulations.
- A wide variety of communication channels had been used including social media, community champions and the use of variable message signs etc.
- Communications had been heavily involved in the planning of the community testing programme with lateral flow test devices. A mixture of static and mobile sites would be used over the course of the programme.
- There had been a major recruitment drive for volunteers and once again this had been very successful with an excellent response from the community.
- The communications team had been answering lots of questions about the vaccination programme which was now scaling up.

Councillor Strutton asked several questions under Rule 30, including about the progress of vaccinations at care homes. Tracey Faraday-Drake of the Frimley Collaborate of the NHS responded that care homes had been a key early priority of the vaccination programme and it was expected they would be completed locally by the end of the week.

The Board noted that a wide range of Covid-19 statistics were available on the Berkshire Public Health website:

www.berkshirepublichealth.co.uk/covid-19-dashboard

The Board noted the update.

Resolved – That the communications update provided be noted.

45. Local Covid-19 Status Report

The Service Lead, Public Health gave a presentation that summarised Slough's current Covid-19 status.

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The following points were noted:

- Covid-19 cases appeared to be starting to fall slightly but remained extremely high. The weekly rate per 100,000 population was 1,059 overall and 1,019 in the over 60s, which was of particular concern given the likely impact on hospitalisations.
- The percentage of tests being reported as positive was 26.6%.
- Data indicated that most cases were the new variant first discovered in Kent.
- Hospitals were under severe pressure with Covid-19 admissions very high and a large number of staff either sick or self-isolating.

The three different lateral flow test programmes were explained – national, director of public health and Slough's 6 week community testing programme. This was an area that had rapidly evolved since it was announced Slough would be able to apply for a community programme as part of entering Tier 3. The new national 'lockdown' had had an impact on the community testing programme but it was still considered to be a very useful tool in identifying asymptomatic cases in Slough. The programme would start tomorrow for the public and local residents without symptoms were encouraged to get tested. The sites and booking details were noted and the Board welcomed the support from partners including from Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service. The programme was an opportunity to engage local people and provide advice and information as part of the process. In relation to the other testing programmes it was noted that the national programme currently focused on care homes and schools and the director of public health programme was focused on key workers unable to work from home. It was likely to be merged with the community programme in due course.

The chair invited comments and questions from Board members and the following points were noted:

- The Board thanked all those involved in the community testing programme, which had been a huge collective effort to organise.
- A Member asked what people should do if they had not received their PCR test results several weeks after it being carried out at Montem. It was responded that the Montem site was nationally run and overall results were being returned quickly and efficiently. However, where results were awaited the resident was advised to call 119 – the number for NHS Test and Trace.
- The future of the testing site at Montem was raised as the site was due to be redeveloped later in the year. The potential future testing strategy was discussed. The Director of Public Health stated that a large PCR testing site would still be needed in Slough beyond March when the current agreement for Montem expired. As well as lateral flow tests there was new testing technology being trialled including saliva tests and the mix of tests would likely change through the year.

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- The messages given to someone with a negative lateral flow test was discussed. A script was in place for staff at the testing sites and it was made clear in communications that a negative lateral flow test result did not necessarily mean someone did not have the virus. People must still follow the rules even with a negative test.
- Members asked how the community testing programme would reach the most deprived areas of Slough. The Service Lead explained the detailed planning that had taken place to target mobile testing sites in areas where need was greatest, both in terms of the number of cases and population factors. Community groups and teams would be involved to encourage people to come forward for tests. It was agreed to keep ward councillors informed of testing sites in their areas.
- Speaking under Rule 30 Councillor Strutton stated that it was important to promote vaccine take up in hard to reach communities. It was responded that the vaccination programme was in its early stages and currently people were being called for vaccination based on the national priority lists recommended by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the report was noted.

Resolved – That the Local Covid-19 Status presentation be noted.

46. National and Local Key Messages

The key messages were summarised as follows:

- People should follow the key national messages of Stay at Home and 'Hands, Face and Space'.
- People should act as though they had the virus.
- If people had symptoms they should book a test at Montem.
- People without symptoms were encouraged to book a lateral flow test.
- People should be encouraged to attend their vaccine appointment when offered.

A question was asked about places of worship. They could open, subject to operating in a Covid secure way and the Council had written to them to confirm the current regulations.

Speaking under Rule 30, Councillor Strutton asked what joint work was happening with neighbouring areas of Buckinghamshire and asked if the Council could provide some form of identifier for people exempt from wearing masks in supermarkets for example. The Communications Manager reported that they were in regular contact with Bucks Council and worked cross-border through the Local Resilience Forum. In relation to mask identifiers, there was no centrally organised or approved way of identifying those people exempt from wearing masks. Communications had been issued to say people should

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be aware that some non-mask wearers would be medically exempt and treated sensitively. The major mask related problem was incorrect wearing of masks and there had been a significant amount of communications work to inform people about how to wear masks properly, which was crucial to their usefulness.

Partners were encouraged to coordinate messaging where appropriate.

Resolved – That the key national and local messages be noted.

47. Members Attendance Record

Resolved – That the Attendance Record be noted.

48. Date of Next Meeting - 9th February 2021, 5pm

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 9th February 2021 at 5pm.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.00 pm and closed at 7.00 pm)