

Minutes

EXTERNAL SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

9 February 2021

VIRTUAL



HILLINGDON
LONDON

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Nick Denys (Chairman), Devi Radia (Vice-Chairman), Simon Arnold, Raymond Graham, Vanessa Hurhangee, Stuart Mathers (Opposition Lead), Ali Milani and June Nelson</p> <p>Also Present: Richard Ellis, Joint Lead Borough Director, Hillingdon Clinical Commissioning Group (HCCG) Dr Veno Suri, Vice Chair, Hillingdon Local Medical Committee (LMC) Laura Tarling, External Affairs Manager, Post Office Ltd Sandra Taylor, Director Provider Services and Commissioned Care, London Borough of Hillingdon</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Nikki O'Halloran (Democratic Services Manager)</p>
27.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO REPORT THE PRESENCE OF ANY SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>There were no apologies for absence.</p>
28.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest made.</p>
29.	<p>EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That all items of business be considered in public.</p>
30.	<p>MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 12 JANUARY 2021 (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2021 be agreed as a correct record.</p>
31.	<p>MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 14 JANUARY 2021 (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2021 be agreed as a correct record.</p>
32.	<p>UPDATE ON COVID-19 VACCINATION PROGRAMME IN HILLINGDON (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed those present to the meeting.</p> <p>Mr Richard Ellis, Joint Lead Borough Director for Hillingdon Clinical Commissioning</p>

Group (HCCG), advised that the COVID-19 vaccination programme had been running since the third week of December 2020, approximately 6-7 weeks. A number of vaccination sites had been running across the Borough and it was hoped that more would be opened.

The Department of Health had set a target for all areas to have vaccinated 75% of the following priority groups by 14 February 2021:

1. Residents in a care home for older adults and staff working in care homes for older adults;
2. All those 80 years of age and over and frontline health and social care workers;
3. All those aged 75-79; and
4. All those aged 70-74 and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals (not including pregnant women and those under 16 years of age).

Mr Ellis confirmed that Hillingdon had already achieved the following:

1. 84% of those aged 80+ had been vaccinated;
2. 90% of those aged 75-79 had been vaccinated;
3. 84% of those aged 70-74 had been vaccinated;
4. 60% of clinically and extremely vulnerable individuals had been vaccinated;
5. 73% of care home residents and staff had been vaccinated. CNWL and other colleagues had vaccinated almost all residents in all care homes with the remainder being vaccinated on 10 February 2021; and
6. Approximately two thirds of health and social care staff had been vaccinated.

It was anticipated that the vaccination programme would be widened out to the following groups in the next week:

1. All those aged 65-69; and
2. Adults aged 16-65 in an at-risk group.

Mr Ellis noted that the success of the vaccination programme in Hillingdon had been as a result of joint working between the various partners including the Council, voluntary sector and health partners. Ms Sandra Taylor, the Council's Director Provider Services and Commissioned Care, echoed the comments made by Mr Ellis in relation to the effectiveness of the joined up working that been undertaken.

Dr Veno Suri, Vice Chairman of the Hillingdon Local Medical Committee, advised that general practice had been prioritising the roll out of the vaccination programme. That said, he strongly advised that patients should continue to contact their GP for routine care as normal services were also still being provided. GPs were being advised when their patients had not attended a vaccination appointment or had not booked an appointment even though they were eligible and were proactively contacting them to address any issues. They had also been working hard to identify eligible patients and book them in for a vaccination appointment.

Dr Suri stated that he had been humbled by the way that the vaccination programme had been rolled out in Hillingdon, particularly in comparison with other London boroughs. The programme had been well coordinated and issues experienced tended to be in relation to the availability of the vaccine rather than resources. These issues had included the logistics around the three-day shelf life of one of the vaccines that had been administered.

Ms Taylor advised that action had been taken to identify all social care workers in Hillingdon (approximately 4,600) and all of them had been offered the vaccination. Around 2,500 of these staff had taken up the vaccination offer so far, with this figure

still increasing. There had been reluctance from some staff cohorts who had adopted a watch and wait approach. It had been made clear to those who had not yet taken up the offer or who had refused the offer, that they could change their minds at any time.

Members appreciated the effort that had been made to deal with the huge logistical challenge that had been posed in getting the vaccination programme up and running. It was noted that the closest mass vaccination site to Hillingdon had been based in Wembley but this seemed a significant journey for some of the Borough's residents. Mr Ellis advised that residents would be offered more pharmacy sites as they became available and noted that the opening of local mass vaccination sites was awaited. He would provide the Democratic Services Manager with more information about these additional mass vaccination sites which could then be circulated to Members.

