

COUNCIL

11 NOVEMBER 2021

REPORTS OF CABINET MEMBERS WITH RESPONSIBILITY – CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Introduction

1. I would like to thank Council for this opportunity to bring my inaugural Health and Well-Being report, following my appointment in May 2021. Since the last report by my predecessor, it has been a challenging time for the portfolio in the face of the pandemic and I am proud of the Council's response and many achievements accomplished during this tumultuous time.

2. I am politically responsible for a wide-ranging and complex programme of work which is shaped around meeting the statutory duties of the Council under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 regarding public health; the statutory duties of the Council under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004; the statutory duties of the Council under the Crime and Disorder Act and the statutory duties, of which there are numerous which sit under Trading Standards. We have clear governance in place around this work, set out below. In order to give members a clear idea of the breadth and value of the work done, a table setting out financial information is attached at **Appendix A**.

COVID-19 Response and Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF)

3. The COVID-19 Health Protection Board meets monthly and is chaired by the Director of Public Health (DPH). It is a system wide meeting that has representation from the NHS, District Councils, the University of Worcester, Education and Adult Social Care. Its remit is to support problem solving of issues caused by COVID-19 and enable the system to reduce compounded inequalities. The chairs of each District Council Incident Management Team report to this board and it, with the DPH, holds the overall governance for the use of the COMF.

4. In total £12.985 million has been carried forward from the 2020/2021 COMF allocation and WCC has been given an additional £2.94 million for the 2021/2022 COMF allocation. Therefore, the total available is £15.925 million, until March 2021/2022. The allocation and spend has been closely reviewed and adapted, many proposals for COMF allocations have been developed collaboratively with District Councils and wider partners. Initially there were substantial allocations against COVID-19 testing for those without symptoms and surge testing. However, as the pandemic has continued these items have been funded directly from Department for Health and Social Care. Therefore, the DPH has taken the opportunity to reallocate COMF resource, with a focus on acute response and reducing the impact of COVID-19 on communities that are most adversely affected. Currently over £14 million of COMF has been allocated, with plans being reviewed to spend the remainder by the end of the financial year. Work continues within Public Health and with wider stakeholders to explore opportunities for allocation that will protect the health of the

Worcestershire population against COVID-19.

5. The Local Outbreak Response Team continues to provide support to high-risk settings, such as care homes, schools and workplaces, to control outbreaks of COVID-19. This is a multiagency response including Public Health at Worcestershire County Council (WCC), Worcestershire Regulatory Services and Infection Prevention and Control from the Clinical Commissioning Group. At the time of writing, most of the demand is being driven by outbreaks in schools. The team work closely with Worcestershire Childrens First (WCF) to support headteachers to implement their Outbreak Management Plans, recommending additional measures such as testing when required. This acute response will continue until at least March 2022, with a contingency for a further three months available if required, all allocated from COMF funding.

Health and Well-being Board (HWB)

6. As the new Chair of the HWB, I bring a refreshed focus to having this vital board functioning and recognised as an effective 'system leadership partnership'.

7. The HWB is a statutory body, leading our strategic approach to improving health and well-being and strengthening integration between health and social care. Its membership includes partners from the County Council; District Councils; NHS Commissioning bodies; NHS England; Worcestershire Healthwatch; the Voluntary and Community Sector; and a representative of Housing Authorities. This brings an opportunity to work together to drive better local outcomes, and to influence the developing Integrated Care System (ICS) to support delivery of the same.

8. The 2016-2021 Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) has been extended by a year to allow further engagement work around the new JHWS. In preparation, much work has been undertaken by the HWB to develop the overarching theme for the new JHWS as "Better mental health and emotional wellbeing", supported by healthy living at all stages in life, safe and healthy homes, and good jobs. There will be a strong focus on prevention and in particular, the inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic.

9. It is recognised that the pandemic has affected the residents of Worcestershire in many varied and complex ways, with a range of short, medium, and longer-term impacts. Whilst some of these are known, others may be hidden or not yet understood. To better understand this, Public Health is commissioning a range of qualitative COVID-19 impact focus groups run by community providers, in-depth ethnographic research, and a detailed impact survey. This data collection will be completed by the end of March 2022 to inform the new JHWS and supporting the development of its action plans.

10. The HWB is due to approve the annual Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), a statutory requirement which local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups have equal and joint duties to prepare through the HWB. This comprehensive report sets out health, care, and wider needs of our local population, reports far reaching impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and highlights areas which may be of emerging concern. Worcestershire generally has good health with some pockets of poor health particularly linked to health inequalities. There are some issues which remain an issue for Worcestershire people including: school readiness, excess weight

in adults, alcohol related admissions, breastfeeding initiation, smoking status in pregnancy and hip fractures. Each of these issues is subject to more detailed investigation, surveillance, and action where needed.

