

Major review: Impact of a Pandemic in Hillingdon and the Effects on Council Services

Witness session 3

Contact Officer: Khalid Ahmed
Telephone: 01895 250833

REASON FOR ITEM

To enable the Committee to continue to gather evidence as part of their review into the impact of a pandemic in Hillingdon and the effects on Council services and residents.

OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE COMMITTEE

1. Question the witnesses using the suggested questions
2. Ask additional/supplementary questions as required
3. Highlight issues for further investigation

INFORMATION

1. The Committee commenced its review into the impact of a pandemic in Hillingdon and the effects on Council Services at its meeting on 7 July 2009. The first witness session on 23 July concentrated on the business and continuity plans which the Council already had in place in the event of a pandemic. Members heard evidence from the Civil Protection Manager, the Head of ICT, the Head of HR, the Council's Bereavement Officer and the Head of Democratic Services.

2. The second witness session on 8 September focused on communication, schools and their business and resilience plans, the vaccination programme and the possible prioritisation being given to healthcare and social care workers, the carrying out of vaccinations in the Occupational Health Suite and the implementation of additional hygiene measures. Members heard from the Head of Resources, Policy & Performance, Education and Children's Services, the Deputy Head of Communications, the Executive Director for Flu Resilience at Hillingdon Primary Care Trust and a representative from Uxbridge College

3. As a result of those first two witness sessions and because of the circumstances surrounding the present swine flu pandemic, Members have agreed three initial recommendations which will be submitted to the Cabinet meeting on 15 October 2009. These are:

a) That a skills and knowledge audit be undertaken of the Council's workforce to build up a computerised database. This information to include details about staff who have been vaccinated against the swine flu virus, those who have had swine flu, those with children and with childcare responsibilities, those staff who were front line staff and those that come into contact with the public.

b) That enhancements be considered to the Council's Constitution to provide further contingency arrangements for the decision making processes of the Council, in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

c) In order to mitigate the impact of a major pandemic, officers ensure that business and continuity plans are in place at all educational and care establishments operating within the borough. This includes but is not limited to playgroups, nurseries, schools, further education and higher education establishments as well as social care homes.

4. At the last meeting Members asked that officers undertake a sample survey of the Borough's educational and care establishments to ask whether they had in place business and continuity plans for a pandemic. Subsequent to the meeting, and with the agreement of the Chairman, this was not carried out as this was already being carried out by Education officers. Regarding the survey for care establishments, a representative from Adult Social Care, Health and Housing will attend this meeting and answer Members questions on the contingency arrangements for social care homes and facilities.

5. In addition Members asked that a representative of Brunel University be invited to inform Members of their preparations for a pandemic.

6. For Members information, the latest figures from the Health Protection Agency shows that an estimated 14,000¹ new cases of swine flu in the previous week, which was an increase in the previous week. A license for the GSK vaccine has been approved by the European Commission and all NHS Organisations must ensure that their plans for vaccinating patients in the priority groups and eligible staff are in place.

WITNESSES

7. The following witnesses have been invited to attend the second witness session:

- Representative from Adult Social Care, Health and Housing, LBH
- Dr Iran Adil-Smith – Brunel University
- Representatives from schools in the Borough

¹ Department of Health – "The Week" – issue 115 25-1 October 2009

Suggested questions

- i) What are the business and continuity plans which are in place for a pandemic for the social care establishments in the Borough?
- ii) What hygiene measures are taking place in social care establishments to mitigate the impact of a pandemic?
- iii) What preparations are in place to ensure care staff are in place to ensure the provision of care is maintained if staff are off work sick?
- iv) What plans are in place for Brunel University to ensure the education of students is not compromised if there is an upsurge in swine flu?
- v) Is Brunel University is the communication loop with all agencies within the Borough to ensure a partnership approach to the effects of a pandemic?
- vi) Are schools in the Borough prepared for the anticipated second wave of swine flu and what contingency arrangements are in place to ensure that the education of children is not compromised?
- vii) Is the communication from the Council and the PCT effective in ensuring schools are being kept up to date in terms of information on the pandemic and on the imminent vaccination programme?

PAPERS WITH THE REPORT

Revised scoping report (as updated at 8 September meeting) - Appendix 1

SUGGESTED COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

1. Members question the witnesses and identify important issues for their review.
2. Members to discuss the evidence gathered to date on their review and note any potential draft recommendations.