

Slough Outbreak Engagement Board – Meeting held on Tuesday, 14th December, 2021.

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

Dr Sohail Bhatti	Interim Service Lead Public Health
Kate Pratt	Group Manager, Communications
Alan Sinclair	Executive Director of People (Adults)
Richard West	Executive Director Customer & Community

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Smith, Muvvala and Basra

Apologies for Absence:-

Neil Bolton-Heatonon	Healthwatch East Berkshire
Ramesh Kukar	Voluntary and Community Sector Representative

PART 1

10. Declarations of Interest

None were declared.

11. Minutes of the Last Meeting Held on 9 November 2021

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2021 be agreed as a correct record.

12. Communications Update

The SBC Communications Manager provided an update on the key communications activities and messages since the last meeting of the Board and advised that:

- Her team were promoting the Government's Plan B measures, i.e., encouraging mask wearing, regular hand washing, etc.
- A joint campaign with the community and voluntary sector promoting the booster vaccine was underway. There remained a large cohort in Slough who remained unvaccinated and there was a wider campaign aimed at encouraging them to get vaccinated.
- There was a campaign to encourage volunteers to support the work of the two vaccine centres in Slough which was being publicised through social media and digital platforms. Council staff were also being encouraged to volunteer. The Mayor had signed up to act as a volunteer at Salt Hill.

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- Those attending Salt Hill were being encouraged to be considerate of others as the centre had become very busy. The site was currently operating an appointments only system. The bus lane along Salt Hill had been suspended to allow easy access to vehicles to the centre.

Following questions, the SBC Communications Manager and the Associate Director of Primary and Community Care Transformation at Frimley CCG advised that:

- The car park at Montem would be available for overflow parking from Salt Hill and stewards would be on hand to direct and guide the public. Notices would be displayed indicating that the bus lane had been suspended and this information would also be publicised via social media. Parking and security experts would be consulted to help ease congestion in the area.
- Additional vaccination sites would be explored in the New Year once more volunteers were on board and trained.
- The SBC Communications Manager would be writing to all Councillors regarding the volunteer and vaccine booster campaigns and about logistics at Salt hill so that they could share this information with residents.
- Social media channels were quite popular and a Facebook boost could expect to reach 50-60k people in Slough and reached at least 50% of the local population. Information would also be shared on community groups' pages on Facebook.
- For those not on social media, word of mouth and local newspapers would be relied on to spread the message. Sending an e-newsletter to local residents was under consideration. The council held contact details of around thirty-five thousand households, and messaging them was also under consideration, although data protection regulations would need to be adhered to.

Action 1: The SBC Communications Manager would be writing to all Councillors regarding the volunteer and vaccine booster campaigns and about logistics at Salt hill so that they could share this information with residents.

Resolved: That the Communications Update be noted.

13. Local Covid-19 Status Report

The SBC Interim Public Health Service Lead provided a summary of Slough's current Covid-19 status. He advised that:

- The Health Inequalities Board was working to engage residents in the 'Talk and Tell' initiative encouraging them to share information regarding vaccinations and covid safety with their contacts.
- To date, around 18,800 residents had been infected with covid, with 600 new cases being reported per week and 1000 confirmed cases per day over the previous two days. Compared to neighbouring boroughs, Slough's infection rates were lower whereas its positivity rate was higher.
- Most of those infected in Slough were women and school-aged children and those living in households.

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- London and South East in general had higher infection rates and 40% of new cases were the Omicron variant which was predicted to be the majority variant in coming months.
- There had been 382 covid related deaths in Slough since the onset of the Pandemic.
- 42k residents of Asian heritage had been given their first dose, however, this cohort had 69k people in it, and therefore vaccine uptake in this group was 61%. Uptake figures for other cohorts were lower but those cohorts were smaller.
- Vaccine uptake remained low among the most deprived populations and only 66% of those living in affluent areas had been vaccinated.
- The vaccine bus continued to operate and would visit different parts of the borough. Data from local GPs suggested that entire families may have chosen not to be vaccinated.
- 75% of those over the age of 60 had received the booster vaccine. Sixty thousand people had yet to receive their booster.

