

PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE TO COVID-19

To: Health Committee

Meeting Date: 11th March 2021

From: Director of Public Health

Electoral division(s): All

Forward Plan ref: Not applicable *Key decision:* No

Outcome: To update the Health Committee on the Council's public health response to COVID-19, which impacts on outcomes for individuals and communities.

Recommendation: Health Committee is asked to:

- a) note the progress made to date in responding to the impact of the Coronavirus.
- b) Note the public health service response

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. A series of reports have been provided to Committees on the Council's ongoing response to the coronavirus pandemic, our work with partners and communities to protect the most vulnerable and our developing work to help Cambridgeshire to recover from this unprecedented emergency into a 'new normal'.
- 1.2. Officers and teams across the Council continue to work closely with our communities, partners and providers to develop appropriate operational responses to new epidemiological information and guidance as it is issued.
- 1.3. The Council Senior Leadership Team continues to co-ordinate our response, with a Covid-19 Gold Group, which includes both the Chief Executive and Director of Public Health, meeting three times per week. The Local Resilience Forum (LRF), a partnership of local agencies, continues to hold a Strategic Co-ordinating Group to co-ordinate the multi-agency response.
- 1.4. Since the last report to Health Committee in February national lockdown has continued, and a national Covid-19 Response Plan Spring 2021 was published in February, with a Roadmap for coming out of lockdown. The first step in the Roadmap has now taken place, with the reopening of schools on March 8th.

2. LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH CONTEXT

2.1 Confirmed cases

Rates of testing and diagnosis for Covid-19 have changed significantly during the course of the pandemic - so the numbers and rates of confirmed cases do not provide a full picture of Covid-19 epidemiology over time.

Since the last report to Health Committee on February 11th there has been a fall in Covid-19 cases in Cambridgeshire, but this has been more marked in the south of the county than the north, with Fenland in particular seeing enduring transmission and higher rates of Covid-19 transmission. This is likely to reflect a number of factors including many front line jobs in agriculture, food packing and distribution, reflected in higher case rates in the working age population.

At the time of writing the latest case rate for Cambridgeshire is 64 cases per 100,000 population for the week ending March 3rd, a decrease of 34% from the previous week. This rate is still higher than the number of cases last summer, so it is essential that the lockdown rules for this stage of the government's Roadmap continue to be observed.

Within Cambridgeshire County, the rates for the week ending 4th February were highest in Fenland at 112 cases per 100,000 population and lowest in East Cambridgeshire at 30 cases per 100,000.

Covid19 cases in Cambridgeshire: Week of 25th February to 3rd March

District/City	Weekly case rate per 100,000 population	% change from the previous week
Cambridge City	47	-25%
East Cambridgeshire	30	-57%
Fenland	112	-52%
Huntingdonshire	89	-13%
South Cambs	37	-20%
Cambridgeshire	64	-34%
England	66	-36%

Source: Public Health England daily Covid-19 Dashboard

2.2 Deaths

Sadly, 902 Cambridgeshire residents have had their death registered from causes related to Covid-19 in the period from March 2020 to 26th February 2021. Of these, 187 deaths of local residents were registered in the last four weeks of this period. The following table provides more detail for the Covid-19 related deaths registered in the week ending February 26th.

Week 8 - Covid-19 deaths registered the week ending 26 February 2021

Area name	Place of death						Total
	Home	Hospital	Care home	Hospice	Other communal establishment	Elsewhere	
Cambridge	0	2	0	1	0	0	3
East Cambridgeshire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fenland	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Huntingdonshire	1	7	3	0	0	0	11
South Cambridgeshire	0	3	4	1	0	0	8
Cambridgeshire	2	12	8	2	0	0	24

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS)

2.3 Further information on the epidemiology of Covid-19 in Cambridgeshire and its Districts is available on

https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/coronavirus_cambridgeshire/cambridgeshire-and-peterborough-public-health-covid-19-reports/

2.4 Statistics on Covid-19 vaccination of patients of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Sustainable Transformation Partnership are released weekly. By 28th February a total of 276,584 doses of Covid-19 vaccine had been delivered in the area. Vaccination rates by age band (using ONS populations by age band which may not be entirely accurate) are 96% for age 80+, 100% for age 75-79, 96% for age 70-74 and 84% for age 65-69. Further information of the numbers of local residents vaccinated is available on

[Statistics » COVID-19 Vaccinations \(england.nhs.uk\)](#)

2.5 The numbers of patients with Covid-19 in hospital have fallen significantly since the January peak in both Cambridgeshire University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust. This reflects the impact of lockdown and a similar fall was

seen after the first wave of Covid-19 infection. However the fall has been faster locally amongst the over 75 age group, indicating a potential effect from the vaccination programme, which has also been seen nationally.