11. Moving forward, the intention is for the JSNA to focus on wider determinants and take an asset-based approach, with an increased level of district input and analysis, with the intention for it to be recognised as the overarching assessment for Worcestershire, with partners strategies and plans flowing from this. There will be a clear alignment between the new JHWS and the Integrated Care Strategy, all informed by the JSNA.

12. The HWB received the DPH's Annual Report in September 2021; 'The Role of Primary Care in Prevention, Population Health and Narrowing Health Inequalities'. This highlighted the opportunity to learn lessons from the pandemic response, placing Primary Care services at the heart, and working with the community. It recommended a stronger focus on prevention across all services to improve the health and wellbeing of Worcestershire residents and narrow health inequalities. Specifically, maximising the role of Primary Care in preventing illness, creating healthy places and stronger communities able to help themselves, and focusing on physical and mental wellbeing.

13. The HWB was recently pleased to receive an update on the development of the Integrated Wellbeing Offer (IWO). Initial scoping for an IWO began in late 2018 and work developed throughout 2019. In 2020 WCC established the Here2Help programme to help those needing support during the pandemic, including those with poor mental health and well-being. In early 2021, development of the IWO recommenced. The IWO aims to empower people to live well, by addressing the factors that influence their health and well-being and building their capability to be independent, resilient and maintain good well-being. It will move beyond focusing on single issues and take a holistic and person-centred approach, addressing the psychosocial determinants of health behaviour. It will augment the collective response to early intervention and prevention to meet people's needs across the life course, improve health and well-being and address inequalities. It is anticipated that the IWO will be a major delivery arm of the new JHWS.

14. The Board has recognised this opportune time, amidst ongoing system change with the ICS and under new chairmanship, to review its governance arrangements. Members contributed to a peer review, carried out by the Local Government Association, which involved interviews with more than 40 key stakeholders. It has taken this valuable insight and is preparing a development programme to assist members in clarifying the role and purpose of the HWB, defining its vision over and above its statutory duties, and its ambitions around early prevention and aligning priorities across the local system, whilst strengthening partnership working. Following this, the HWB will likely revise its sub-group structure and potentially refine its membership to support delivery of its priorities and JHWS. There may further be consideration given to additional meetings with Herefordshire's HWB, yet to be explored as part of the developing ICS.

15. Significant progress has been made over the year, building on strong working relationships across the system, whilst bringing challenge to colleagues to improve outcomes for Worcestershire. The HWB strives to be well-positioned to continue this work based on good engagement with its districts and partners, with aligned leadership and priorities.

Community Safety

16. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (as amended) requires each Authority to exercise its functions with due regard, and to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder, anti-social behaviour, the misuse of drugs and alcohol and reduce reoffending. This is a corporate responsibility for all Council directorates, leadership sits with the DPH, provided with additional duties under the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

17. In addition to delivery of the above responsibilities, officers support strategic partnership activity through the Safer Communities Board, and in addition have been active in implementing new Council duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Compliance with the duty has included setting up new governance arrangements through a Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, carrying out a needs assessment on supported safe housing and progressing a new Domestic Abuse strategy for the county. Extensive new commissioning arrangements (working with internal directorates, Worcestershire Children First, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the District Councils), are underway to create new safe accommodation and support with other services to support victims and their families.

18. Officers have oversight of the Domestic Homicide Review process on behalf of the North and South Community Safety Partnerships, where cases are assessed to learn lessons and reported back to the Home Office prior to publication. There are six review cases in the system at present, which span three years.

19. There is ongoing work to meet the Governments Counter Terrorism legislation through a range of duties under Prevent, and to equip Council and Worcestershire Children First staff with an understanding and knowledge as to how to identify and respond to possible radicalisation, particularly of children and vulnerable individuals. This includes leading the Channel Panel which considers formal referrals where there are concerns about radicalised individuals and where a package of support may be provided. The Council is also leading work with partner local authorities, through a newly established Protect Group, to consider the security and protection of public spaces and infrastructure against potential attacks in the lead up to further new responsibilities under the forthcoming Protect duty (likely 2022). These groups report to the countywide Safer Communities Board, providing both oversight and assurance.

Emergency Planning

20. The Emergency Planning work is robust and contributes to strategic and tactical initiatives co-ordinated through the West Mercia Local Resilience Forum. The WCC Gold and Silver Commander rotas ensure that it participates in multi-agency emergency response. The Emergency Planning team supports the COVID-19 response and recovery processes, whilst also ensuring that WCC remains responsive to concurrent incidents such as industrial fires, severe weather and flooding.

21. The DPH has initiated a strategic review of the Emergency Planning function in response to capacity pressures, the impact of COVID-19, and an external national review of Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response (EPRR). This is being facilitated by the Emergency Planning College, which is sponsored by the

Government Cabinet Officer, and will include consulting with partners in Worcestershire and the West Mercia Local Resilience Forum.

