

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### HEALTH REFORM AND PUBLIC HEALTH CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee held in the Online on Tuesday, 6 July 2021.

PRESENT: Mr A Kennedy (Chairman), Mr N Baker (Vice-Chairman), Mr D Beaney, Mrs B Bruneau, Mrs P T Cole, Ms K Constantine, Ms S Hamilton, Mr D Jeffrey, Mr B H Lewis, Mr J Meade, Mr D Ross, Mr A Weatherhead, Mr S Webb and Ms L Wright

#### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

**158. Apologies and Substitutes**  
*(Item 2)*

There were no apologies for absence.

**159. Election of Vice Chair**  
*(Item 3)*

It was proposed and seconded that Mr Baker be elected Vice Chair.

RESOLVED that Mr Baker be elected Vice Chair.

**160. Declarations of Interest**  
*(Item 4)*

There were no declarations of interest.

**161. Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2021**  
*(Item 5)*

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2021 are correctly recorded and a paper copy be signed by the Chair.

**162. Minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2021**  
*(Item 6)*

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2021 were correctly recorded and a paper copy be signed by the Chair.

**163. Verbal updates by Cabinet Member and Director**  
*(Item 7)*

1) Clair Bell, Cabinet Member said that she had provided updates during the Covid-19 pandemic relating to commissioned services and KCC's role in providing information and advice to residents. KCC had supported national awareness campaigns in the form of media releases and activity on KCC's social media channels.

KCC had supported 'Clean Air Day' on 17 June 2021 and the Communications Team had made use of national assets such as graphics and hashtags to suggest that people go 'vehicle-free' on Clean Air Day and highlighting the issue of air pollution and children's health. On the day itself, messages went out around the importance of improving air quality all year round with links to the page on the KCC website.

Mental Health Awareness Week was in May 2021 and the theme was 'connecting with nature' and was supported by services across the county, including One You Kent, Explore Kent and Live Well Kent. A special Members' briefing was to be held jointly with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services on mental health and wellbeing to assist colleagues to understand the authority's role. It would also cover loneliness and social isolation which was the subject of a select committee in the past. An invitation was to go out to Members for 10 September.

Another area covered by Public Health was encouraging safe consumption of alcohol. There had been concerns that due to the Covid-19 restrictions that people had been drinking more at home and were not aware of how much they were consuming. It was estimated that around 75% of people were drinking within safe limits but in Kent, almost 300,000 people were drinking more than the recommended safe limits. Residents were being encouraged to check how much they were consuming and try out an online tool at [lowermydrinking.com](https://www.lowermydrinking.com)

In mid-June, Mrs Bell filmed some messages with Public Health Communications on staying well during heatwaves. High temperatures could put vulnerable people at risk of suffering health issues. Messages were going out about 'keeping an eye' on vulnerable neighbours, friends and family to ensure they were keeping hydrated and their homes were kept as cool as possible. Reminders were given about also being Covid-19 aware and to think about social distancing, with suggestions about making telephone or video calls rather than visiting.

Public Health were urging people to make testing for Covid-19 part of their weekly routine and to register the results so there would be a record of how many people were testing. Home testing kits were available online and in pharmacy so test centres had been scaled down. There had been 24 symptom free test centres around the county and around 600,000 tests had been conducted. Centres were to remain open with increased hours at Sessions House in Maidstone and at Eurogate Business Park in Ashford.

People had been urged to undertake testing if they were planning to watch football with others and KCC had supported Maidstone Borough Council with communications regarding this as cases had risen in the area. Messages had gone out to remind people of their responsibility to themselves and others and messages were to be repeated until the day of the final match.

In response to questions from Members, it was noted:

- The remaining symptom free testing centres were in areas of high population with good transport links but home testing kits were available to order online with next day delivery.
- The 'Lower my Drinking' app was provided by an external organisation rather than KCC so it was not clear whether it was available in multiple languages. However, work was done by Public Health around behavioural insight on how best to reach different communities around Kent.

2) Dr Allison Duggal, Director of Public Health said there had been an increase in Covid-19 rates which was presumed due to the Delta variant. As of 1 July 2021, the rates for Kent were 137.7 per 100,000 population, 165.5 per 100,000 for the south east and across England, 238 per 100,000.

Canterbury and Maidstone districts had outbreaks which were being dealt with by outbreak control teams which included KCC Public Health, Public Health England and the University of Kent. Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells' figures were above the average for the south east. Cases in Maidstone had been linked to hospitality services and people had been encouraged to take lateral flow tests.