Concern was expressed that some residents were unable to get to local vaccination appointments as they did not have their own transport and were unable to use public transport. Mr Ellis advised that arrangements were being made for those patients who were registered with their GP as being housebound to have their vaccination at home. In addition, consideration was being given to the provision of reduced cost / free transport for some residents to vaccination sites.

Dr Suri believed that the service being provided by the Federation of GPs would be the way forward. If it transpired that the COVID vaccination needed to be undertaken annually, Mr Ellis believed that it would make sense that this was done by GPs and community pharmacies at the same time as the flu vaccination.

Although recent media broadcasts had been negative about the performance of the vaccination programme in North West London (NWL), the statistics presented at the meeting had painted a different picture. Mr Ellis would provide the Democratic Services Manager with local statistics for circulation to the Committee. He noted that NWL should be proud of its performance as these boroughs had vaccinated more people in less time than the rest of London. Of the eight NWL boroughs, Hillingdon had performed the best.

It was suggested that action needed to be taken to ensure that all of the feedback being given at all levels was collated in one place. Mr Ellis spent a lot of time talking to health colleagues and agreed that there was a need to collate all of the ideas and suggestions that were coming through. Ms Taylor noted that the Health Protection Board had been meeting on a monthly basis. In addition, a NWL communication group had been collecting information about lessons learnt and promoting the uptake of the vaccine to priority groups.

Dr Suri noted that GPs had access to a dashboard which identified which patients had not taken up the opportunity to have the vaccine. At his Hayes practice, there was a large South Asian population but uptake had not been low. However, neighbouring practices had reported a low uptake from this same group in their areas. To encourage more BAME residents to have the vaccination, videos had been produced in different languages to dispel any myths. GPs were advised when their patients did not turn up for their vaccination or if they had not booked an appointment to get their vaccination. When this happened, surgeries were proactively contacting these patients to identify any issues.

It was noted that antibody tests had been undertaken for health staff in 2020 but the results had not provided particularly useful data. Whilst the test could establish whether or not the individual had had the virus, it could not state when they had had it,

how long it had taken to develop the antibodies or how long the antibodies would last. Dr Suri was not aware of any plans for further antibody testing to be rolled out post COVID vaccination – effort was currently being concentrated on rolling out the first dose of the vaccination.

With regard to the supply of the vaccine, Mr Ellis advised that NWL would welcome as much as it could get. To this end, NWL continued to push for additional supplies of the vaccine. Although there had been rumours of a reduced supply, this had not yet been proven to be true. Dr Suri noted that there had not been any issues with supply in Ruislip and, although the Hayes site had expected problems, this had not been borne out.

Ms Taylor advised that Community Champions had been appointed and were working on the uptake of testing in the South of the Borough for both lateral flow (LF) and polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests. Uptake in the area had been low in terms of vaccination and testing. As such, work was being undertaken with community leaders and the police to understand what was preventing uptake in these communities. Webinars were being held for faith leaders and leaflets were being sent out with home care workers to give to patients. PPE had also been distributed. A positive and active campaign had been undertaken to promote wellbeing. Ms Taylor would provide the Democratic Services Manager with a written update on the progress of the Community Champions by the end of March 2021.

Concern was expressed that information provided to residents about the LF test had not been as crisp as it could have been. Ms Taylor advised that she would take this issue back to the Hillingdon lead on the communications team. Whilst it was understood that positive LF tests were largely reliable, there was still a proportion of false negatives. That said, it was still a useful tool to help key workers to know their current position and could take some cases out of circulation. In Hillingdon, social care staff were being asked to take two PCR and two LF tests each week.

Members were advised that the national booking system / process for inviting residents to have their second dose of the COVID vaccination had changed. Whereas previously individuals had been helped by their GP surgery to get a second dose appointment after they had received the first dose, these second dose appointments (time, date and place) were now automatically being made at their first appointment. It was noted that patients should wait to be contacted about their appointments rather than chasing their GP.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1. Mr Richard Ellis provide the Democratic Services Manager with more information about additional mass vaccination sites for circulation to Members;**
- 2. Mr Richard Ellis provide the Democratic Services Manager with local statistics on the vaccination programme in Hillingdon for circulation to the Committee;**
- 3. Ms Sandra Taylor provide the Democratic Services Manager with a written update on the progress of the Community Champions by the end of March 2021; and**
- 4. the discussion be noted.**

33.

UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PAST REVIEWS OF THE COMMITTEE - GP PRESSURES (*Agenda Item 8*)

Dr Veno Suri, Vice Chairman of the Hillingdon Local Medical Committee (LMC), advised that the review had sought to streamline liaisons between GPs and social services. As such, discussions had been held between GPs and Council officers to agree a process to streamline requests for letters in relation to housing, blue badges and benefits. However, the Hillingdon Clinical Commissioning Group (HCCG) would be required to agree any funding associated with this work.

