

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 13 JANUARY 2021
REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR (PUBLIC PROTECTION, PLANNING
AND GOVERNANCE)

HEALTH UPDATE 2019/20

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This is the annual report made to members which provides an update on work undertaken by the council in partnership with colleagues in the wider health system. As would be expected, this year has been dominated by work to support the Covid-19 global pandemic, but this report does not repeat the information previously supplied to members through reports to Cabinet and Council. The report also details the work undertaken at County level through the statutory health scrutiny committee, of which Councillor Barbara Fitzsimon is our appointed member.

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. It is usual for a report to be made each year to members of some aspects of this work, and quite often for partners to be invited to make a presentation to members. However, given the current pressures on the health system arising from the global Covid pandemic, a written report was felt to be more appropriate this year.
- 3.2 **Covid Response** – the main areas of focus for 2020 have been in response to the Covid pandemic. This has already been documented through several Council and Cabinet reports over the year but it is important to once again highlight the great partnership working that has taken place.
- 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 Covid-19 pandemic, a formal response structure has been implemented to coordinate the response to and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 3.4 As well as the formal LRF cells such as the Community Reassurance cell, Accommodation cell, Communication cells and the Strategic Coordination Group, the authority is also represented on Health Protection Board, Herts District Outbreak Management Group, Business Support Groups and the Outbreak Tactical Control Group. These are just a few examples.
- 3.5 The Public Health and Protection Team have worked closely with colleagues within Hertfordshire County Council's Public Health team and representatives

from Environmental Health teams across Hertfordshire. This partnership has enabled a number of successful work streams to be completed.

- 3.6 Our Communications team has worked tirelessly with colleagues across the County to deliver key messages throughout the pandemic as well as developing toolkits and social media campaigns to raise awareness of Covid related matters.
- 3.7 **Health and Wellbeing Board** – this brings together the NHS, public health, adult social care and children’s services, including elected representatives from the County and District Councils, Hertfordshire Healthwatch and the Police and Crime Commissioner. The board plans how best to meet the needs of Hertfordshire’s population and tackle local inequalities in health. Councillor Tony Kingsbury is one of the elected members represented on the board. The board holds meetings four times a year and, as you may appreciate, this year the topics have been heavily focused on Covid and the Hertfordshire-wide response and recovery.
- 3.8 **Health Scrutiny Committees** – Councillor Barbara Fitzsimon attends these meetings on behalf of Welwyn Hatfield. The purpose of scrutiny is to review and make recommendations that will improve the services in Hertfordshire to have a positive impact on the lives of Hertfordshire citizens. Over the past year a number of the committees have been cancelled but the last meeting (at the time of writing the report) focused on an update from the Integrated Care Service (Herts and West Essex) on the response to Covid, as well as an update from the Director of Public Health on the Countywide response. Other topics such as the redevelopment of the Princess Alexandra Hospital and night-time closures of the QE2 have been discussed. Presentations have included an update from Mount Vernon on cancer treatments, and one from Moorfields Eye Hospital regarding new sites being proposed. The developments and improvements at these hospitals do have an impact on our residents as many currently use or will need to use the service provided at these sites.

4 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.

5 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.

6 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 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 Procurement Implication(s)

- 8.1 None directly arising from this report.

9 **Climate Change Implication(s)**

- 9.1 The council has declared a climate emergency and the links between health and climate change are well documented for example in the report from the Health Protection Agency¹

10 **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. It is hoped that the recently launched “Environmental Health Together²” in partnership with the Local Government Association and the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health will help with this.

11 **Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)**

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

12 **Communication and Engagement Implication(s)**

- 12.1 This year has seen the launch of the online “Healthy Hub” which has provided a new online platform for dissemination of health-related information. Additionally, 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 **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 **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.

Joanna Harding
Head of Public Health and Protection
November 2020

¹ [Climate change: health effects in the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/reports/data-reports/publications/climate-change-health-effects-in-the-uk)

² [Launch of Environmental Health Together](https://www.local.gov.uk/news/launch-of-environmental-health-together)