

# Minutes of Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board

**Monday, 13 September 2021 at 5.00 pm**  
**at Council Chamber - Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

**Present:** Councillor E M Giles (Chair)  
Councillors Akpoteni, Fenton, Fisher, L Giles and Melia

**Officers:** Lisa McNally – Director of Public Health  
Paul Fisher – Deputy Director of Public Health  
Simon Fogell – (Representing) Healthwatch Sandwell  
Sophie Morris – Environmental Improvement Officer

## **21/21 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Bhullar, Costigan, Davies and Khatun.

## **22/21 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **23/21 Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2021 are approved as a correct record.

## **24/21 Urgent Item of Business**

There were no urgent items of business to consider.

## **25/21 Healthwatch Priorities 2021-2022**



The Board noted Healthwatch Sandwell's priority projects for 2021/2022.

Priorities were set annually following collation of intelligence and feedback from an online public survey, a series of engagement events and stakeholder and partner consultation. As a result of the feedback gathered from engagement events in early 2021, three key priorities had been identified:-

- The Hidden Impact on Carers of COVID19.
- Young Peoples' Mental Health.
- Hospital Treatment Pathways

Following consultation and engagement work, a written report would be produced on the detailed findings in each of the priority areas, which would be shared with partner organisations.

In response to questions and comments, the following was noted:

- The impact of mis-information around covid-19 would be explored if it was raised during the consultation and engagement work.
- Healthwatch would provide positive messages around vaccination on the Healthwatch website and in social media and would also talk to young people.
- The public survey was carried out in February 2021. All individuals who had completed the survey and chose to share their details with Healthwatch would be contacted and included in engagement events.
- The survey had been undertaken online and inevitably some care home providers may not have had the opportunity to respond. Once the project on carers commenced, Healthwatch would contact all partners to share the opportunities for engagement as widely as possible.
- Healthwatch would provide data to members on the demographics that the survey had reached.
- Local support for teenage vaccinations was good. However, the recent advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) that 12-15 year olds should not be offered the covid-19 vaccine and the

subsequent Chief Medical Officer's decision to the contrary had caused confusion to parents.

**26/21**

## **Smoke Control Area**

The Board's views were sought on the proposal to declare the whole of Sandwell a Smoke Control Area.

Concerns about poor air quality in Sandwell had existed for several years. Out of 72 local authorities found to have dangerous background concentrations of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) in 2019, Sandwell and Leicester were the only two local authorities that had these exceedances outside of London and the South East of England.

Sandwell's Climate Change and Air Quality Consultation in 2020 had found that 70% of residents agreed that improving air quality should be a key priority for the Council.

The use of open fires and solid-fuel burning stoves had risen in popularity over recent years and concerns continued about the current and future impact on urban air quality. PM2.5 concentrations and other toxic emissions were closely associated with domestic burning. PM2.5 had a significant impact on human health. The World Health Organisation (WHO) advised that there was no 'safe level' on particulate matter and any amount was deemed harmful to the human body.

Smoke Control Areas could help to reduce PM2.5 emissions by limiting the types of fuel and appliances that could be used. Sandwell currently had 51 separate Smoke Control Areas (SCA). Extending the SCA to cover the whole of the Borough would protect all neighbourhoods against harmful smoke emissions. Borough-wide Smoke Control Areas were not uncommon in West Midlands, and two neighbouring authorities, Birmingham and Dudley, already had them in place.

The Council was required to publish a notice stating its intention to revoke the existing 51 smoke control areas and replace them with a borough-wide one. A minimum six-week public consultation would be undertaken, and all objections would be considered and responded to. The Cabinet would

then consider the proposal, before making a recommendation to the full Council.

In response to questions and comments, the following was noted:

- The SCA would make it illegal for residents and businesses to emit smoke from chimneys unless using specifically approved appliances or authorised fuel.
- The order did not apply to smoke coming out of barbecues, pizza ovens, or bonfires.
- Existing appliances could continue to be used, however, only with authorised fuels.
- Officers would investigate what relief schemes were available to those in fuel poverty.
- The announcement of the SCA would be supported by an awareness campaign.

The Director of Public Health undertook to investigate the powers that the local authority possessed in relation to tackling bonfires and rubbish fires and how to strengthen that approach.

**Resolved** that the proposal to declare the whole of Sandwell as a Smoke Control Area is endorsed.

**27/21**

### **Work Programme**

The Board noted its work programme for 2021/22.

It was agreed that a special meeting of the Board be held on 4 October 2021 to look at access to primary care.

Councillor Fisher shared that he would be meeting with Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on 24 September and invited members to send him any questions they would like him to ask on the Board's behalf.

**28/21**

### **Update on Mental Health Services Review**

The Board noted that an information pack was being prepared for members containing data on mental health services in Sandwell. Once collated a working group meeting would be arranged to analyse the data and next steps in terms of evidence gathering.

**29/21**

### **Scrutiny Action Tracker**

The Board noted the contents of the Scrutiny Action Tracker.

**30/21**

### **Cabinet Forward Plan**

The Board noted the contents of the Cabinet Forward Plan.

Meeting ended at 6.20 pm

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