

EAST STRATEGIC NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

20 January 2021

Commenced: 6.35 pm

Terminated: 8.35 pm

Present: Councillors Pearce (Chair), Sharif (Vice-Chair), Billington, Dickinson, Feeley, Gosling, J Homer, S Homer, Jackson, Lane, Patrick, Sweeton, Taylor, Wild and Wills

5 MINUTES

RESOLVED

The minutes of the meeting of the East Strategic Neighbourhood Forum held on 14 October 2020 were approved as a correct record.

6 CENSUS 2021

Consideration was given to a presentation of the Census Engagement Manager for Tameside updating Members on the plans for the forthcoming Census 2021. Despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, census day would take place on 21 March 2021 and would be a "Digital First" with 90 per cent of households receiving an online census invitation pack.

Members were informed of the importance of completing the census, as it would provide detailed demographic information about society, which in turn would inform policy related to service provision at a local and national level for years to come. It would also provide important insights into the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on society.

The Census Engagement Manager outlined a number of key population groups identified as hard to reach:

- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Indian
- Eastern European
- Adults 80+
- Low Income Households
- Veterans
- People Lacking Digital Skills Aged 65+

In order to ensure that the census in Tameside was successful, it would be crucial to engage effectively with the groups listed. The local knowledge of ward councillors therefore had an important role to play in encouraging engagement among these groups. A number of engagement exercises that had already taken place were highlighted and included:

- BAME – Mosques/Temples
- Councillor Network – Individual Meetings/Development Sessions
- Charities – Action Together, Age UK, Tameside & Glossop Mind and Foodbanks
- Eastern European Supermarkets
- Housing Associations
- Veterans – Tameside Armed Forces Services
- Local Media – Tameside Correspondent/Tameside Reporter/Tameside Radio and In & Around

A discussion ensued regarding the digital focus of this year's census, particularly access among those groups that did not have access to digital technology. Whilst 90 per cent of households would receive a digital census invitation pack, around 10 per cent of households would receive a paper version. Residents could also request a paper copy of the census by phone or email if they preferred.

In order to facilitate completion of the census for those without computer access, six digital hubs would be created at libraries across the Borough at Ashton, Denton, Droylsden, Hattersley, Hyde and Stalybridge. The hubs, open from March until the end of May, would allow residents to complete the census themselves or receive help from a trained advisor. In light of the current Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, plans for the hubs were being kept under regular review and any changes would be communicated through both local and social media.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

7 COVID-19 UPDATE

Consideration was given to a presentation of the Consultant, Public Health updating Members on the Covid-19 situation within Tameside.

Members were informed that the current rate of new cases in Tameside in the last seven days per 100,000 people was 359.8. The rate had increased rapidly in recent weeks, with the highest numbers of new cases in younger working age adults but there were signs that rate of infection had begun to stabilise. It was suggested that the increase in infection rates was in part due to a new highly transmissible variant of coronavirus that now accounted for 70 per cent of new cases in the Borough.

Despite a reduction in the number of Covid tests returning a positive result, hospital activity related to the disease was increasing steadily and was expected to continue to do so in the coming weeks.

The Consultant, Public Health emphasised the conditions where Covid-19 was able to spread most easily; crowded places, close contact settings and confined enclosed spaces. Communities within Tameside most likely to be exposed to these conditions were:

- People and families living in overcrowded housing;
- People with poor working conditions;
- People using public transport or car sharing for work;
- People undertaking certain types of work (e.g. taxi drivers); and
- People working in smaller settings (e.g. takeaways and small shops).

In addition, older people and those living with a long-term health condition were particularly susceptible to the disease and its most severe effects.

The measures that individuals should undertake to limit the spread of the virus were reiterated:

- Regular hand washing (20 seconds with soap and running water);
- Maintenance of social distancing (2 metres or 1 metre with additional precautions); and
- Wearing of a face covering in public spaces.

In line with Government guidance, any individual displaying symptoms of the virus was required to self-isolate for 10 days and obtain a coronavirus at one of the Borough's mobile or fixed testing sites. Rapid lateral flow testing had been introduced at Dukinfield town hall and Stalybridge Civic Hall to detect asymptomatic cases of the virus.

The Council, in partnership with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), would continue to engage with local communities to provide information, support and listen to concerns.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

8 DEVELOPING COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS MODEL

The Public Health Manager delivered a presentation providing details of the development of a Community Champions model within Tameside.

Members were informed that the Community Champions network had been developed to empower Tameside residents and workforces with the information they needed to lead the way within their communities. The Council would provide the Community Champions with the latest advice and guidance about Covid-19 to enable their family, friends and other community members to have clear and accurate information about the virus. By sharing this clear information, it was hoped that it would enable residents to make informed choices and provide an opportunity for the community to share information they had heard about coronavirus and ask questions.

The Public Health Manager explained that other local authorities had adopted a similar model of 'Covid Champions', but Tameside hoped the Champions could also play an important role once the pandemic was over.

The Council had so far recruited 182 Champions from a variety of different backgrounds and it was hoped that the diversity could be further increased to ensure the best representation of Tameside residents. Information would be provided to the Community Champions via Zoom calls, email and WhatsApp and the Champions would then disseminate the information in the way that worked best for them. The Champions would then share ideas, ask questions and provide feedback to ensure everyone was working together to get the messaging right.

