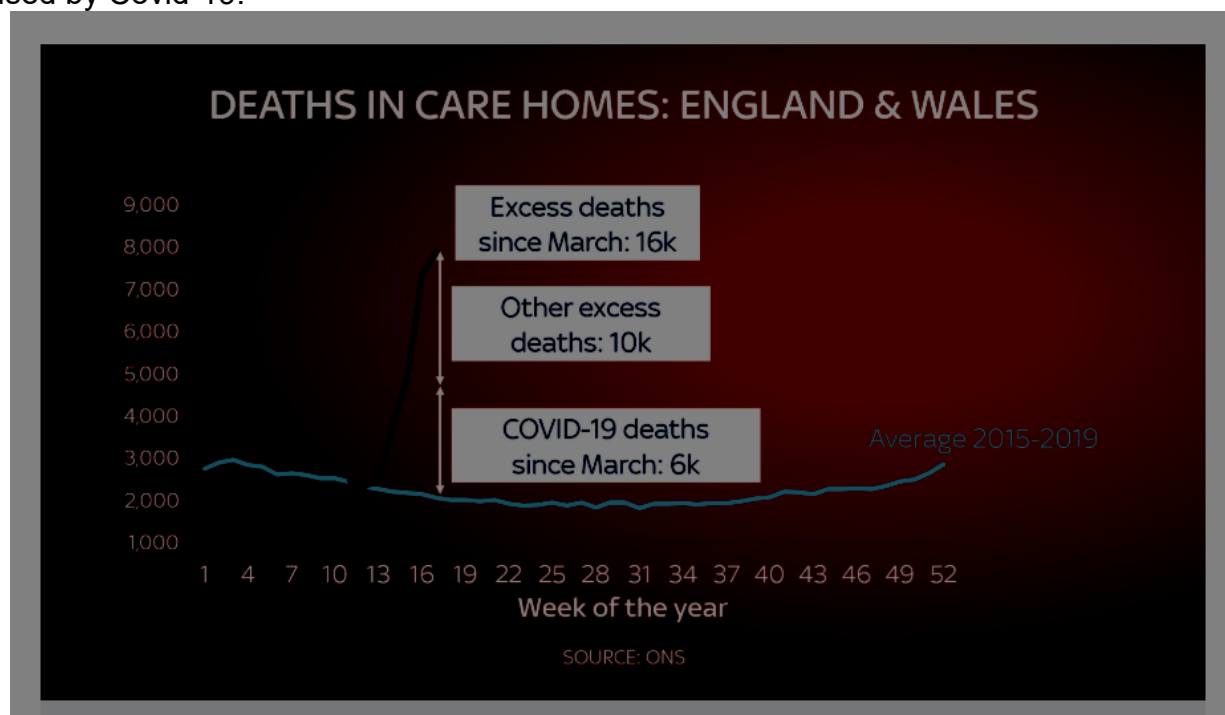


COUNTY COUNCIL – 19 MAY 2020
WRITTEN QUESTION UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 9.2

1. Question from Councillor Sandra Crawford

There has been an alarming 16,000 rise in the number of home care deaths in the UK recently. At least 6800 are known to have been caused by Covid-19.



Professor Martin Marshall Chair of the Royal College of GPs (14th April), stated that lack of testing in care homes makes it difficult for GPs to record the cause of death accurately and makes it difficult for staff to take the necessary measures to isolate patients to reduce the risk of the virus spreading. While 6800 of the excess deaths are confirmed as Covid 19.

(ONS), it is likely that some of the other excess deaths are due to Covid-19 or Covid-19 related (not getting to hospital for other illnesses)

Professor Angela McLean, the UK's deputy chief scientific adviser said that Care home deaths are still rising and stated "I think what this shows us is there is a real issue we need to get to grips with about what is happening in care homes." <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/05/deputy-chief-scientist-we-need-to-get-to-grips-with-coronavirus-care-home-deaths>

It is the responsibility of the health protection team from Public Health England, commissioned by the NHS, to carry out testing of residents, and up to now the guidance has been to test residents only if they show symptoms, which can arise up to 14 days after infection. In the early stages of the outbreak, many residents were not tested due to test kits being in limited supply (L Robin, Health Committee). The Government has stated that wider testing would be available "in the ramping up of testing, we would expect all residents to be tested" (L Robin, Health Committee). This would address the issues raised by Professor Marshall and help to diagnose cause of death, and better still, identify those infected before symptoms arise and allow isolation to prevent further spread and save lives. The non Covid-19 deaths could fall by being treated apart from Covid-19 patients.

