

## HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES AND OLDER PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

9 FEBRUARY 2021

(7.15 pm - 8.25 pm)

PRESENT                      Councillors Councillor Peter McCabe (in the Chair),  
Councillor David Chung, Councillor Thomas Barlow,  
Councillor Nigel Benbow, Councillor Pauline Cowper,  
Councillor Mary Curtin, Councillor Jenifer Gould,  
Councillor Linda Kirby and Di Griffin

### 1        APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Saleem Sheikh (co-opted member).

### 2        DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

### 3        MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.

### 4        COVID-19 IMPACT IN MERTON - PRESENTATION TO FOLLOW (Agenda Item 4)

The Director of Public Health provided an overview of the impact of Covid-19 in Merton date. Overall the infection rate in Merton and other London boroughs continues to decline with the R value estimated to be below 1 with positive cases per 100,000 across London boroughs is on the decrease.

London boroughs were previously purple in colour during the peak of the pandemic. A majority of London boroughs including Merton are now orange with some boroughs green in colour where the case numbers have dropped even more. Demand for tests was also at its peak however this has now fallen dramatically and the extended opening hours of the testing sites are back to normal.

Covid-19 continues to put pressure on the NHS but is more manageable although the bed occupancy is still high the severity of cases continues declining. Merton has the third highest rate of cases amongst the SWL borough.

Outbreak of cases have fallen significantly in care homes which shows good prevention infection control and all care homes residents have been vaccinated. The number of registered deaths in Merton due Covid-19 appear to be descending with the most up to date number of deaths per week standing at 28 cases. Since Jan 2020 the cumulative registered deaths in Merton were 376 cases with 44 of these deaths being from care homes, 288 from hospitals, 35 from home, 1 from hospice

and 1 from elsewhere. Note some of the hospital deaths may include care home residents.

The cases in both the east and west of the borough by age continues to fall and the number of cases in East Merton were higher than the West Merton in all age groups thus more testing centre in East Merton.

At the beginning of Covid-19 there was a greater ethnic disparity between the BAME and white population but this seems to be on the decrease.

#### POLLARDS HILL ENHANCE TESTING PROGRAMME SUMMARY

The Director of Public Health informed all of the above. Merton is one of three London borough asked by the national programme to undertake enhanced testing in order to track the South African variant - though not more serious it is more infectious and the vaccines may be less effective against it. The purpose of testing is to undertake a two week testing programme to better understand the geographical reach of the new variant within the Pollards Hill area of Merton in light of the case identified in the area.

The programme aims to offer around 10,000 track and trace kits to contain and control the variant. All those who live, work and in the Pollards Hill area essentially will be offered a PCR test ranging from a mobile test, test at a centre and to a door to door home test. Positive cases from the enhanced testing programme are required to isolate for up to 10 days including neighbours (this applies to all new variants considered to be highly infectious).

Public Health urges all those worried or concerned to get tested and continue following government guidelines for Covid-19.

The chair asked about the identification of the postcode area in the media reports. The director of Public Health was not aware of how the error identifying CR4 as the new variant area but said that cases are normally labelled by the beginning of the postcodes and locality is used to describe a community of about 10,000 residents which may have been disclosed in the media reports.

A panel member asked for the confusion over the postcode to be clarified also as parts of the Longthornton Ward come under SW16. Those living in the SW16 are not regarded as Pollards Hill residents according to the media reports. The Director of Public Health said that the issue with the postcode division has been raised with the national programme. Feedback will ensure better future clarity over how areas are identified in order to reduced / avoid confusions to residents. We welcome local residents from either sides of the postcodes to come forward and be tested if in doubt.

Public Health / health colleagues were thanked for their hard work and help around the pandemic to date as well as presentation and clarifying the concerns raised by members.

#### 5 MERTON SAFEGUARDING ADULTS ANNUAL REPORT (Agenda Item 5)

The AD of Adult Social Care, Community and Housing gave an overview of the Safeguarding Adults activities of the MSAB for 2018/19 and performance. The report

presented outlines the board performance for 2018/19 published retrospectively thus reflecting on work undertaken in the previous year due to how the Department for Health and Social Care collate the national annual data returns.

The Merton Safeguarding Board is a statutory strategic function in Merton under the Care Act 2014 with responsibility for writing and publishing the annual safeguarding reports. The board is chaired by Aileen Buckton who took over from Theresa Bell in 2020. As of next year the new independent chair will be present on the annual report.

MSAB is made up of key partners from both statutory and non-statutory partners with the key function of providing a multi-agency response safeguarding and highlight areas to take action and safeguard vulnerable adults in Merton by all partners.

There have been improvements in safeguarding data across all areas of board and following the last annual report the board has been working to improve the recording of safeguarding database, literacy of staff across the partnership. Improvements due to simplified safeguard processes, simplification of data recorded, simplified forms, better quality assurance processes and an auditing tool enabling managers to audit safeguarding cases on a case by case basis and ensure consistency. The key focus is not only on the data but quality of safeguarding work in Merton. Since the last report the board has recommissioned safeguarding and mental capacity training for staff and manager at all levels. Key partners have also undertaken similar actions to improve safeguarding across the board / partnership.

The report is for all key partners in Merton and outlines the four subgroups the board is divided into and works. Further details on the subgroups and Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SAR). SAR is a legal requirement under the Care Act 2014 and is undertaken only if it is felt that agencies could have worked together more effectively to prevent the death. There have been no SAR referrals for 2019/20 however there have been 4 reviews which have been on going due to Covid-19 and 2 are in the final stages and soon to be published. Two cases have been considered for safeguarding review in 2020/21.

