

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON 19 OCTOBER 2020 FROM 7.00 PM TO 8.15 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Ken Miall (Chairman), Abdul Loyes (Vice-Chairman), Rachel Bishop-Firth, Jenny Cheng, Guy Grandison, Clive Jones, Adrian Mather, Jim Frewin, Barrie Patman and Emma Hobbs (substituting Michael Firmager)

Others Present

Nick Durman, Healthwatch Wokingham Borough
Madeleine Shopland, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

23. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Firmager.

24. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Jones declared a Personal Interest in item 27 Update on work of Healthwatch Wokingham Borough, on the grounds that he had recently been elected to the Royal Berkshire Hospital NHS Trust Board of Governors. He was due to assume this role in November.

25. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

26. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

27. UPDATE ON WORK OF HEALTHWATCH WOKINGHAM BOROUGH

Nick Durman provided an update on the work of Healthwatch Wokingham Borough.

During the discussion of this item, the following points were made:

- Members were asked to disregard p14-15 of the agenda which had been issued in error.
- The way Healthwatch worked had changed significantly as a result of the pandemic and online interaction had increased. Healthwatch had focused particularly on the advice and information provision element of its service. Reach via Facebook, Twitter and other types of social media had increased significantly.
- Collaborative working with partners such as the CCG and Royal Berkshire Hospital Trust had strengthened.
- Healthwatch participated in weekly Zoom meetings with CLASP and the Learning Disability Board, to hear about any issues of concern.
- Healthwatch had helped to source easy read information regarding anxiety and worry.
- Members were informed of a case where a resident who had had learning disabilities had had their nomad pack service withdrawn, leading to a loss of some of their independence. The pharmacy who had withdrawn the service had indicated that they had undertaken an assessment with the individual's GP. However, the individual had indicated that they personally had not received any contact. Kevin Barnes from Thames Valley LPC had helped to source a different pharmacy to undertake the nomad pack service for that individual.

- CLASP had indicated that some people with learning difficulties had found it difficult to find easy read information on dentists' websites.
- Healthwatch had undertaken a mystery shop of dentist and GP practice websites to ascertain how easy they were to use. The results of the dental service survey were contained within the agenda. A response had been sought from the providers. A number of residents had reported finding it difficult to access information about NHS dentist services and to access the services themselves. Services available varied between dental surgeries.
- Healthwatch had had reports of people finding the website for Royal Berkshire Healthcare Trust, difficult to use, particularly for vulnerable groups. Various issues had been fed back by the Berkshire West Healthwatches. A project to rebuild the website had been brought forward. The engagement phase had been completed and it was hoped that the new look website would be in place by late Autumn. Councillor Frewin asked that the Committee be kept updated on progress.
- The Committee was informed that a number of deaf and hard of hearing residents who lip-read, had reported to Healthwatch that they found telephone or video GP consultations, difficult. Healthwatch had raised the matter of GP practice staff wearing face coverings with transparent windows to communicate better with patients with hearing difficulties, and who relied on lip reading, with the CCG.
- Councillor Bishop-Firth commented that she was pleased to hear about the work undertaken with residents with hearing difficulties and those with learning difficulties. She questioned whether Healthwatch would be undertaking work around other groups such as BAME and the elderly. Nick Durman emphasised that Healthwatch Wokingham was a small team and as such had to prioritise its projects. He was aware that the Council was undertaking work with the BAME community. Healthwatch would in future be undertaking work on the experience of carers, before and during the pandemic.
- Members were informed that there was a disparity between GP surgeries around access. In some surgeries, you were able to wait inside if you socially distanced, and in others, you were not.
- Nick Durman indicated that some residents continued to experience long waits for CAMHS services. It was noted that the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be receiving a presentation from CAMHS at their next meeting and that the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee members would also be invited to attend the meeting.
- The Berkshire West Healthwatches had undertaken a survey of residents' experiences during the pandemic. 680 responses had been received, of which 174 had been from Wokingham Borough residents. Questions had covered matters such as mental health, experiences of using GP surgeries during the pandemic and the availability of information on services. Councillor Loyes asked how many Wokingham residents had indicated that they had experienced difficulties accessing GP services. Nick indicated that he would share the results of the report in the near future.
- Councillor Mather emphasised that it was vital that vulnerable residents had access to services that they needed. He offered support if any issues were identified within his Ward. Nick Durman commented that some voluntary groups such as CLASP had responded well to keeping in contact with vulnerable people, digitally, during the pandemic.
- A project was in place to look into the possibility of a community hub for the voluntary sector, facilitating collaboration. Several possible buildings had been identified.

- Nick Durman indicated that Healthwatch had shared the details of several voluntary groups with the company that was leading the consultation around the improvement of the Royal Berkshire Hospital Trust estate. Councillor Jones questioned whether any of the voluntary groups had submitted consultation responses. Nick Durman stated that a number had submitted responses around access and transport in particular.
- Nick Durman went on to state that the number of children admitted to hospital with non-accidental injuries had increased. Members agreed to ask the Royal Berkshire Hospital Foundation Trust for an update on this matter.
- The Committee discussed the funding of Healthwatch. Councillor Hobbs asked whether the Council should look to increase the funding it provided. Nick Durman explained how Healthwatch was funded and indicated that the Council had written to Healthwatch and other voluntary groups that received funding, to indicate that the contract expiration would be delayed by a year until April 2022.
- Members were informed that Nick was part of the Flu Action Group, which included partners such as the CCG and Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust. Discussions had been had about concerns GP practices had around purchasing PPE. Practices were required to register via a digital portal to order PPE.
- Flu jabs would be provided for those living and/or caring for those who were shielded. However, it was sometimes difficult for Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust to identify who these patients were as they were not able to get their names from the GP practices. Capacity was also a concern as issuing a flu jab now took longer, given the PPE and cleaning requirements.
- The Royal Berkshire Hospital had started to give flu jabs to its staff and were currently at a 60% uptake. In addition, those patients attending maternity appointments would be asked whether they had received a flu jab and would be offered one if they had not.
- Nick Durman informed the Committee of the CCG Patient Survey results which were due to be published shortly. It was noted that a number of surgeries including Wokingham Medical Centre and Woosehill, had performed less well in some of the questions asked to patients. Nick agreed to circulate the results to the Committee when they became available.
- Nick Durman indicated that the Committee would be provided with the following reports when they became available; perinatal mental health, mystery shop of GP websites and the Covid survey report.

RESOLVED: That the update on the work of Healthwatch Wokingham Borough be noted.

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