

## **Slough Outbreak Engagement Board – Meeting held on Thursday, 15th April, 2021.**

**Present:-** Councillors Pantelic (Chair), Anderson, Bains, Carter, Mann, Nazir and Ramesh Kukar

SBC Officers: Josie Wragg (Chief Executive), Joe Carter (Director of Transformation), Alan Sinclair (Executive Director, People (Adults)), Richard West (Executive Director of Customer & Community), Suzanne Foley (Public Health Representative) and Kate Pratt (Group Manager, Communications).

Partner Agencies: Ramesh Kukar (Slough CVS) and Sangeeta Saran (East Berkshire CCG).

**Apologies for Absence:-** Councillors Swindlehurst and Akram. Stephen Gibson, Neil Wilcox, Eleni Ioannides, Tessa Lindfield, Tracey Faraday-Drake and Supt Wong

### **PART 1**

#### **66. Period of Silence**

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Board held a period of silence for High Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh who had passed away on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2021.

#### **67. Declarations of Interest**

None were declared.

#### **68. Minutes of the Last Meeting Held on 9th March 2021**

**Resolved –** That the minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021 be agreed as a correct record.

#### **69. Public Questions**

No questions from the public had been received.

#### **70. Communications Update**

The Group Manager for Communications gave an update on the key communications activities and messages since the last meeting.

Communications activity had been focused on two main areas – vaccinations and the community rapid testing programme. A research project had started on vaccine hesitancy and this would inform a multi-agency communications strategy to promote take-up. The Muslim community was being encouraged

to continue to take up the offer of vaccines during Ramadan in accordance with the key messages from the British Islamic Medical Association. Members asked about the feedback from the vaccinations being offered from two local mosques. It was reported that it was early in the programme and it would require evaluation but anecdotal feedback had been very positive and it appeared to have reached people that may not otherwise have taken up their vaccine. The approach may be extended if the evaluation showed it was effective.

The availability of lateral flow tests was being expanded with home testing kits being made widely available as well as the static and mobile testing sites available in Slough. Members of the Board who had recently used the community testing facilities commented how quick and efficient the process was. The Board agreed that residents should continue to be encouraged to get tested regularly, particularly as restrictions were eased over the coming months. Work was continuing to make testing as accessible as possible, for example by working with local supermarkets to have testing facilities on site.

At the conclusion of the discussion the update was noted.

**Resolved** – That the communications update be noted.

### 71. Local Covid-19 Status Report

The Service Lead, Public Health gave a presentation that summarised Slough's current Covid-19 status.

The following points were noted:

- The Covid-19 case rate had fallen but was fluctuating at a weekly rate of approximately 60-80 cases per 100,000 population.
- Whilst the number of cases had fallen very significantly, Slough's rate remained above England and South East averages. Slough was currently 17 in the rankings of English local authority areas.
- The case rate in the 60+ age group was 37.2 per 100,000.
- The percentage of tests that were positive was 3% compared to 4.5% at the time of the last meeting.
- 1 Covid-19 death had been reported in the week ending 2<sup>nd</sup> April.
- The number of outbreaks was generally low with some relatively small outbreaks reported in schools.
- Non-essential retail and outdoor hospitality had re-opened earlier in the week, although it would take a few weeks to assess the impact on cases.
- The new national messaging on Step 2 of the Government 'roadmap' emphasised the importance of fresh air and ventilation in addition to 'hands, face and space'.
- There were now significantly more testing options available – community sites, community collect, workplace collect, workplace testing and pharmacy collect.

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- The Board noted that a revised Local Outbreak Management Plan had been approved by the Cabinet on 12<sup>th</sup> April.

The Board requested an update on the local vaccination programme and this was provided by Sangeeta Saran from East Berkshire Clinical Commissioning Group. It was noted that:

- There had been a vaccine take up in Slough of 79.46% for people in the most vulnerable groups 1-9.
- Whilst this was excellent for any vaccine programme, it was recognised that more needed to be done to increase take up as high as possible in these groups.
- The programme was currently offering vaccines to those in the 45-49 age group and was also focused on second doses. 67% of the 80+ age group had received their second dose.
- Health partners were working through plans to address vaccine hesitancy. There was a pilot in Slough for multi-generational households where all adult residents in such houses would be offered a vaccine.
- Building confidence in vaccines across Slough's communities was key and the role of GPs and other clinicians was crucial.
- By working with the public health team and Solutions 4 Health one of the unique features about Slough's programme was that healthchecks were being offered as people came in for their vaccination. This had already picked up conditions such as diabetes which could now be treated.

Members asked a number of questions including about the impact on cases following schools reopening. It was responded that case rates were highest in teenage age groups and there had been some impact, but there was also increased testing in place. A question was asked about the impact of the negative publicity of the Oxford-AZ vaccine following reports of a rare number of blood clots. The national guidance would be to offer an alternative vaccine for people in the under 30 age group, but that overall the benefits continued to outweigh any risks.

A member of the board asked what residents should do if they had not been called for their second dose. It was responded that people should be contacted within the 12 week period following their first dose but residents should contact their GP if they had not been contacted.

It was noted that with case rates still above average in Slough further work was required to understand the reasons and take further action. It was asked whether this could include more widely opening up the vaccination programme. The pilot on vaccinating all adults in multi-generational households was referred to as an example of the types of measures being trialled and evaluated.

A query had been raised at the last meeting about the messages being given to vaccinated people to highlight the fact that it took time to build immunity

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and people still needed to follow the rules. Ms Saran commented that this issue was raised with the vaccination team and she would check with the CCG communications team as well.

The update was noted and it was agreed to add a vaccination update as a standing item on future agendas.

### **Resolved –**

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That a vaccination update be added as standing agenda item.

## **72. National and Local Key Messages**

The key messages discussed throughout the meeting were reiterated:

- People should take up their offer of a vaccine when invited, and ensure they had their second dose when due.
- Residents should be encouraged to continue to get tested using the variety of means now available.
- Fresh air and ventilation was emphasised along with 'hands, face and space'.

**Resolved –** That the key messages be noted.

## **73. Members' Attendance Record**

**Resolved –** That the Attendance Record be noted.

## **74. Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 5pm.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 5.00 pm and closed at 5.55 pm)