In 2019/20 there were 732 safeguarding concerns which is significantly higher than concerns from previous years and does not imply an increase in the number of safeguarding concerns but reflects on how we now record, capture and report the data. The number of referrals are now in line with safeguarding numbers across London. The data also shows an improvement in the number of section 42 enquiries (statutory safeguarding enquiries led by councils' social work teams). Note not all referrals result in enquiries, care management assessments or any further action.

The report also provides an update into the Learning Disability Mortality Review Programme (LeDeR) for Merton 2019/2020. The LeDeR programme was established in 2015 with the aim of reducing early deaths / health inequalities of those with learning disabilities and shows a reduction in mortality cases in 2019/20 compared to the number of cases in the previous year.

MSAB agreed priorities for 2020/21 are within the circulated papers and are adaptable in line with changing needs and circumstances of our residents.

A panel member highlighted a discrepancy on page 32 of the committee papers. The AD of Adult Social Care, Community and Housing thanked the panel member for

bringing this to light and assured the committee that the discrepancy will be corrected before the report is finalised.

Concern was also raised over the scrutiny function as the data was not current members were more interested the scrutiny function to influence current activities and future priorities. The AD of Adult Social Care, Community and Housing noted the concern raised and would take them back to the MSAB.

A panel member asked about the difficulty in safeguarding an adult facing abuse. The AD of Adult Social Care, Community and Housing informed all of the difficulty in safeguarding adults even with good capacity they can make good, bad and unwise decisions. In most cases the adult may be living with the abuser, feel safe whilst still getting verbally abused but the worst outcome for them would be being removed from the family. MSAB aim to make safeguarding personal to the individual case. For adults with learning disability or no capacity the MSAB works with different professionals and family to make a best interest decision.

A panel member commented on the reference to unprecedented demand on the service due to Covid-19 in 2019 in the message from the chair within the report and also asked whether the service and systems can cope with growing demand. The AD of Adult Social Care, Community and Housing responded that we have been working to prevent hospital admissions, discharging, vaccines and testing.

Safeguarding work continued throughout the pandemic and investment in safeguarding, resources, systems and processes have also continued with further planning to meet growing service demand being made.

The Chair asked why more up to date data was not available on the proviso that it may be subject to approval / being finalised by the Department of Health. The AD of Adult Social Care, Community and Housing responded that the data being presented is 2019/20. New data will be available after March of this year as it takes 6 weeks to 2 months to collect and then send it to the Department of Health. Only once the Department of Health receives data from all boroughs in England is the data published this is normally between November and the end of the financial year. The Director of Community and Housing informed all that the data available was reliant on other partners in order to get the full picture. The difference in data collection systems for each partner organisation impacts on the time it takes to make the data available although the local authority data can be made available without partner data the picture would be incomplete.

A panel member went further to suggest making the local authority data available quarterly. The Director of Community and Housing was happy to take this suggestion back to the MSAB Chair and reconfirmed that the MSAB role is to scrutinise the data.

It was agreed that the quarterly reporting of data would be tried for a period of time and then reviewed.

The Chair went further to ask whether the Police reorganisation of BCU has had an impact on safeguarding process. The Director of Community and Housing replied that irrespective of changes in partner organisations, partnership working continues to ensure the statutory duties for safeguarding are met. The multi-agency support is very strong and continues to ensure statutory functions are met with no concerns.

The panel asked who appoints the Independent Chair. The Director of Community and Housing responded that the Independent MSAB Chair is appointed by Inspector Richards the BCU lead and Managing Director of the CCG.

The Chair thanked officers for their updates.

## 6 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 6)

The work programme was noted.

## 7 BUDGET AND BUSINESS PLAN 2021-2025 (Agenda Item 7)

Following on from the previous meeting the Director of Corporate Services updated on the third round of the Budget and Business Plan 2020-21 and settlement. There are no additional savings to be reviewed only savings for other panels with further meeting to be had.

The settlement was better than expected with an additional one off funding being available for a short period and an Adult Social Care precept of up to 3% phased over 2 years to be undertaken for 1 year. The Council Tax referendum has been confirmed at 2% with a recommendation of a Council Tax increase of 1.99% before the GLA precept is disclosed. TFL have been given additional dispensation in light of current issues they face with a further £15 precept to cover the cost of concessionary travel additional cost linked to the under 18 travel which TFL and London boroughs will pick up.

Council reserves have been used to balance the books as set out in para 6.2 page 29. Between December 2020 and January 2021 there was a Covid and local tax support scheme grant resulting in the reduction in the amount collected by Council Tax due to more people claiming and a reduction in. It is anticipated that a further council tax support in April 2021 when furlough comes to an end is likely unless extended. National budget to be introduced from 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021 with very little immediate change to local government but could impact on local businesses and resident.

New homes bonus and grants have been confirmed some of which are less than what was expected with new grants in particular for adult social care that can be used both across children and adults. Confirmation of the Public Health grant is still pending.

A panel member asked whether the grants coming in will be enough to cover our spend. The Director of Corporate Services informed all that details of grants known have been provided in the paper. Some grants are one off grants and some are continuing and attempts to maximise grant usage have been made in order to protect services being delivered as set out in appendix 1 of the report.

The Chair asked whether there are any issues we should be focusing on following the last meeting. The Director of Corporate Services said that the only issue to draw the members' attention to was the savings put forward and if members had comments on the equality assessment or service plan then she's happy to take them forward as the report is still in draft and subjects to change until proposals are implemented.

