

ENGAGEMENT BOARD (COVID-19)

MINUTES OF MEETING Wednesday, 10th March 2021

PRESENT: Councillor Brett (in the Chair); Councillors Daalat Ali, Emsley, Heakin and Rowbotham (Rochdale Borough Council); Dr C. Duffy and D. Dawson (Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale NHS CCG) and K. Jones (HealthWatch Rochdale).

OFFICERS: M. Widdup (Director of Neighbourhoods), A. Fallon (Director of Public Health), W. Meston (Consultant in Public Health), D. Brierley (Neighbourhoods Directorate), D. Gardner, M. Hall, A. Threlfall (Public Health Directorate) and P. Thompson (Resources Directorate).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: A. Mitchell (Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale NHS CCG).

25 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Blundell.

26 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interests.

27 **INTELLIGENCE UPDATE**

The Director of Public Health reported on the latest intelligence available for use by the Council and its partners to attempt to counter the spread of Covid-19 in the Borough.

The meeting was informed that the key issues were fourfold: testing; contact tracing; protecting the vulnerable; and prevention.

In terms of direct impact on the Borough, the Board was reminded that the most vulnerable groups, susceptible to the virus, are those who are elderly and frail, those in care homes and older people with multiple health conditions. These people had a case fatality rate of 5% or more. It was therefore crucial to carry out all available measures to prevent spread in these groups.

In addition many other people over 50 years of age were also vulnerable, if they have existing health conditions but the case fatality rates in this group were much lower. A small proportion of people younger than 50 with underlying and multiple health issues were vulnerable.

There was currently 280 people in hospital, in Rochdale, with Covid-19. This, however, compared to 424 hospital patients at the height of the first wave of the pandemic, in the spring months of 2020. There was also evidence to suggest that the vaccination programme was starting to work. It was hopeful that the combination of the vaccination programme, combined with the latest 'lockdown' should soon see substantially reduced numbers of Covid-19 cases.

In terms of the indirect impact of the virus on vulnerable people it was noted that the response to the virus was causing harm. Most vulnerable includes those at risk of decline because of isolation, financial distress, lack of care and treatment. In addition some of the most vulnerable may be hidden or less obvious and could include: Young people with anxiety; people trapped in abusive relationships; wealthier people seeing their life's work in ruins; homeless and people with unaffordable mortgages.

Members requested that consideration be given to holding at some future date to be determined, an event or a series of events that celebrate the lives of those Rochdale Borough residents who have lost their lives to Covid-19.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted.
2. The appropriate body of the Council be requested to consider holding, at some future date(s) to be determined, an event or a series of events that celebrate the lives of those Rochdale Borough residents who have lost their lives to Covid-19.

28 HEALTH PROTECTION BOARD & OUTBREAK PLAN UPDATE

The Director of Public Health gave a presentation that detailed statistics relating to the numbers of deaths and hospital admissions in the Borough as a result of Covid-19 and updated on testing arrangements across the Borough.

The Engagement Board was informed that the fast testing programme was being successfully rolled out across the Borough, and was working well in filtering out asymptomatic cases. In addition 'Lateral Flow Tests' – which delivered results in 30 minutes, were available at various locations throughout the Borough.

The meeting was advised that Lateral Flow Tests were particularly useful for when people had a 'high viral load', meaning when they were at their most infectious. These tests would allow asymptomatic carriers to be 'taken out of circulation' and stop them spreading the virus. Thus far 70% of the negatives were accurate.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

29 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

Consideration was given to a presentation by the Director of Public Health which set out the key themes of engagement activity across the Borough in relation to the pandemic and responses from the community thereto.

It was reported that there here had been sustained efforts to share key public health messages and regular updates on the current situation in the Borough, working closely with partners to ensure consistent messaging, including the public health actions taken by partners and public health.

Resolved:
That the report be noted.