

## **Slough Outbreak Engagement Board – Meeting held on Tuesday, 9th February, 2021.**

**Present:-** Councillors Pantelic (Chair), Swindlehurst (Vice-Chair), Akram, Anderson, Bains, Mann, and Nazir.

SBC Officers: Suzanne Foley (Public Health Representative), Kate Pratt (Communications Manager), Richard West (Executive Director), Josie Wragg (Chief Executive)

Partner Agencies: Superintendent Gavin Wong (Thames Valley Police Representative), Jamie Green (Slough CVS), Tracey Faraday-Drake (ICS Place Lead) and Dr Iyer (Frimley Collaborative).

**Also present under Rule 30:-** Councillors Gahir

**Apologies for Absence:-** Councillor Carter, Alan Sinclair, Tessa Lindfield, Stephen Gibson, Joe Carter, Eleni Ioannides and Ramesh Kukar (Jamie Green deputised).

### **PART 1**

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Board held a minutes silence for Colin Pill of Slough Healthwatch who had sadly passed away on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021. On behalf of the Board, the Chair paid tribute to the huge contribution Mr Pill had made in giving local people a strong voice in shaping health services.

#### **49. Declarations of Interest**

None were declared.

#### **50. Minutes of the Last Meeting Held on 12th January 2021**

**Resolved –** That the minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021 be agreed as a correct record, subject to some minor grammatical amendments to Minute 43 – Public Questions.

#### **51. Public Questions**

No questions from the public had been received.

#### **52. Communications Update**

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

The Board noted that the 11<sup>th</sup> weekly Covid e-newsletter had been sent to approximately 32,000 residents and the feedback remained positive. There

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had been significant communications activity in support of the lateral flow community testing programme to raise awareness of the static and mobile sites, dates and eligibility.

A year on from the start of the pandemic, it had been agreed to produce a third Covid magazine which would be delivered to households in Slough. The Board was asked for suggestions on the content. It was agreed the publication should be forward looking and as concise as possible. Specific feedback was as follows:

- Recognition of the huge contribution volunteers had made to the One Slough response and the message that those who had come forward but not yet been called upon would do so in the future.
- The Board agreed that following the amazing response from residents it would be important to seek to retain volunteers in the medium and long term and information on the opportunities to do this could be highlighted.
- Include a focus on the future, including the work on recovery from Covid in terms of jobs, regeneration, skills and partnership working.
- Information on how to access mental health support.
- Signposting people to the available benefits and welfare support.
- Seek to provide reassurance from those with vaccine hesitancy, with input from NHS partners.
- As the vaccination programme accelerated and restrictions eased, it was important to provide advice on how people could continue to 'stay safe' and reduce risk beyond the 'lockdown'.

At the conclusion of the discussion the update was noted.

**Resolved** – That the communications update be noted and suggested content for the next Covid-19 magazine be agreed.

### 53. 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:

- Covid-19 cases were now falling more quickly, although they remained relatively high and above neighbouring authorities.
- The weekly rate per 100,000 population was 348, which was down from the 1,059 reported at the time of the last meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> January.
- The percentage of PCR tests that were positive was 14.5%, which was falling but was still high.
- Twenty-three deaths of Slough residents from Covid-19 had been reported in the week ending 29<sup>th</sup> January. It was hoped the rate would fall significantly in the coming weeks in line with cases.
- No new outbreaks had been reported in the past weeks.

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- 7,475 lateral flow tests had been carried out as part of the community testing programme. The positivity rate in the testing programme was 1.7%, which was in line with similar programmes elsewhere in the country.
- The community testing programme had received excellent feedback from residents. Slough was seeking to extend the programme to the end of March and widen the scope to include critical workers including those in early years, taxi drivers etc.
- Plans were being made for surge testing if cases of the variants of concern were detected in Slough. Surge testing was already being used in several places in the country and Slough was ensuring it was prepared to move quickly if required.

The Chair invited comments and questions from Board members and the following points were noted:

- A member asked if a breakdown was available for Slough on the variants of positive cases and whether any cases of the South African variant had been identified. It was responded that the most recent data made available to Slough was that the Kent variant was dominant. The Service Lead would enquire whether any more recent data was available. No cases of the South African variant had yet been reported in Slough.
- The Board discussed the reasons why Slough's case rate remained amongst the highest in England and had fallen more slowly than other areas such as London. These issues were being closely monitored by the various technical groups in Slough and it was noted that the borough had a significant number of risk factors such as population density, multi-generational households, proximity to London which had had a very large increase in cases in recent months and a significant number of people in occupations at relatively higher risk of Covid. Statistical comparator areas had experienced similar trends to Slough. Officers were constantly reviewing the measures and actions that could be taken to further reduce cases.

At the conclusion of the discussion the report was noted.

**Resolved** – That the local Covid-19 status presentation be noted.

### 54. Vaccination Programme Update

Dr Lalitha Iyer, Executive Medical Director at Frimley Collaborative, gave a presentation that updated the Board on the Covid-19 vaccination programme.

The following points were noted:

- Vaccination had started in December 2020 and Slough was in the first wave of the programme.

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- To date, 100,000 doses had been given across the Frimley area and 12,000,000 nationally.
- 91% of people over 80 years of age had received a first dose and 84% of those aged between 75-79. Vaccination priority had been decided nationally following the recommendations of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).
- The systems were in place to use every dose and avoid wastage. If appointments were cancelled they were offered to another person on the priority list or call list.
- There was evidence that Covid-19 had a disproportionate impact on BAME communities and activity was taking place to “myth bust” and engage with communities. It was emphasised that the vaccine was safe and had no meat derivatives, pork or gelatine in the contents.
- There was also great deal of work being done to seek to overcome vaccine hesitancy.
- It was an important message to people who had received a vaccination that they should continue to follow the coronavirus rules and guidance.

The Chair thanked Dr Iyer for her excellent presentation and the Board welcomed the progress that was being made in protecting the most vulnerable groups in Slough. Members commented that it was welcome to receive reassurance that doses were being maximised and that a proactive approach was being taken to encourage a high level of take up.

The role of social media in spreading misinformation about vaccines was discussed, particularly in younger age groups. This could become an issue as the roll out reached younger people and the Board highlighted that the communications would need to reflect this. Dr Iyer highlighted that one of the key messages was that vaccine had no impact on fertility and a video had been produced to use on social media to counter this misinformation. Councillors offered to use their community contacts and social media accounts to help share key messages and communications. There were a wide range of communications activity planned and already place from partners to support the vaccination programme and this would continue over the coming months.

### **Resolved –**

- (a) That Dr Iyer be thanked for her informative presentation.
- (b) That the update be noted.

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

In addition to all the national messages and following the Government’s guidance, the key messages for Slough were summarised as follows:

- Residents without symptoms were encouraged to get tested through the community testing programme.

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- People called for their vaccine should be encouraged to take up their appointment.

**Resolved** – That the key national and local messages be noted.

### **56. Members Attendance Record**

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

### **57. Date of Next Meeting - 9th March 2021, 5pm**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021 at 5pm.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 5.01 pm and closed at 6.00 pm)