Existing Champions' projects were detailed and ideas going forward for 2021 were also outlined.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

9 COVID-19 VACCINATION ROLLOUT

The Director of Commissioning submitted a presentation updating Members on the Covid-19 vaccination rollout in Tameside. The vaccination rollout was initially focused on protecting those most vulnerable to Covid-19 including individuals aged 70+; care home residents and staff, frontline health and social care workers; and the clinically extremely vulnerable.

Members were informed that as of 15 January 2021 a total of 16,000 people in Tameside and Glossop had received their first dose of a coronavirus vaccine and a further 2,000 individuals had received both a first and second dose of one of the approved vaccines. Overall, 90 per cent of those in the 80+ priority group had been vaccinated within the CCG area compared to 36 per cent in the North West region and 35 per cent nationally.

The Safe Steps app showed that 96 per cent of care home residents had given consent to be vaccinated and the rollout of the vaccine for housebound people aged 75+ had begun on 18 January.

Following the vaccination rollout among the elderly and clinically vulnerable the aim was the targeted vaccination of those at high risk of exposure and/or those delivering key public services, including:

- Teachers;
- Police/First Responders;
- Military Personnel;
- Transport Workers;
- Those working in the justice system; and
- Public servants essential to the pandemic response.

The Director stressed that the public could have confidence that all of the approved vaccines were safe and that residents would be invited to book a vaccination appointment when the time was right. Members of the public were being encouraged to attend the drive-thru vaccination clinic where possible but the vaccination centre at Oxford Park in Ashton-under-Lyne was now operational. It remained important that once an individual had been vaccinated they continued to follow the social distancing rules because whilst the vaccine could prevent a person from becoming seriously ill with coronavirus, it was still possible for a vaccinated individual to carry and spread the virus to others.

A discussion ensued in relation to a limited number of individuals who had encountered issues with the internet link when registering for a vaccination appointment. The Director requested the details of those individuals who were concerned that they had not been booked in for an appointment but assured Members that before moving onto the next priority group, a check was made of the previous priority group to ensure that nobody had been missed. Moreover, GP practices were being encouraged to ring vulnerable patients before sending out text messages advising that a vaccination appointment could be made to ensure that those less familiar with digital technology could access an appointment promptly. It was anticipated that all in the most vulnerable priority groups in Tameside would be vaccinated by 3 February 2021.

Members extended their thanks to the Director of Commissioning and all those involved in the vaccination rollout, lauding both its speed and effectiveness.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

10 CHILDREN'S WORK ON NEIGHBOURHOODS / SCHOOLS AND HUMANITARIAN HUB

The Head of Service, Early Help, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance and the Head of Education Improvement and Partnerships, delivered a presentation updating Members on the work ongoing in neighbourhoods, schools and the Humanitarian Hub.

The Head of Service, Early Help detailed a range of targeted support that had been delivered to support vulnerable families during the Covid-19 pandemic. The challenges of the current circumstances were also outlined and included:

- Not being able to have face to face meetings with families;
- The impact and sustainability of delivering evidence-based interventions virtually to families;
- The emotional impact on children and young people;
- Ensuring IT provision;
- Gaining the Voice of the Child and the lived life experience at this time;
- Ensuring that children were safe;
- School/Early Years closures; and
- Working from home.

Despite some of the challenges posed by the pandemic, the Early Help team had received positive feedback from families particularly in relation to the flexibility, resilience and support provided over the past 10 months.

The Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance provided further information in relation to the pressures experienced during the pandemic, when the demand for Early Help and Social Care services had been very high. Members were informed that there had been a big increase in contact and referrals from the police and the increased pressure on families resulting from the lockdown had led to additional demand for services. Overall, there had been a 14 per cent increase in contact on 2019 and the number of Cared for Children had increased by 3 per cent since 2019.

The Head of Education and Improvement Partnerships gave details of the work that schools in Tameside had undertaken during the coronavirus crisis. It was highlighted that headteachers and school staff had worked tirelessly despite the enormous challenges faced, particularly as children and young people in the North West had seen their education disproportionately disrupted due to the high number of Covid-19 cases in the region.

Details of the support that the Council had made available to schools and parents was outlined and included:

- Support with remote learning;
- Planning and communication: daily calls, Scenario Planning Group, TASH, TPC, Special School Heads and a weekly bulletin from the Assistant Director, Education;
- Public Health and Health & Safety webinars;
- Risk assessment template and advice, regular Covid Committee review process;
- Round the clock availability of officers for schools;
- Parent helpline for parents of children with additional needs; and
- Additional laptops for disadvantaged children isolating due to Covid-19.

Members were informed that during the October half-term over 5,000 supermarket vouchers worth £15 per child had been distributed. The Winter Covid Grant had been used to provide vouchers up to £40 per child over the Christmas break and food vouchers worth £15 per child would also be available over the February half-term. Schools continued to provide food parcels or supermarket vouchers to those children isolating or unable to attend school in term time due to Covid-19.

Members thanked the officers from Children's Services for their detailed and informative presentation and commended their efforts in supporting schools and vulnerable children during the pandemic.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

CHAIR