314 cases were notified to the local 'Test and Trace' partnership for KCC to follow up with telephone calls and give advice as well as signposting to other help.

KCC Public Health had been looking at adaptation of services for the 'new normal' and were helping the NHS with the vaccination effort, including behavioural insight work. Also being considered was assistance with delivery of booster jabs. Work was being undertaken to identify particular events being attended by young people and more broadly, looking at events happening so that these could take place in Covid-safe manner.

In response to questions, it was noted:

- It was hoped that the vaccination programme would improve but there was an element of chance with Covid-19 outbreaks.
- KCC Public Health had been working with the University of Kent and they had stepped down events for the end of term. Students were advised to take a lateral flow test and make their way home as safely as possible. If someone had symptoms or had been in contact with someone with Covid-19, arrangements had been made for them to self-isolate. Work was to continue to deal with any issues brought about by the new term.
- Work had been done with KCHFT to engage with Traveller and Roma communities to get them registered with GP surgeries, signposting to maternity services, etc. Due to Covid-19, this had been put on hold but was being followed up. Members were advised that GP surgeries, maternity services, dental services, etc, were NHS services.
- A 'surge' plan has been worked on with the NHS and partners looking at how services would be provided to tourists.

**164. Introduction to Public Health**  
(Item 8)

1) Allison Duggal, Director for Public Health presented an introduction to Public Health, outlining the history, overall aims, statutory responsibilities and commissioning responsibilities. An introduction was also given to the role and responsibilities of the Director of Public Health.

2) An overview of the impact of Covid-19 on Kent was given and Public Health programmes relating to Covid-19.

In response to questions from Members, it was noted:

- There was a trial on giving Covid-19 and flu jabs at the same time and the logistics of how this could be carried out.
- Commissioning of services for gambling addiction was not a statutory responsibility of Public Health. There was not capacity to commission a service during the Covid-19 pandemic but consideration would be given in the future.
- The Public Health grant allocation had been the same as for the previous year, totalling around £69.7 Million. There was some income from NHS England, with whom KCC jointly commissioned sexual health services and from Kent Police which funded some substance misuse services. KCC Public Health's income was around £2.6million.
- A Public Health reserve had been maintained which was important due to uncertainties. Open access services were demand led and there had been uncertainty around NHS pay increases which was significant to Public Health as many of the providers were from the NHS staff and providers.
- The Director of Public Health had a statutory responsibility in relation to air quality and KCC were part of the Kent and Medway Air Quality Partnership. There was a website for air quality in Kent and it was being investigated how to alert people who are vulnerable when there is poor air quality in a particular area.

**165. Performance of Public Health commissioned services**  
(Item 9)

1) Vicky Tovey, Head of Strategic Commissioning (Public Health), gave an update to Members regarding the performance of Public Health commissioned services. Members were advised that national guidance had meant a number of services had been put on hold during the pandemic. 12 of 15 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were RAG-rated as green, 1 was rated as amber and 2 were rated as red.

2) The KPIs relating to Sexual Health services and the NHS Health check programme were to be amended. The KPI relating to Sexual Health services would be changed to reflect the change in the way services were delivered. The KPI relating to NHS Health Checks would be changed taking into account a 5 year programme of continuous improvement and to bring performance back to pre-pandemic standards.

3) In response to questions from Members, it was noted:

- Some of the KPIs were set nationally and others were locally set benchmarks and targets. KPIs relating to lifestyle services were set by KCC on the basis of what was reasonable.
- There had not been any 'drop out' from using a triaging system for Sexual Health Services. Tests had been sent out promptly and returns of the testing kits were followed up.

4) RESOLVED that the performance of Public Health commissioned services in Q4 of 2020/21 be noted.

**166. Response, Restart and Recovery - Kent Drug and Alcohol Services**  
(Item 10)

1) Jess Mookherjee presented to Members regarding Kent Drug and Alcohol Services.

2) Prior to 2012, services had been provided through the NHS. Since the budget for the services had been moved to KCC, the focus of the services had broadened to include those who had alcohol dependency issues. This had been an unmet need in the county.

3) Before the pandemic, there had been an increase of drugs-related deaths and it had been anticipated that there would be an increase in demand for services during the pandemic.

4) Illicit drug use and supply had continued during the pandemic with some shortages and there had been anecdotal evidence that the purity of drugs had increased.

5) In response to questions from Members, it was noted:

- KCC worked closely with Kent Police on the preventative measures.

**167. Work Programme**  
(Item 11)

Noted.