

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON 22 JULY 2020 FROM 7.00 PM TO 10.05 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Pauline Helliar-Symons (Chairman), Alison Swaddle (Vice-Chairman), Jenny Cheng, Andy Croy, Paul Fishwick, Jim Frewin, Sarah Kerr, Abdul Loyes, Ken Miall, Andrew Mickleburgh, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey and Oliver Whittle

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Emma Hobbs

Officers Present

Nick Austin, Assistant Director, Customer and Localities
Nigel Bailey, Assistant Director, Housing and Place Commissioning
Neil Carr, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist
Susan Parsonage, Chief Executive
Meradin Peachey, Public Health Consultant

12. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted by Guy Grandison.

Emma Hobbs attended the meeting as a substitute.

13. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee, held on 16 June and 24 June 2020, were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the signed by the Chairman at a later date.

14. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

15. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

16. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

In accordance with the agreed procedure the Chairman invited Members to submit questions to the appropriate Members.

16.1 Caroline Smith asked the Chairman the following question:

One of the alarming statistics to come out since the beginning of the Covid 19 pandemic is that certain ethnic minorities are disproportionately represented in the number of deaths. What is Wokingham doing to help understand why this is happening and going forwards, trying to reduce this aspect in the event of a second wave of Covid-19?

Answer

Public Health England published a report in June 2020, titled **Beyond the data: understanding the impact of Covid-19 on Black and Minority Ethnic Groups**.

The report confirmed that death rates linked to Covid-19 were higher for Black and Asian ethnic groups when compared to White ethnic groups.

The report made a number of recommendations around improved data collection, community research, health impact assessments and occupational risk assessments. It also emphasised the importance of targeted education and prevention campaigns and ensuring that Covid-19 recovery strategies actively aim to reduce inequalities caused by the wider determinants of health such as educational attainment, income and housing.

The Council will be working with Public Health England, other health partners and the BAME community to understand and address local issues in order to mitigate the impact of any future Covid-19 outbreaks.

In the meantime, the Council has designed an individual risk assessment to support its BAME employees in considering any additional measures that may be needed to ensure that they are protected and supported.

17. WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COVID-19 OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 19 to 34 and the supplementary Agenda, which gave details of the Borough's Covid-19 Outbreak Management Plan.

Susan Parsonage (Chief Executive) and Meradin Peachey (Public Health Consultant) attended the meeting to present the plan and to answer Member questions.

The Plan aimed to establish a clear process for controlling any further Covid-19 outbreaks and to minimise any impacts on the Borough's residents. Achieving this aim would require a whole system approach across local and national government, the NHS, businesses, the voluntary sector, community partners and residents.

The Outbreak Management Plan focussed on settings and population groups where there were particular risks relating to Covid-19. The plan focussed on a number of key themes, viz:

- Care settings and schools;
- High risk workplaces, communities and locations;
- Mobile testing units and local testing approaches;
- Contact tracing in complex settings – led by Public Health England;
- Data integration – used to identify hotspots and target responses;
- Vulnerable people – support for diverse communities;
- Local Boards – managing outbreaks through Incident Control teams.

In the event of a Covid-19 outbreak, a range of measures could be implemented, including:

- Specific advice on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), infection prevention, control measures and contact tracing;
- Testing of people with and without symptoms;
- Restricting attendance at an outbreak site;
- Cancelling events;
- Closing community facilities and other premises, if required;
- Alert messaging.

The Outbreak Management Plan confirmed that the Director of Public Health retained primary responsibility for the health of the local community, working closely with other professional and organisations such as WBC. The Plan would be triggered when there were suspected or confirmed Covid-19 outbreaks in any setting type, or significant community spread. Public Health England would work with partners, including the Council, to gather intelligence via the national Test and Trace service, laboratory results and local partner feedback. Public Health England would conduct a risk assessment with the setting, provide infection control and advice on testing as appropriate. The Council would provide support to the outbreak setting and additional capacity for contact tracing, as necessary.

The Plan stated that strong engagement and communication with the local community was essential. A Local Outbreak Communication Plan would focus on two key areas:

- Preventative measures – building confidence in the NHS Test and Trace service, observing social distancing measures, maintaining good hand hygiene, wearing face coverings in specific locations and supporting people who are medically vulnerable, self-isolating or shielding.
- Targeted messages in response to local outbreaks – supporting high risk settings, responding to public enquiries, explaining any restrictions in place and keeping residents up-to-date as restrictions change or lift.

