

Health and Wellbeing Board (Local Outbreak Engagement Board) Sub-Committee

Tuesday 6 October 2020 at 4.00 p.m.

Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams

Held in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020; and conducted according to the Council's Standing Orders for Remote Meetings and those set out in the Council's Constitution.

Present: Councillor S. Craddock (Chair)
Dr. A. Rischie, Clinical Commissioning Group (Vice-Chair)
Councillor I. Robertson
Mr. S. Gunther, Director of Public Health
Ms. D. Lytton, One Walsall
Dr. M. Lewis, Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust
Mr. D. Fradgley, Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust
Chief Supt. A. Parsons, West Midlands Police

In attendance: Dr. H. Paterson, Chief Executive
Dr. U. Viswanathan, Consultant in Public Health Medicine
Mrs. E. Thomas, Public Health Intelligence Manager
Mr J. Elsegood, Interim Director of Communications

Welcome

At this point, the Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the Local Outbreak Engagement Board and explained the rules of procedure and legal context in which the meeting was being held. He also directed members of the public viewing the meeting to the papers which could be found on the Council's Committee Management Information system (CMIS) webpage.

18/20 Apologies and substitutions

There were no apologies or substitutions.

19/20 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest

20/20 Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985

There were no items to be considered in private session.

21/20 Questions from the public

The Chair reported that two questions from members of the public had been received. He introduced the questions and reported the answers as follows:

The first question from Mr Spencer was: 'Having been to Walsall Town Centre for the first time in months. My question is about why no one is enforcing the rules wearing masks in shops. At least 50% of the people in a shop were not wearing masks. When I asked the duty manager why the rules were not being enforced his reply was it's the Polices job to enforce the rules as they are not going to turn away paying customers. So how are you going to prevent Walsall becoming an area of interest to the Government?'

The Chair reported the answer from the Council and its partners as: *'The enforcement of COVID legislation extends much further than the police.*

Those responsible for the management of premises which are open to the public, have a duty to ensure the COVID guidance and regulations are adhered to – social distancing, wearing of face masks. The circumstance described is not one which should be referred to the police without the store first making efforts to either secure customers compliance or establish whether any exemptions apply.

Where premises make a report to the police that person/s are breaching guidance / regulations, an assessment will be made of the individual incident and this assessment will then be balanced against the other demands being made on resourcing at that particular time prior to any decision being made to deploy staff or not.

National guidance on what a face covering is and when to wear one is available on the government website'.

Mr Parr asked: *'Can you please tell me and almost everyone why shops are still keeping their toilets closed when we are all being encouraged to use the shops and other businesses? After all it's at least another chance to wash our hands'.*

The Chair reported the answer from the Council and its partners as: *'The opening and closing of toilet facilities is a matter for individual stores and their risk assessment. They have to create a COVID safe environment and make decisions on toilets as part of this process'.*

22/20 Walsall Covid-19 data

Councillor Craddock introduced the Council's Public Health Intelligence Manager Mrs. E. Thomas, who presented a dashboard report which provided an overview of the current situation for Walsall looking at potential symptoms, number of confirmed cases and the number and pattern of deaths in Walsall. She presented the most up to date information at the meeting.

(see annexed)

Members discussed the differences between age groups that tested positive for the virus in different local authority areas. It was also noted that the south west of Walsall had shown greater prevalence of infections. The cause of this was believed to be socio-economic. It was also noted that mortality was beginning to increase in the region but there were no recent deaths in Walsall.

The meeting discussed the age groups in which cases were currently being found and noted that the virus was spreading amongst family groups. At this point there were no serious outbreaks being recorded in schools, large businesses, places of worship or sports groups. Care homes had developed good interventions and were continuing to receive enhanced support.

The need to remain vigilant over the coming weeks with numerous community festivals set to take place was noted. It was important that key messages on prevention techniques were emphasised to reduce further community transmission. On this point a Member noted low compliance with wearing face coverings in a local supermarket. The need for the public and all partners to work together to encourage the wearing of face coverings was discussed.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

23/20 Incident Management Team

Mr. S. Gunther introduced the report on the establishment of an Incident Management Team for the borough.

(see annexed)

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

The meeting terminated at 4.42 p.m.

Chair:

Date: