

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 14<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2022  
REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND PROTECTION

**PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE 2021/22**

**1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee currently has statutory powers over reviewing the provision of health services in its area. This report provides an update on work undertaken by the council in partnership with colleagues in the wider health system. However, as would be expected, this year has again been dominated by work to support the covid19 response and vaccination uptake within the borough.

**2 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 For members to consider and agree the content of this report and note the work which has been undertaken.

**3 Explanation**

- 3.1 The council is part of the wider health system and works in partnership with many agencies to protect and improve health and wellbeing. In previous years, partners were often invited to the meeting so that members could be updated on various aspects of health service delivery. However, given the current pressures on the health system arising from the response to the covid pandemic, it was felt that it would be more appropriate to provide this report from officers.
- 3.2 **Covid Response** - As highlighted in the report for 2019/20, the main areas of focus for 2020/21 have once again been in response to the Covid pandemic and adapting to life living with covid. However, it is again important to highlight the great partnership working that has taken place throughout this pandemic and continues to do so as we move forward.
- 3.3 Welwyn Hatfield, along with all other councils, the emergency services, health and other agencies is a member of the statutory Local Resilience Forum partnership. As part of the response to the covid19 pandemic, a formal response structure had been implemented to coordinate the response to and recovery from the covid19 pandemic. Throughout the year the Council continued to work closely with colleagues at Hertfordshire County Council, especially the Public Health Team and our NHS colleagues.
- 3.4 **Covid Vaccination Programme** - The Council has been working closely with health providers and County Council colleagues to rollout vaccinations across the district. Although the Council does not have any clinical delivery responsibilities which need to be in place to deliver the vaccine, we have supported the wider work of our NHS and GP colleagues for example:

- Trying to maximise the uptake of the covid-19 vaccination across all populations, including ‘hard to reach groups’ and by protected characteristics, geography and deprivation.
  - Ensuring population groups have access to the covid-19 vaccination, which is particularly important in preventing health inequalities in across the district or worsening during vaccine roll-out.
  - Ensuring that we provide all residents with the right information to support any concerns with uptake.
- 3.5 **Health Inequalities** - The Covid vaccination model has also been a catalyst for change, demonstrating the potential to reduce health inequalities through collaborative working. Health inequalities are a system wide priority and closely aligns with Healthy Hubs delivery programme. A representative from the Public Health and Protection Team now sits on the Welwyn Hatfield locality board and the Council will be working closely with the Primary Care networks to deliver neighbourhood health inequality plans.
- 3.6 **Healthy Hubs-** The Welwyn Hatfield Healthy Hub continues to develop and strengthen its links within our communities. The Healthy Hub is a “One Stop Shop” for residents to access information, signposting and referrals to appropriate services across the wider determinants to health. Over the past year the hub has been a fantastic resource for the Council to promote and cascade health messaging, national and local campaigns and COVID related messaging to residents and hub partner organisations.
- 3.8 Towards the tail end of 2021, (when Covid restrictions permitted) a physical Healthy Hub presence was provided at suitable locations across the district. These pop-up events were able to host public health improvement services (such as: NHS health checks, weight management, drug and alcohol support, stop smoking service) to fit with local delivery need. A copy of the recent healthy hub newsletter has been included in this report. (Appendix 1)
- 3.9 The plan going forward with the Healthy Hubs is:
- to target populations at higher risk of experiencing health inequalities
  - to increase awareness of Healthy Hubs and
  - to encourage usage.
- 3.10 **Health Protection** - The Council has various health protection duties, set out in legislation. Ultimately the duties are in place to prevent or reduce the harm caused by communicable diseases and minimise the health impact from environmental hazards.
- 3.11 One of our Health Protection duties is to provide assurances to the Director of Public Health (Hertfordshire County Council) that our arrangements to protect the health of our communities are robust and implemented appropriately to the local health needs.

3.12 The Councils response to the covid pandemic is one such example, where assurances can be provided but there are also other situations where assurance will be sought, for example a recent intervention from the Public Health and Protection Team and the UK Health Security Agency to investigate cases of Legionnaires disease.

#### **4.0 Legal Implication(s)**

4.1 The council is responsible for a number of statutory provisions relating to the wider health system and this has increased in legislative complexity over the year owing to the continuously evolving canon of coronavirus legislation. Other legislation include: The Civil Contingencies Act 2004, Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 and Health Protection (Local Authority Powers) Regulations 2010 as examples.

#### **5.0 Financial Implication(s)**

5.1 None directly arising from this report. Budgets are in place to deliver some of the services described in this report and during the pandemic, additional resources were provided via the Contain Outbreak Management Fund. The fund has enabled us to support delivery of some of the workstreams and support the implementation of additional covid control measures across our services.

#### **6.0 Risk Management Implications**

6.1 Failure to work in partnership with other organisations as part the wider health system will result in detriment to people's health and damage to the council's reputation

#### **7.0 Security and Terrorism Implication(s)**

7.1 Health protection activities include working with a range of partners to help mitigate the health effects of terrorism.

#### **8.0 Procurement Implication(s)**

8.1 None directly arising from this report.

#### **9.0 Climate Change Implication(s)**

9.1 The council has declared a climate emergency and the links between health and climate change are well documented.

#### **10.0 Human Resources Implication(s)**

10.1 The council has struggled this year to recruit environmental health officers and other environmental health staff. This is a national situation and has been entered onto the council risk register.

10.2 The response to the covid pandemic has placed unprecedented additional workloads on teams. The health and wellbeing impact of this on employees who have and are still responding to a national public health emergency, should not be underestimated.

10.3 Additional support mechanisms have been put in place to assist those officers that require it. The Council has undertaken staff wellbeing surveys, introduced the headspace app and delivered sessions on resilience and wellbeing. Managers have also been provided with tools to help identify stress and how they can help their teams.

#### **11.0 Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)**

11.1 As described and arising from the content of this report.

#### **12.0 Communication and Engagement Implication(s)**

12.1 The council continues to play an active role as a member of the multi-agency communications cell to put in place to support the covid 19 pandemic.

#### **13.0 Link to Corporate Priorities**

13.1 The subject of this report is linked to all council priorities as health is a cross cutting topic.

#### **14.0 Equality and Diversity**

14.1 An EqIA was not completed because this report does not propose changes to existing service-related policies or the development of new service-related policies.

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February 2022