Given the likelihood that Covid-19 outbreaks would spread beyond local authority boundaries, it would be important to develop good communication links with neighbouring councils. It was confirmed that key contacts had already been established with the Council's neighbours.

It was confirmed that the Plan would be updated on a monthly basis following Government policy changes and the outcome of scenario testing. Some elements of the Plan already required updating following recent Government announcements.

In the ensuing discussion, Members raised the following issues:

A resident had complained about a hairdressing outlet in Wokingham which appeared not to be complying with social distancing requirements. Should this be reported? It was confirmed that a key element of local intelligence was feedback from residents about issues such as this. If reported, this issue would be followed up with a discussion with the business causing concern.

What was the PHE/Council involvement in the recent Tesco cases of Covid-19? It was confirmed that the Plan and supporting systems had been in a developmental phase which meant that all new cases were not reported. Going forwards, the aim was to ensure that as many new cases as possible were reported through the contact tracing system set out in the plan. (Note: it was subsequently confirmed that Public Health England were not initially made aware of the local Tesco cases).

Following the national reporting on the increased risk from Covid-19 to vulnerable communities, such as BAME and the elderly, how were the Council's communications tailored to educate and support these groups? It was confirmed that communications were targeted at specific groups and this would be maintained, as described in the Plan. Discussions were being held with the Borough's BME Forum to explore the issues set out earlier in the response to Councillor Smith's Member question.

Was the Community Hub still operating and, if so, how had it changed since the height of the pandemic? It was confirmed that the Community Hub was still open for business but had been scaled back in recent weeks. It was noted that the voluntary sector had provided enormous support to the community response to the pandemic.

The Plan referred to the creation of class “bubbles” in schools, made up of no more than 15 children and up to two adults. It was understood that whole class bubbles were now in place. It was confirmed that the statement in the Plan had been superseded by Government advice. This was an example of the changing environment and the reason why the plan would be update each month.

Feedback following the recent lockdown in Leicester indicated that Leicester City Council had received key information from the local newspaper. Has the quality and quantity of data improved? It was confirmed that data was much improved and would facilitate early decisions. More specific data was now available on the exact location of cases and the breakdown of cases by age group.

The wearing of face coverings was now mandatory in shops. What enforcement took place if members of the public did not comply? It was confirmed that discussions were ongoing with shops and businesses about social distancing requirements. Essentially, enforcement was a police matter, but Council staff were providing advice and support.

In relation to communication with the public, was there a risk of information fatigue resulting in key messages not being absorbed? It was confirmed that there was no local evidence of information fatigue. The Local Outbreak Communication Plan aimed to build on existing activity and deliver effective messaging on prevention and targeted messaging in the event of local outbreaks.

There were concerns about social distancing at Dinton Pastures and the availability of hand sanitising facilities when the café was closed. It was confirmed that, following investigation, a written response would be provided on these issues.

What lessons had been learned from the Leicester lockdown in relation to the BAME community, for example in relation to gatherings and risk assessments for local mosques? It was confirmed that further consideration would be given to these points.

In relation to the role of Members in supporting local residents and reporting on local intelligence, could more guidance be provided? It was confirmed that consideration would be given to the development of specific guidance for Members to support them in their work in the local community.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Susan Parsonage and Meradin Peachey be thanked for attending the meeting to present the Outbreak Management Plan and answer Member questions;
- 2) Susan Parsonage be asked to thank Officers from WBC and the relevant partner agencies for the significant amount of work carried out in developing the Plan;
- 3) responses be provided to the specific issues raised by members of the Committee;

- 4) Officers consider the production of specific guidance for Members to inform their work in supporting local communities.

18. UNAUTHORISED ENCAMPMENTS

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 35 to 50, which gave details of the Council's powers, policies and procedures relating to unauthorised encampments.

Nick Austin (Assistant Director, Customer and Localities), Nigel Bailey (Assistant Director, Customer and Localities) and Sarah Lynch (Senior Specialist Housing Manager) attended the meeting to present the report and answer Member questions.

The report set out how the Council was working to prevent and mitigate any detrimental impact caused to communities or land. It gave details of increased preventative measures at vulnerable sites in addition to improved communications with the public and joint working with partner organisations.

The report proposed the provision of annual training for Members which would refresh their knowledge of the Council's powers and procedures and enable them to provide more effective advice for residents. Due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was proposed to hold the first training session in August 2020.

Appended to the report was a draft leaflet, jointly produced with Thames Valley Police, which provided information on police and Council powers relating to unauthorised encampments. Once finalised, the leaflet would be posted onto the Council's website.