In the Cambridgeshire County, there were 66 deaths at 10th April compared to a three year average of 21, 19 were confirmed as Covid-19. (Health Committee L Robin). We need to bear in mind Professor Marshall's statement that the inadequacy of testing means that not all of the excess deaths causes are accurately identified. Residents and staff could be carrying the infection with no symptoms, so consequently without testing all staff and residents, this could lead to higher infection and death rates, and an inaccurate/incomplete cause of death on the certificate.

Deaths in City Care Homes have been rising at an alarming rate. A report on City Care Home deaths showed that ALL deaths in the City were as follows:

- (i) Woodlands Care Home 19,
- (ii) Langdon House 10
- (iii) Buchan House 9

Of these, 21 were confirmed as Covid 19 by ONS

Questions:

- 1) While testing is the responsibility of Public Health, the well being of residents in commissioned care homes is still the duty of care of the Local Authority under the 2014 Health and Social Care Act to ensure the well being of residents in commissioned care homes. Therefore could the Adults and Health Committees report back to concerned members the following:
 - (i) Will the wider testing mean that all residents and staff will be tested?
 - (ii) Will this include the testing of all people moved back to care homes from hospital?
 - (iii) When will the wider testing begin?
 - (iv) Members would benefit from information on the wider testing of residents and staff to ascertain if this is improving mortality rates, will this be provided in due course in a report to members?
- 2) Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is being supplied by the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Hub, and is the responsibility of care homes to obtain it. However, the Unison and Unite Unions have stated that guidance on its use “are not sufficiently clear, or comprehensive enough. As a result, workers up and down the country are being told incorrectly by unscrupulous employers that safety clothing such as masks aren’t necessary.” Members are being asked by unions for answers regarding these issues. It would be very helpful for members to provide them with reassurance that these issues are being addressed in Cambridgeshire commissioned homes. As the Local Authority does have a duty of care under the Health and Social Care Act 2014 could it use its good offices to scrutinise procedures in care homes that it funds and give a report to members. We can then give a qualified answer to the Unions.
- 3) Similarly, Unison has asked members about the payment of staff when they need to self isolate and are unwell, or have family members with symptoms. Where the Local Authority have commissioned care homes, could the Council officers supply information on care staff who are paid (or not), as this is both a safety and welfare issue for care workers and those that they care for.

Sources of information from Unison/Unite-

<https://www.unison.org.uk/news/press-release/2020/05/elderly-vulnerable-people-still-risk-poor-advice-care-homes-says-unison/>

<https://unitetheunion.org/news-events/news/2020/march/social-care-workers-must-be-provided-with-full-protective-equipment-during-coronavirus-crisis/>

Media report on care staff pay when ill, and reports on scarcity of PPE

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/may/08/care-workers-pay-ppe-stress-zero-hours-contracts-coronavirus>

Response from Councillors Anna Bailey and Peter Hudson, Chairwoman of Adults Committee and Chairman of Health Committee

Question 1:

- (i) A new online portal through which care homes can arrange deliveries of coronavirus test kits for all care home residents and all asymptomatic staff (staff without symptoms) was launched on 11th May. It is currently available for care homes whose primary clients are older people or those with dementia. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) is working with local authority Directors of Public Health, Directors of Adult Social Services and local NHS providers to help deliver and prioritise this new testing programme for care homes.

The only exemption to this is if a care homes identifies their first symptomatic resident and is concerned they may have an outbreak. In these circumstances they should contact their local Public Health England Health Protection Team who will undertake a risk assessment, provide public health advice, and arrange urgent testing of all symptomatic residents.

- (ii) All people who move back to care homes from hospital are already tested before they leave hospital in line with national guidance.
- (iii) The national Care Home testing portal was launched on May 11th.
- (iv) The Council's Public Health Intelligence team will be producing a weekly update on Covid-19 mortality, including mortality in care homes, using information from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) and Care Quality Commission (CQC) weekly updates. This will enable local trends in mortality to be monitored to see whether they are improving as a result of the range of interventions taking place, including testing.

Question 2:

The Clinical Commissioning Group and social care are working with care homes to support them with infection control, including the appropriate use of personal protective equipment.

Communication has been made to all registered providers by way of our daily bulletin and the message below is issued every day to ensure all providers recognise the importance of PPE, but all understand that there is support available to them. All our weekly provider forums are attended by the infection control nurse who can answer questions and give advice about PPE supplies or usage.

“You will be aware that there has been significant guidance which has been issued on the use of PPE. It is understood that the supply of PPE has changed in terms of availability and cost, however, it is essential that as providers you are clear on the correct use of PPE and your responsibility as providers to ensure that your employees are supported to have the necessary access to use it.”

