

## SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held in the Online on Friday, 24 July 2020.

PRESENT: Mr A Booth (Chairman), Mr J Wright (Vice-Chairman), Mr M A C Balfour, Mr P V Barrington-King, Mrs P M Beresford, Mrs R Binks, Mr R H Bird, Mr G Cooke, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Mr D Farrell, Mr B H Lewis (Substitute for Dr L Sullivan), Mr R C Love, OBE and Mr A M Ridgers

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs C Bell

IN ATTENDANCE: Dr A Duggal (Deputy Director of Public Health), Mr A Scott-Clark (Director of Public Health), Mrs A Taylor (Scrutiny Research Officer) and Mr B Watts (General Counsel)

### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

#### **5. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2020 (to follow)** (Item A4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2020 were a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

#### **6. Local Outbreak (COVID-19) Control Plan (verbal update)** (Item C1)

1. Mrs Bell introduced this item explaining that the situation in Kent was currently stable and Mr Scott-Clark gave a presentation to Members. [This presentation is available to view here.](#)
2. The Chairman and Members thanked Mr Scott-Clark for his excellent presentation.
3. In response to a question Mrs Bell explained the high rate of positive tests per 100,000 people in Ashford, it was important to note that this was cumulative and it was likely that it related to the large amount of testing done in May.
4. Mr Scott-Clark explained, in response to a question, that currently, in prisons single cases had been managed and there had not been large outbreaks.
5. In response to a question Mr Scott-Clark explained that in East Kent the NHS was a large employer and the East Kent Hospitals had undertaken a high level of testing of employees, further work was being done to understand the spike of cases in Ashford.
6. In terms of capacity for testing in Kent, this information would be circulated to the Committee. Capacity could be ramped up where necessary.

7. In response to a question Mr Scott-Clark confirmed that there was concern about a second wave, Covid had not gone away. It was considered that viruses survived longer outside of the body during the winter months and it was essential to maintain social distancing, wash hands and wear face masks to mitigate any second wave.
8. In relation to the opening of the hospitality sector, a close eye was being kept on the statistics, and more would be known during August and the Autumn.
9. A Member asked about death rates in care homes, this was around 2.5% in relation to the number of beds available. A lot of work had been done around care homes to protect vulnerable residents against the virus. There had been a low rate of care home outbreaks in the South East. In relation to agency workers, this was being discouraged but mitigation was in place with good access to PPE to do everything possible to reduce the spread of the virus.
10. In relation to prisoners and whether they would be tested routinely upon release Mr Scott-Clark would circulate an answer to the committee outside of the meeting.
11. Was there reliable evidence of people contracting Covid more than once? There was currently no reliable evidence, but it had not been ruled out.
12. There was a concern around domiciliary care and the potential for spreading of the virus. Dr Alison Duggal explained that there was no information around those providing domiciliary care being super spreaders.
13. Communication was vitally important and it was a balance between ensuring enough information was available but that messaging was not confusing or scaremongering.
14. The Chairman invited Ben Watts to explain the new regulations covering local lockdowns to Members. Mr Watts gave an overview of the regulations which came into force on 18 July 2020. The responsibility had shifted from government to local authorities to allow them to take a risk-based approach with consensus to reopening local businesses. There was a need to take a proportionate approach to local lockdowns and decisions would be made on a case by case basis.
15. The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and guests for attending the meeting and answering Members' questions.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Committee note the update.

## **7. Short Focused Inquiries - Update** *(Item C2)*

1. The Chairman updated Members on the progress of the current Short Focused Inquiry which was looking at the effect Covid-19 was having on the Kent Visitor Economy. He thanked Members for their input into this Inquiry.

RESOLVED that Members note the report.