Other issues addressed in the report included:

- Sharing best practice among neighbouring authorities and the Community Safety Partnership;
- Meeting future needs of the Gypsy, Romany and Traveller (GRT) communities through additional provision in the Local Plan Update;
- Improving relationships with private landowners who frequently experienced unauthorised encampments;
- Preventative measures at WBC sites and further advice to private landowners;
- Potential for Borough-wide injunctions against named individuals.

The report also set out responses to specific issues raised previously by members of the Committee.

In the ensuing discussion, Members raised the following points.

How did the Council provide information and support to residents, landowners, elected Members and travellers? Currently, there was little information or contact details on the Council website. It was confirmed that, once finalised, a publicity leaflet (appended to the report) would be available and would be posted on the Council website.

Do Officers monitor good practice in other local authority areas, such as Elmbridge, Essex, Salford and Thurrock? It was confirmed that Council websites were monitored for information and that Officers would welcome Member insights into good practice in other parts of the country.

The information on Officer time allocated to dealing with unauthorised encampments appeared to contain inconsistencies. How robust was the information? It was confirmed that the time recording system needed to be strengthened to ensure that the reported figures were more accurate.

The report stated that there had been 21 unauthorised encampments in the Borough during the Covid-19 period. What special arrangements were in place during this period and what issues arose? It was confirmed that a tolerated stopping site had been operated at Mere oak, in partnership with Reading Borough Council (RBC). Discussions were ongoing with RBC about the future of this site. Longer term options were also under consideration.

What powers did the Council have in relation to private landowners who did not seek the removal of unauthorised encampments? It was confirmed that work was ongoing with the Community safety Partnership on this issue and that the Council was able to use bailiffs to clear sites as necessary. A database of private landowners was being developed in order to improve communications in the event of an unauthorised encampment.

Were systems in place for welfare checks on children and other vulnerable people on these sites? It was confirmed that systems were in place to support children and vulnerable adults. Children's Services were informed of any potential safeguarding issues. Members of the GRT community were recognised as persons with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

In relation to the potential provision of a traveller transit site within the Borough, could the business case for such a site be referred to the Committee in draft form for comment? It was confirmed that a further report would be submitted to the Committee as necessary.

In relation to an unauthorised encampment at Chestnut Avenue, there was concern that communication about progress in resolving the situation had not been effective. It was confirmed that communications could have been more effective and that this learning would be incorporated into the handling of future sites.

The report stated that one family had been present at a significant number of unauthorised encampments. Was it possible to take action to address this issue? It was confirmed that Officers were investigating the potential for taking action, possibly through an injunction against a named family.

What progress was being made in discussions with the Berkshire unitaries on the issue of unlawful encampments? It was confirmed that discussions had been held up by the Covid-19 pandemic, but would be progressed. An example of joint cooperation was the work with Reading Borough Council on the Mere oak site.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Nick Austin, Nigel Bailey and Sarah Lynch be thanked for attending the meeting to present the report and answer Member questions;
- 2) the actions set out in the report aimed at the prevention and mitigation of unauthorised encampments be noted;
- 3) responses be provided to the specific issues raised by members of the Committee;

- 4) Member comments and feedback be incorporated into proposals to deliver service improvements and improved communications relating to unauthorised encampments;
- 5) the proposed business case for any future traveller transit sites be submitted to the Committee for scrutiny;
- 6) the actions set out in the report aimed at increasing permitted Gypsy, Roma and Traveller site provision, via the Local Plan Update, be noted;
- 7) the provision of additional information and guidance for the public and private landowners be supported;
- 8) the proposed annual Member training sessions, commencing in August 2020, be supported.

19. QUARTER 4 2019/20 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 51 to 82, which gave details of Council performance in the fourth quarter of 2019/20 (January to March 2020).

Louise Griffin (Performance and Programme Management Specialist) attended the meeting to present the report and answer Member questions.

The report gave details of performance against 34 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and 18 Supplementary Indicators. It was noted that the number of indicators reported had been reduced in 2019/20 to enable greater focus on key areas of performance.

It was also noted that the Council's Corporate Delivery Plan had been approved at the Council meeting in February 2020. Work was underway to develop KPIs for 2020/21 to align with this plan. The new KPIs would be reported to the Committee in due course.