Trading Standards

22. Trading Standards work to ensure consumers are protected from unfair trading, that required standards are met, and supporting criminal investigations, for example, under the Fraud and Forgery and Counterfeiting Acts.

23. This year, Trading Standards in Worcestershire reported over 200,000 illegal cigarettes and over 50 kilogrammes of illegal hand rolling tobacco being removed from the market. Sales of such products result in thousands of pounds being lost to the Treasury and undermines the Public Health efforts to reduce tobacco consumption in our most deprived communities.

24. The team has commenced work investigating 'underage sales' of alcohol, visiting approximately 50 businesses to provide advice, with two test purchasing exercises resulting in one sale from ten attempts. Preventing young people's access to alcohol had positive impacts on long-term health and the intention is to broaden activity to include tobacco.

25. The Government recently tightened the law around food item labelling for certain products, following the death of a teenager from a reaction to an un-declared allergen. Locally, Trading Standards is supporting food businesses with the additional controls.

26. With regard to product safety and seasonal demand, the team are visiting firework retailers ahead of bonfire night, reviewing storage and safety, and will focus on the sale of low-cost electrical goods, such as LED string-lights, in the run up to Christmas. The team has also supported a large local business with the recall of a children's hair product that posed a serious microbiological hazard.

27. With Winter approaching, Trading Standards will be issuing advice to help farmers and poultry keepers protect their flocks from avian influenza. Last year bought national concern to the issue, and whilst no commercial premises were impacted in Worcestershire, there were significant deaths in the swan population on both the River Severn and River Avon.

Public Health Services

28. Over the past year, Public Health has worked closely with providers of its services, offering advice and support as the pandemic progressed. The Team has monitored its core services, such as public health nursing, sexual health and substance misuse to ensure service continuity and recovery.

29. I am pleased to report that following a robust needs assessment and procurement process, a new model for universal prevention and early intervention service for children, young people and families, the Starting Well Service, commenced last year. The service has brought together Health visiting, nursery nurses, parenting support, school nursing, Health Care Support Workers and Community Health Connectors into teams who deliver the evidence based Healthy Child Programme. The service undertakes key assessments to identify need as early

as possible and responds with appropriate support ranging from universal information and advice, through to complex packages of care.

30. Public Health has also continued to review and improve the substance misuse services, reaching some of the most vulnerable in Worcestershire, implementing a redesigned and expanded service model to further drive improvement. We have seen a steady improvement in outcomes since 2016.

31. Worcestershire's sexual health services continued to deliver through a range of new and innovative ways during the pandemic. Conception rates for young people under 18 years in Worcestershire have continued to reduce. Recently published data indicated that in 2019 this rate in Worcestershire had again decreased and was significantly lower than both the West Midlands and England average. In addition, the rate of new sexually transmitted infections in Worcestershire has decreased and was significantly lower than both the West Midlands and England averages in 2020. The prescribing rate for long-acting reversal contraception continues to increase which should lead to reduced rates of unintended pregnancies.

32. Public Health commission NHS Health Checks for people aged 40 to 74, which can identify early signs of heart disease, stroke, diabetes and kidney disease, helping to lower risk and improve health. In 2019/20, 9.9% of the Worcestershire population received a health check which was higher than the regional and national percentage. Nationally, however the Health Checks programme, delivered through GPs, was paused during 2020/21 due to COVID-19. As part of the recovery strategy Public Health has worked with its GP colleagues and redesigned a fresh approach to restarting Health Checks which prioritises those at greatest risk and those who have not attended General Practice for some time.

33. Prior to COVID-19 Public Health designed and commissioned two new innovative services; a Lifestyle Service based in Primary Care Networks to support people to adopt healthier lifestyle behaviours (diet, physical activity, alcohol, smoking, mental wellbeing), and a new service to reduce loneliness. Both were required to flex their delivery mode during the pandemic and offer digital or telephone solutions. Face to face support has now returned, retaining some of the flexibilities and learning from the last year. As part of the recovery, Public Health Ring Fenced Grant is being used to support new ways of working. For example, with mental health and wellbeing, funding a new online counselling service for adults, and emotional health and wellbeing service in some schools. To support younger children to be school ready, there is a pilot for additional assessments and support at age 3.5 years. To help build resilient communities, Public Health is investing in community builders to help communities build additional assets, activities, and capacity.

Current Spend

34. A detailed breakdown of current Public Health budget and spend is attached at **Appendix A**.

Summary

35. I would like to thank my predecessor, Councillor John Smith for his hard work and dedication in his role. My special thanks go to Dr. Kathryn Cobain and her team for their commitment and diligence in the face of significant pressures to support

Worcestershire residents. I would like to wholeheartedly thank the teams across WCC and partners that have all worked together to aid our response to COVID-19. Finally, I would also like to thank my fellow cabinet members for their support.

Karen May
Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health & Well-being