There had been pressures in the South of the Borough in relation to GP recruitment. Dr Suri noted that, to try to alleviate this, the NHS had agreed to cycle trainee GPs into the South of the Borough which would provide more flexibility in the GP training.

It was noted that the recommendations had been agreed by Cabinet in January 2020 which had been just before the pandemic had arrived in the UK. Although some progress had been made, the progress of some recommendations had been adversely affected by COVID-19. As such, it was agreed that a further update report be scheduled for the Committee's meeting in February 2022 to give those parties involved more time to implement the recommendations.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1. a further update report on the implementation of recommendations from the GP Pressures review be scheduled for February 2022; and**
- 2. the discussion be noted.**

34. **POST OFFICE SERVICES IN HILLINGDON** (*Agenda Item 7*)

The Chairman thanked Ms Laura Tarling, External Affairs Manager at Post Office Limited, for attending. Ms Tarling noted that it had been an extraordinary year and that the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted on retailers which had, in turn, impacted on the Post Office.

Post offices had been deemed to be an essential service during the pandemic and, in the current period of lockdown, 99% of post offices had remained open for business. However, a small number had been affected by the pandemic resulting in temporary closures and reduced hours, potentially at short notice following staff shortages. Trade levels had been mixed with some post offices seeing an increase in transactions as more people had been sending parcels and mail, especially over the Christmas period when they had been unable to visit in person. However, income from travel insurance and foreign currency had not been good following COVID-related restrictions on travel.

The pandemic had dramatically changed how customers were shopping but had remained positive, supporting and understanding. In December 2020, there had been £640m of cash withdrawals which had been the highest level of withdrawals ever.

In the last year, Post Office Limited (PO) had been supporting its post masters to ensure that they were able to provide essential services to the community. They provided them with PPE and perspex screens and had set up a hardship fund. They had also provided them with posters to remind customers to wear face coverings, keep 2m apart and regularly wash their hands. Ms Tarling noted that the post masters in Hillingdon had worked hard to ensure the continued provision of post office services in the Borough and they had done a good job. 26 post offices had remained open across Hillingdon, although some of them may have been disrupted by the need for actions such as deep cleans.

The Post Office Strategy looked to maintain a network of 11,500 post offices across the

UK. Ms Tarling advised that the PO was not looking to cut services but was instead looking at how it could best serve its communities. Although there would not be a public consultation, findings from the review would be discussed with the relevant Government department and the findings would then be made public.

Concern was expressed that post office services were still not available in the Heathrow Villages area and it was queried whether a suitable business had been identified in the area to provide the services. Ms Tarling noted that Sipson and Harmondsworth were in the area that would be affected if the third runway at Heathrow went ahead. She noted that businesses would be less likely to invest in starting a post office (or adapting their existing business to include post office services) if there was a possibility that the third runway would go ahead and their future was uncertain.

Members queried whether there was anything that the Council could do to help identify a business to provide post office services in Heathrow Villages. It was suggested that a short-term investment could be for as long as five years. Ms Tarling advised that the PO did want to work with local communities and would welcome any support that the Council could provide. The provision of services did come at a cost to PO which would be taxpayer funded. Over the past twelve months, the focus had been on providing support for existing post offices and guaranteeing remuneration or post masters. As there was currently no funding available for new post offices, consideration was being given to exploring the development of a lower cost model for the future. Whatever model was used, the identification of someone to run the services with adequate premises and funding would be key.

RESOLVED: That the discussion be noted.

35. **WORK PROGRAMME** (*Agenda Item 9*)

Consideration was given to the Committee's Work Programme. It was noted that the Committee's next meeting on 23 March 2021 would be focussing on crime and disorder. The Chairman asked Members to forward questions to the Democratic Services Manager that they would like answered by the Metropolitan Police Service. As well as the usual Safer Hillingdon Partnership performance report, the Committee would be looking at the impact of the pandemic on the provision of police services in the Borough.

The Programme of Meetings 2021/2022 would be considered by Council on 25 February 2021 and the External Services Select Committee meeting dates would be agreed. At the meeting on 23 March 2021, it was agreed that Members would discuss possible topics for consideration at its meetings during the 2021/2022 municipal year.

Given the impact of COVID-19, it was agreed that a further update report on the GP Pressures review be scheduled for the Committee's meeting in February 2022 to give the relevant parties more time to implement the recommendations.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1. Members forward questions that they would like sent to the police to the Democratic Services Manager;**
- 2. an update on the implementation of the recommendations of the GP Pressures review be considered at the meeting in February 2022; and**
- 3. the Work Programme be agreed.**

The meeting, which commenced at 6.30 pm, closed at 7.50 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Nikki O'Halloran on 01895 250472. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.