The KPIs showing a Red RAG status in Quarter 4 were:

- KPI EA2 - % of children who attend a Wokingham Borough state-funded school (Primary, Secondary or Special) which is Ofsted rated Good or Outstanding;
- KPI VP2a – Delayed transfers of care (delayed days);
- KPI SC7 - % of household waste reused, recycled and composted;
- KPI AS4b – Safeguarding timeliness – enquiries completed within 28 days;
- KPI AS6 – Proportion of people receiving long term care who were subject to a review in the past 12 months;
- KPI Ch2 - % of Education, Health and Care Plan Assessments completed within 20 weeks of referral;
- KPI VP8 - % of child protection visits completed on time (within 10 days of the previous visit or start of the Child Protection Plan).

Each of the Red indicators presented with a note explaining the action being taken to improve performance.

In the ensuing discussion, Members raised the following issues:

Residents were becoming increasingly frustrated with the black box issue regarding wet paper and card (which affected recycling rates in the Borough). What actions were being taken and when would this take effect? It was confirmed that this issue was being considered currently and plans were being formulated for announcement in the near future.

Re the tolerance thresholds for KPIs CE1/2 (Revenue and Capital forecast reporting), there was concern that any underspends were reported as Green and, as underspends could be as concerning as overspends, appropriate Amber and Red thresholds should be identified. It was confirmed that Officers would review this point with the Business Services team and agree suitable tolerances to apply for 2020/21.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Louise Griffin be thanked for attending the meeting to present the report and answer Member questions;
- 2) the performance monitoring report for Quarter 4 of 2019/20 be endorsed;
- 3) further information be provided in response to the specific issues raised by members of the Committee.

20. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMMES 2020/21

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 83 to 103, which set out draft Work Programmes for the Management Committee and the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees for 2020/21.

The report provided details of the issues scrutinised during 2019/20 and a list of Scrutiny requests for 2020/21. These included requests from Town and Parish Councils, residents and Members. It also reminded Members of the list of Covid-19 related issues which had been agreed at the previous meeting.

Members considered the draft work programmes for 2020/21 (Annex D) and the list of Scrutiny suggestions (Annex B) and made the following amendments:

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

- Local Plan Update – to be scrutinised later in the year;
- Economic Development Strategy and Local Enterprise Partnership – to be scrutinised later in the year;
- Equality Act 2010 – to be scrutinised by the Management Committee;
- Impact of Brexit – to be scrutinised in 2021;
- Update on food waste collection – to be considered later in the year;
- Update on Street Cleansing contract – to be considered later in the year;
- WBC website improvement plans – to be scrutinised by the Management Committee in 2020;
- Traveller Transit Sites – Business case to be scrutinised by the Management Committee;

- Air Quality Management Action Plan – to be scrutinised by the Management Committee.

Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Safe walking and cycling routes to schools – add to work programme item – Highway and Transport Issues;
- Connected cycleways – add to work programme item Highway and Transport Issues;
- Traffic Regulation Orders – add to work programme item – Highway and Transport Issues.

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Youth services – effectiveness of existing provision – add to work programme.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Overview and Scrutiny Tracker for 2019/20 (Annex A), be noted;
- 2) the proposed Work Programmes for 2020/21, Annex D), as amended, be approved;
- 3) the Overview and Scrutiny Committees review and prioritise their individual work programmes;
- 4) each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees undertake one or more detailed Scrutiny reviews during 2020/21;
- 5) the Committee focus on the review of the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic at its meeting on 16 September 2020.

21. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY - IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 105 to 116, which set out a number of ideas for improvement to the Overview and Scrutiny process at WBC.

The report focussed on a range of issues including improved Member training and briefings, calls for evidence, improvements to the Scrutiny section of the Council website and greater prominence via social media.

Appended to the report was a presentation from the Devon County Council Scrutiny team to the Centre for Public Scrutiny's annual conference in December 2019. The presentation gave examples of innovative measures aimed at making Scrutiny more relevant and accessible to residents and community groups.

Members felt that the report contained a number of initiatives which could help to strengthen the Council's Scrutiny process and generate greater public awareness and involvement.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the proposed ideas for improving the Overview and Scrutiny process be noted;
- 2) the proposed ideas for improvement be implemented, as appropriate, during 2020/21;

- 3) meetings of the Committee for 2021/22 onwards be arranged to ensure a reasonable gap between the Committee and meetings of full Council.

22. CONSIDERATION OF THE CURRENT EXECUTIVE AND IEMD FORWARD PROGRAMMES

The Committee considered the Executive and Individual Executive Member Decision Forward Programmes, as set out on Agenda pages 117 to 124.

RESOLVED: That the Forward Programmes be noted.