3 PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE

Prevention

- 3.1 The communications team have developed the 'This Depends on Us' campaign to emphasise that unless we all comply with current Covid-19 rules and keep the spread of infection low, it won't be possible to keep lifting restrictions in line with the government's road map out of lockdown
- 3.2 Public health staff are advising on Covid-19 safe preparations for key events in April and May, including local elections.
- 3.3 There is ongoing work in partnership with District Environmental Health teams and the Health and Safety Executive to provide advice and support to businesses

Testing

- 3.4 Uptake of testing at our local Community Rapid Testing Sites for people without symptoms continues - and pop-up sites are being piloted at three further venues in Fenland. We continue to support local workplaces to introduce their own rapid testing programmes.
- 3.5 Considerable work has taken place through the Education directorate to support the safe return of pupils to school, and in particular to enable rapid testing for school staff and secondary school pupils. The new national offer of home tests for the households of schoolchildren has been publicised. More information on the various rapid testing options now available is on [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Rapid community testing - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

Contact tracing

- 3.6 Further appointments have been made to the in-house contact tracing team, which will enable work to pilot enhanced (backward) contact tracing to start. A sustainable model is being developed which combines dedicated contact tracing staff, with surge capacity for peaks of demand through trained staff who can be redeployed.

Self-isolation

- 3.7 The Council's self isolation support centre provides supportive calls for those self isolating and refer them to local services and voluntary groups where necessary. The national Test and Trace support payment scheme for people who are self-isolating has been extended to 30th June 2021, and now also applies to people who have to stay home to look after a child who is self-isolating.

Outbreak management

- 3.8 The Surveillance Group continues to meet daily to review the latest data from Public Health England, NHS Test and Trace, the local NHS and other relevant sources for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This information is summarised and passed on to the public health led Outbreak Management Team which oversees the management of local clusters and outbreak of Covid-19, through the work of multi-agency 'cells'. These cells are:
- Workplace Cell
 - Vulnerable Populations Cell
 - Care Home Cell
 - Education Cell
 - NHS Healthcare arrangements.

While outbreaks in care homes and schools have reduced, outbreaks in workplaces which operate with front line staff during lockdown remain relatively frequent.

Partnership work at local level

- 3.8 Public health specialists attend the weekly Covid-Gold and/or Rapid Response meetings in each Council to ensure that they are kept up to date with the latest available public health information on local epidemiology and Covid-19 outbreaks. This enables effective preventive, communications and support work to take place in communities.

Enduring transmission

- 3.9 The phenomenon of 'enduring transmission' of Covid-19 is increasingly recognised, associated with social and economic factors. In both Peterborough and Fenland, Covid-19 case rates have been slower to fall during lockdown than in most of the rest of England. This is likely to be associated with a range of factors such as people continuing to work during lockdown in low-wage and insecure employment - including agency work and zero hours contracts in sectors such as agriculture, packing, distribution and construction. Other factors may be living in crowded housing; sharing transport to work; and lack of information or exposure to misinformation about Covid-19 and preventive measures.
- 3.10 At the end of February a Cabinet Office Covid-19 task force visited Peterborough and Fenland to find out more about the factors that may be causing enduring transmission locally. They met with a wide range of community and voluntary sector representatives, public sector leads, and local employers. The visit was successful and stimulated discussion and reflection, with learning for all participants involved.

Supporting Covid-19 vaccination uptake

- 3.11 A range of work is taking place to ensure that all communities and residents receive reliable information about Covid-19 vaccines, that any misinformation or lack of trust contributing to vaccine hesitancy is recognised and addressed sensitively, and that people eligible to receive the vaccine are encouraged and supported to take up the offer.

Updating the Local Outbreak Management Plan

- 3.12 In line with the development of the national road map out of lockdown, and updates to the Contain Framework, all upper tier local authorities have been asked to update their Local Outbreak Management Plans (previously called Local Outbreak Control Plans). The updates are expected to include plans for surge capacity in the event of a new variant being identified locally, plans to address enduring transmission, and updated information on local rapid testing programmes and local enhanced contact tracing. The draft updated Local Outbreak Management Plan will be submitted to regional Test and Trace colleagues on 12th March and the final version will be approved by the end of March.

4 ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 4.1 The current Coronavirus pandemic will have both an immediate and a longer term effect on all of the Council's priorities. The impacts will be monitored and managed through our risk logs and recovery plans and will feed into the annual review of Council strategy.

5. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 It is essential to ensure that our local response reduces Covid-19 cases as far as possible at this point, so that when national decisions are made about step-wise relaxation of restrictions, we are in the best position ensure that spread in the community and case numbers are kept under control. Maximising compliance with the lock-down now, as well as the uptake of vaccinations by priority groups, will place us in the best position. Ongoing vigilance will be required over the coming year to minimise and rapidly control outbreaks amongst population groups who are not yet vaccinated, and to identify and control new variants of the virus.

Source Documents	Location
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local outbreak control plan	https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/coronavirus/coronavirus-covid-19-test-and-trace#local-outbreak-control-plan-7-0