



Minutes

Name of meeting	LOCAL OUTBREAK ENGAGEMENT BOARD
Date and Time	THURSDAY 14 JANUARY 2021 COMMENCING AT 12.00 PM
Venue	VIRTUAL (MS TEAMS)
Present	CLLrs D Stewart (Chairman), S Hutchinson, C Mosdell and G Peace
Officers Present	S Bryant, J Metcalfe, W Perera

18. **Minutes**

RESOLVED:

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2020 be confirmed.

19. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations declared at this stage.

20. **Public Question Time - 15 Minutes Maximum**

Sam McLuckie of Cowes submitted a written question regarding the safe working conditions for Special Education Needs teachers. (PQ 08/21)

Dominic Coughlin of Ryde submitted a written question regarding the number of positive cases resulting from testing. (PQ 09/21)

21. **Reports of the Local Outbreak Engagement Board**

21.1 **Update on current situation**

The Director for Public Health (DPH) provided the Board with a presentation, based on the data provided that morning.

A map of where we were across the county was shown, for week 52, the week just prior to Christmas, and then moving into week 53 there was a dramatic change and increase in rates across the whole country, the South East was where a large increase was seen moving west and north.

Across Hampshire, Southampton and Isle of Wight, rates were higher than when looking at the more local area it had a rate of 1,171 per 100,000 which had dramatically risen, although it was stabilising a little bit and the rate of increase was slowing down. Rates across ceremonial Hampshire, the 4 upper tier local authorities in our local resilience area (Portsmouth, Southampton, Isle of Wight and Hampshire) the rates across the whole of the pandemic where we are, the Isle of Wight still had low rates per 100,000, although increasing rapidly, the Isle of Wight was still in a positive position overall.

The board were advised that comparing the seven day rates around the region the first wave on the Isle of Wight was quite small compared to now, there was an increase in the spread of the virus, however it seemed to be slowing down slightly which was really positive.

The over 60's rates were closely monitored as that age group were known to be more seriously ill, and end up in hospital, all age bands were monitored across the Isle of Wight. Also the rate in working age population was monitored as they were more likely to catch covid-19.

The trend was going up again with ventilator beds we know that the numbers are smaller so they fluctuate but we know we have seen a huge increase since the beginning of October. An increase in cases across our systems with people requiring mechanical ventilation for Covid. It's a busy position but we want to protect our population and our hospitals, and nationally that's why a lot of work was going on around lockdown as there had been an increase in patients across the country requiring urgent action to be taken.

we know that 96-97% of the new variant and this showed that it doesn't have increased disease severity, the board were asked to remember that it was quite a new variant. the South African variant was also being monitored, with a higher viral load, which may impact on the body and give worse outcomes. Work to prevent that coming into the country was ongoing.

The board were incredibly concerned about the huge spikes seen here on the island and knew previous speculation about the very rapid changes that from when we were in tier one and they understood that at a number of reasons that might have caused that for example:

- commuter density on ferries,
- that fact that we were in tier one,
- perhaps everyone was more relaxed than they should have been, because they felt safer and therefore, they were mixing more.

Speculation about students returning from other higher infected areas to the Island, second home owners and visitors. It was noted that, during the summer when there were a lot of visitors to the Island, there had been no increase that correlated to it. The DPH advised that the virus thrives on people mixing and people getting together, so we know that the more relaxed people are around those behaviours of social distancing, of hand hygiene and wearing a face covering that the virus is more likely to spread. This new variant was 70% more transmissible. With anything is if there was any lapse in those two metres, or the not wearing of a face covering it is much more likely to spread. Students around the country had been tested before

they came home and it is understood that people who travel backwards and forwards for from the Island to the mainland and from the mainland to the Island, was increasing that spread, the more people that moved around the more likely, particularly this new variant is spreading.

The board acknowledged that the Isle of Wight Council's Environmental Health team in conjunction with local police had issued their first fixed penalty notice, against a local business. The individuals had been issued with fixed penalty notices of £1000.00 each and in conjunction with that people who were also on the premises had been issued with fixed penalty notices by police.

The Chief Executive advised that the Council had introduced covid support officers to support the Environmental Health teams, Covid ambassadors had been used to spread the messages far and wide about hands-face-space and how important it was for people to stay apart. People would resolve the pandemic and whilst the vaccination was coming in, it was still about individual behaviours and personal responsibility that would make the biggest difference and would help us gain control of the rates of cases on the Island, in the fastest possible ways.