The Chair emphasised the importance of continuing to encourage those who had not yet received their first dose of the vaccine. She was concerned about the track and trace initiative poor data. She undertook to write a letter to the Government expressing her concerns and whether covid funding would continue to be available until March.

Following questions, the SBC Interim Public Health Service Lead advised that:

- As mentioned at the last meeting, fifty percent of all positive cases in Slough had been self-reported through the online form. The national team would attempt to contact these individuals in the first instance and Slough would do so only if the national team were unsuccessful. This meant that there was often a 2-3 day delay while the individual awaited guidance and advice after self-reporting.
- Slough was working to achieve 'local zero'.
- Ten new contract tracers had been recruited and it was expected that they would be trained and working by the start of the New Year.
- Messaging would encourage the public to continue to adhere to covid safety guidelines.
- The high hospitalisation rates and death rates for those who remained unvaccinated would be further publicised.
- NHS colleagues were looking into waiting times at vaccination venues and going forward vaccinations would be by appointment only.

The Chair advised that those seeking the latest information regarding covid and vaccinations should look at Public Health Berkshire web pages.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

14. Vaccine Update

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The Associate Director of Primary and Community Care Transformation at Frimley CCG advised that:

- The CCG and Primary care teams were ramping up vaccine capacity. Currently just over eight thousand Slough residents were getting vaccinated per week. The intention was to increase this figure to twenty five thousand residents per week. The CCG had been working closely with all vaccination sites to deliver that capacity. She expressed her thanks to the Council and all partners for their support in managing traffic and congestion at the sites.
- Seventy nine thousand residents had yet to receive the booster and teams were working to ensure there was sufficient capacity for this. The mobile vaccine unit would be deployed. She asked Board members to publicise the call for additional volunteers to support the sites.
- Work was underway to reach thirty four thousand residents who had yet to receive the first dose, twenty nine thousand of whom were in the 18-49 age group. Funding would be made available to GP practices to undertake an enhanced call and recall initiative and would seek information from the vaccine hesitant regarding the reasons for their hesitancy. This project would take time to complete.

The Chair stated that it was important to provide more information to the vaccine hesitant to help resolve their queries.

Following questions, it was advised that:

- All volunteers would need to undergo the registration process before they could work as volunteers.
- From a logistics perspective, it would be difficult to reserve vaccination slots for those receiving their first dose. The mobile bus, which would continue to be deployed for two to three months, could prioritise those who had not yet received their first dose of the vaccine.
- Funds had been allocated for the purpose of engaging in dialogue with vaccine hesitant groups.
- The use of Montem as an overflow car park for Salt Hill, improved signage at vaccination sites and the presence of parking marshalls should reduce congestion issues.
- The Associate Director undertook to provide more detailed figures regarding vaccinations and boosters to the SBC Interim Public Health Service Lead so he could share this information at the next Board meeting.
- **Action 2:** The Associate Director undertook to provide more detailed figures regarding vaccinations and boosters to the SBC Interim Public Health Service Lead so he could share this information at the next Board meeting.

Resolved – That the vaccine update be noted.

15. Interim Plan for the Winter of 2021

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The SBC Interim Public Health Service Lead stated that:

- The national 'local zero team' would not be able to provide training for the recently recruited track and trace staff until the New Year.
- Funding had been identified to use of banners, posters and advertising on buses to promote vaccine uptake, though these types of initiatives required longer lead in times and planning. Currently the booster campaign was taking precedence.
- His team continued to reach out to the most vulnerable and all vaccine hesitant cohorts in Slough.

The Chair reiterated her request for all parties to call on Councillors to assist with spreading the message among their constituents.

Following questions and comments, it was advised that:

- The use of electronic display boards to promote vaccination and covid safety messages would be looked into by the Communications team.

Action 3: The use of electronic display boards to promote vaccination and covid safety messages would be looked into by the Communications team.

Resolved – That the verbal update be noted.

16. National & Local Key Messages

The national and local key messages were summarised as:

- Residents should aim to get their first, second and booster vaccinations.
- Residents should be encouraged to volunteer at the vaccination sites.
- The importance of residents supporting their family members to return home after being discharged from hospital following covid would be emphasised.

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

17. Date of Next Meeting

20 January 2022.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 5.00 pm and closed at 6.00 pm)

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