Question 3:

Care providers received a 10% uplift from the council in recognition of the additional staffing costs and the cost of PPE. Where care staff are self-isolating or are ill the council and CCG have provided staff to support the home. Our understanding is that all providers are paying or furloughing staff that are not able to be in work due to Covid 19, we have spoken to a number of providers who have confirmed this to us.

Care Home support guidance was published on 14th March 2020 that strengthens support for care homes, this includes financial support for additional staffing where necessary.

2. Question from Councillor Lorna Dupré

ELY SOUTHERN BYPASS TRAFFIC DATA

In answer to a written question on 16 October 2018, regarding plans to repeat traffic counts following the opening of the Ely Southern Bypass, I was told by the Chairman of the Highways & Community Infrastructure Committee, Cllr Mathew Shuter, that at one and five years respectively after the opening of the Ely Southern Bypass, repeat traffic data would be collected at the following locations:

1. Angel Drove (A142) / Station Road mini roundabout

2. Angel Drove / Bypass new roundabout
3. Stuntney Causeway / Bypass new roundabout
4. A10 / Cambridge Road / Angel Drove roundabout
5. A10 / Witchford Road roundabout
6. Stuntney Causeway (A142) / Queen Adelaide Way priority junction
7. Queen Adelaide Way / Ely Road / Branch Road priority junction
8. Station Road tidal flow signal controlled under railway bridge
9. Ely level crossing and underpass
10. A142/B1381 at Sutton
11. A1123/B1381 (Earith)
12. Angel Drove (A142) / Station Road mini roundabout
13. Stuntney Causeway (A142) / Queen Adelaide Way priority junction
14. Ely level crossing and underpass

It now appears that a decision was made to delay the one-year repeat traffic count from its original date one year after the bypass opened on 31 October 2018, to a date after the reopening of the Station Road underpass some months later. The data was finally collected between 13 and 30 March this year, during the COVID-19 lockdown period, and even then only at a few of the above locations. This has had the further consequence that it will not now be possible to properly gauge the effect of the opening of the A14 separately from that of the Ely Southern Bypass, as the A14 has now opened before the one year count has been fully conducted.

Will Councillor Shuter please:

- A. advise who authorised the delay of the data collection exercise, and who was informed of this delay?
- B. explain why data was not collected at all the locations promised; and
- C. commit to ensuring a traffic count is conducted at all the above locations as soon as lockdown has been lifted, in addition to the five year count which should take place in October or November 2023?

Response from Councillor Mathew Shuter, Chairman of Highways and Infrastructure Committee

Thank you Councillor Dupré for this question. I will take the points you have raised in turn.

- A. On the first point, it is important to understand the purpose of the data collection. This was a requirement from the Department for Transport as they part funded the scheme and was referenced in the Business case that they signed off. It was therefore important that like for like traffic flows were being considered. Officers took the decision that as

the underpass works were not complete, it would not have been representative to undertake the surveys at the planned time. The revised date for the surveys was also at what is termed a neutral time and so is acceptable to the Department. All of that said, I do appreciate the local interest in this matter Councillor Dupré and agree that although I believe this was the right decision, it would have been helpful for local councillors to be made aware of it.

B. On the second point, I have to apologise that the information given to me for the last response to a question on this matter was incorrect. The actual locations that information was to be collected to satisfy the monitoring framework agreed with the Department for Transport are those for which data has recently been collected. I was led to believe that there would be some additional sites where data would be collected too, but I now understand that to not be the case. For the avoidance of doubt, the monitoring framework locations that data has been collected this year immediately prior to the formal Covid-19 lockdown and will be repeated at the five year stage are as follows:

1. Angel Drove (A142) / Station Road mini roundabout
2. Angel Drove / Bypass new roundabout
3. Angel Drove between new roundabout and Tesco roundabout
4. Stuntney Causeway / Bypass new roundabout
5. Stuntney Causeway (A142) / Queen Adelaide Way priority junction
6. Stuntney Causeway (A142) westbound approach to new bypass roundabout
7. Ely Bypass itself

C. With regard to your final point, I have agreed with officers that traffic surveys will be conducted at the other locations not included in the monitoring plan in October this year, subject to the impact of Covid-19 restrictions. This is the first available neutral month for traffic data collection.

3. Question from Councillor Lorna Dupré

LANCASTER WAY ROUNDABOUT CONSULTATION

On what date will consultation open on the design of the Lancaster Way roundabout on the A142 at Ely?

Response from Councillor Ian Bates, Chairman of Economy and Environment Committee

The consultation on the design of the A142 Lancaster Way roundabout is currently scheduled to start in July this year and will run for an eight week period. The outcome of the consultation will be reported to the Combined Authority's Transport & Infrastructure Committee and the County Council's Highways & Transport Committee in the autumn. Construction work is programmed to start in early 2021.