It was noted that we needed to keep people safe in other ways, not just from Covid, it's the Winter season, and the worst time of the season for the hospital we had to protect and look after our most vulnerable from the ordinary winter pressures and problems that they have to deal with. There were very few people on the Isle of Wight now, who don't know somebody who has caught Covid and there were some people who know people who have died on the Isle of Wight so we can't be strong enough about that message.

The Leader advised that following a national meeting, the Isle of Wight figures were being followed with interest and how they were being dealt with.

21.2 Actions taken and required

The Director of Public Health (DPH) advised that activities being undertaken, as a health protection board, council and partners, a number of outbreaks in different settings were being managed, these included care homes, individuals and schools. Support in these settings to further manage prevention of the spread of infection is being undertaken.

The board were advised that there were lots of things going on with testing, a new local testing unit was now in place at the Medina leisure centre car park, this was to ensure that there was the right amount of testing for the Island, due to an increase in cases there was a need to make testing more available to residents, which had been successful.

A programme was being developed with colleagues to look at community testing over a 6-week period. We were working closely with the department of health and social care and they had provided military planners to assist. We will look at how we do that to ensure that our front facing workers can be tested to make sure that those people who were required to go out to work can get tested.

The board were informed that there was a lot of work going into reviewing the guidance and working with supermarkets and other places to help them embed behaviours that they needed within their organisations.

The vaccination was in the first phase, vulnerable people, the over 80's, health and social care settings and staff were included to prevent death and protect health and social care staff. The vaccination programme had changed, to administer the two doses further apart, to ensure as much immunity in our population as possible, it was noted that the first dose does not give full immunity. The Oxford vaccine is being rolled out on the Island and that doesn't require these really low temperatures and makes it much easier to roll out in our community.

The Leader provided an update from a Local Government meeting, gambling regulations were being reviewed, especially online gambling as there had been an increase since lockdown and the mental pressures that was reflecting. Domestic abuse was also discussed and he urged all people suffering any level of domestic abuse to get support.

21.3 Update on Communications Activity

The Assistant Chief Executive provided the board with a brief update on the activity around communications and engagement. The council continued to provide bespoke advice and guidance to businesses and stakeholders through the work of our regulatory services and other services within the council not least of which our commissioning services working with our care providers on the Island, who had a very good and strong working relationship in terms of providing advice and support to that sector of the market.

Regulatory services and environmental health covid support officers had been visiting businesses and providing advice and guidance, Communication and engagement activity occurred across a range of channels that the council had available and where appropriate we continue to work with partner agencies to support communication. In particular our partners within the IW NHS trust, the CCG and Police across the Island.

The approach as a council had been one of providing factual content and updated information linked to Government announcements and supplemented with more emotive content about the impact that covid is having on the Island, work was being developed to enable people to describe and explain personal experiences of Covid and the impact it had on families and individuals.

Currently we had a single clear message which was stay at home, and only undertake essential journeys. If we do have to go out then hands-space-face is behaviour should be observed, and the importance of making space for one another was stressed. This remained the most critical message that we needed to make, our behaviours as individuals was most important.

We continued to provide information on the availability of our helpline, community support and the really good work that is undertaken in the community in terms of local community hubs and volunteers providing support to individuals. Access to

testing had increased recently, and we continue to provide the message that if anybody had any symptoms, however low level they may feel that is, it is important to self-isolate and get a test.

The business grant process and availability went live earlier in the week and there had already been a huge response to that in terms of applications for business grants.

Advice and guidance to signpost mental health support services, domestic abuse support services as well as promoting online activities that individuals can access were being provided. The self-isolation toolkit was available and continued to be developed this may include things you might like to have in your cupboard, or have available for you at home, so that if the worse comes to the worse and you do contract covid you can get some low level support for yourself at home by being prepared.

Concern was raised regarding the number of businesses that had to stay open who are providing services, although not technically classed as key workers. It was understood that some of the businesses on the Island that have stayed open in manufacturing were doing essential work to keep different parts of the world open, everything needs to be done to protect workers who had to go out to work in the community.

The board asked if there was any information or confirmation that nasal sprays stops the virus from moving into your lungs and also stops anything you inhale from infecting other people, because the virus is wrapped in this spray, the DPH advised that he had not seen anything about this spray, and advised caution, we know this virus spreads through droplets from the mouth and nose, so actually we needed to prevent that spread, by stopping that transmission through to other people, Public Health England looked at the evidence on a very regular basis about what will prevent spread.

The Leader advised that the helpline 823600 was available, we do not want our islanders to feel that they cannot turn to us for support in any form, He would thanked council staff and partners in relation to the media:

- Isle of Wight Radio – tremendous support
- Vectis Radio – for the community
- The County Press
- On the Wight
- Island Echo
- BBC
- ITV
- Other outlets

social media users were, thanked for the excellent work they had been doing with us, hoping to be proven beneficial.

The board recognised that there were some people who were key to keeping everyone going and protecting us from all the other dangers that might befall us at

Winter. As we know, the hospital especially, the primary care and the GP's come under significant pressure in Winter without covid. It was recognised that as a community we needed to support those people in the best possible way. The next stage was Lateral Flow Testing, work had been undertaken to help secure this for the Island.

22. **Members' Question Time**

There were no members questions raised.

CHAIRMAN


Public Question time

To view any public questions that were put to this committee, they will be listed as an additional PDF document below the public question time section within the online minutes, an example is displayed below:

32. [Public Question Time](#) PDF 87 KB

Questions must be delivered in writing
later than 5pm on Friday, 15 January 20

Additional documents:

- [PQ 11-21](#)  PDF 85 KB
- [PQ 12-21](#)  PDF 90 KB

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Local Outbreak Engagement Board – 14 January 2021

Written question from Dominic Coughlin of the National Education Union:

Given that the test centre on the Island is a drive-in centre and only accessible to those with access to a car, would you confirm the total number of postal tests requested by Island residents, the total successfully returned for testing and the number of positive cases resulting from postal tests since September?’

Response

The Isle of Wight Council do not hold this data and a request to the DHSC has been made, once the information is received it will be made available.

Post Meeting

From 1 September 2020 to 10 January 2021 the figures for the Isle of Wight are as below:

Number of postal tests requested 12,004

Number of postal tests undertaken 10,082

Number of positive results >1,360 (some days this was suppressed due to small numbers)

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Local Outbreak Engagement Board – 14 January 2021

Written question from Sam Mcluckie of Cowes:

I am writing to this board as a very concerned SEN teacher on the Isle of Wight. I would like to encourage the board to publish the SEN and regional specific data that suggests SEN settings are safe for staff members. My school receives a daily barrage of Department for Education (DFE) propaganda and spin that suggests schools are safe places for children. This is a statement that, in the main, I agree with. There is limited evidence of school age children becoming sick, but their ability to spread the disease and act as - in the words of our PM -, "vectors for transmission." I have read the report (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/covid-19-infection-rates-in-schools-mirror-rates-in-the-community>) from the DFE that the government, local authority and DFE use to suggest that schools are safe, but this is severely limited and lacks statistical credibility if applied across the breadth of the country. The report even states that, "The SIS design (which is concentrated in areas of England where COVID-19 infection was highest at the start of the academic year) meaning the data presented are not intended to be generalisable to England as a whole."

So I would, once again, repeat my request that the local authority, DFE and government publish the evidence that suggests SEN teaching staff are at less risk than their mainstream counterparts and which eliminates their legal requirements to provide safe working conditions. I would like to praise the incredible diligence and hard work of school leaders and place the blame for this debacle squarely at the door of local council leaders and MP. I would invite the Rt Hon Robert William Henry Seely to spend a day in a confined classroom with 7 SEN children and 5 members of staff, but this would be a direct breach of Covid-19 security protocols.

Please could the board also raise awareness of the complete lie that schools are shut as we have upwards of 50 SEN children in attendance and are currently, as the law states, open to 100% of our cohort.

Response

Throughout the pandemic the Isle of Wight Council has carefully followed the advice circulated by the DfE. This has been informed by Public Health England and therefore contains the advice both schools and the Local Authority should follow.

Mainstream primary and secondary schools are technically closed but with the requirement that all vulnerable children and children of critical workers are able to access full-time education provision on site, face to face. Proportions of vulnerable children and children of critical workers vary from school to school.

Special schools and alternative provision (such as the Island Learning Centre) are required to remain open. All children in special schools have an EHCP (education, health and care plan) and are therefore within the vulnerable category, hence all children and young people in special schools may have access to full-time, face to face provision.

The position regarding all children attending special schools and how that is reconciled with the need to reduce attendance and social mixing has been clarified by the DfE. The intention when making the decision to 'close' schools was to reduce overall social contact across the education system, geographical areas and the country, rather than individually by institution. This means that the DfE can meet its desire to reduce household mixing overall, by closing schools to all but the children of critical workers and vulnerable children, whilst ensuring the latter continue to have access to high quality education in school. The DfE continues to assert that schools are safe and that reduced numbers are not a direct safety measure but a means of reducing social mixing.