

# Agenda Item 3

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## HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES AND OLDER PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

3 NOVEMBER 2020

(7.15 pm - 8.30 pm)

PRESENT: Councillors Councillor Peter McCabe (in the Chair), Councillor Thomas Barlow, Councillor Nigel Benbow, Councillor Mary Curtin, Councillor Jenifer Gould, Councillor Rebecca Lanning, Councillor Dave Ward and Di Griffin

ALSO PRESENT: Caroline Holland (Director of Corporate Services), John Morgan (Assistant Director, Adult Social Care) and Dr Dagmar Zeuner (Director, Public Health) Stella Akintan (Scrutiny Officer).

### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Saleem Sheikh

### 2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests

### 3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record

### 4 BUDGET AND BUSINESS 2020-21 - VERBAL UPDATE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES. (Agenda Item 4)

The Director of Corporate Services gave an overview of the September Cabinet report highlighting that in March the budget gap was predicted to be £3.3 million rising to £11 million over the next four years. Due to the impact of COVID-19 and other funding issues, the gap has risen to £16.7 million rising to £19.7 million over the next four years. The Government has announced there will be a one year spending review rather than the usual three years, this will be announced on the 25 November. The Local Government Settlement will be announced during the week commencing the 14th December. Savings proposals will be brought to the November Cabinet Meeting. The Overview and Scrutiny Commission will have the opportunity to review these in the new calendar year.

The Director reported there is a new service planning process, which will include direction of travel, key performance information to enable councillors to get a better understanding of the service.

A panel member asked what the budget gap would have been before Covid, as local government were encouraged to do what was needed to support communities during

the pandemic. The Director of Corporate Service reported that it was £1.4 million. The council have been given money for 2020-21 there are resources to offset this financial year, but there are ongoing costs and savings which are not being achieved. The Treasury have been made aware of this and it is hoped this will be reflected in the spending review.

## 5 IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES - VERBAL UPDATE FROM SOUTH WEST LONDON CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP. (Agenda Item 5)

The chair welcomed Mark Creelman, into the new role as the interim Locality Executive Director, Merton and Wandsworth NHS Southwest London CCG

The Locality Director gave an overview of the mental health services available to support people during the pandemic;  
The Primary care Improving Access to Psychological Therapies service deals with common mental health problems. There was a marked drop in referrals in June. The numbers have since risen, there is more demand on services and an increased capacity to meet need. There are more online options but the face to face service still takes place.

In the secondary care psychosis service there are more staff and care co-ordinators, there has been a 69% increase in demand but waiting list targets have been achieved.

The Orchid Suite emergency mental health service is very busy. This is also the case for the mental health Crisis Line however there are more staff and every shift has qualified clinicians.

There are online resources for children and young people. Merton has Off the Record and webinars have been included to meet need.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> July there was a summit on mental health looking at supporting prevention and mental health promotion. Merton councillors are invited to attend a further session on the 10<sup>th</sup> November.

A Panel member asked if there has been an increase in the rates of suicide. The Locality Director said it will be determined by longitudinal studies. There is currently no sign of increase. Mental health problems have increased in general. The Assistant Director for Adult Social Care said the Adult Safeguarding Board are monitoring suicide rates to determine if they are connected to COVID

A Panel member said people may not come forward for low level mental health problems during the pandemic therefore are there plans in place for an increase amongst those who didn't want to put pressure on NHS services.  
The Locality Director said the key message is the NHS is open. There are national and local campaigns sharing this message. Some services may be accessed in a different way. It is how do we tap into communities and faith groups and build on good engagement work.

The Director of Communications, Stakeholder Engagement and Public Affairs said prevention work looks at community capacity building working with schools, community leaders and what can be put in place to support mental wellbeing and working with partners to develop the offer.

A panel member said many older people are having panic attacks indoors what support is available for them. The Locality Director said people should still use primary care facilities as they are working closely with mental health teams. There are tools that can help people to manage anxiety.

A Panel member asked if the NHS received extra funding to cope with the increased demand on services. The Locality Director said there is some Covid funding but it is anticipated there may be a financial impact in the longer term.

## 6 COVID-19 UPDATE - VERBAL UPDATE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE. (Agenda Item 6)

The Director of Public Health gave a short presentation outlining the most recent data on the number of Covid cases in Merton.

A panel member asked if the number of Covid cases are likely to increase until the effects of lockdown are realised. The Director of Public Health agreed and said the aim is to reduce R number and flatten the infection to prevent it from getting out of control.

A panel member asked how people can be encouraged to wear masks. The Director of Public Health said some people are exempt, so it is important to find the balance between civic duty and enforcement. The Director said she will raise concerns with environmental health who have an enforcement role. Community Marshalls have been deployed to support and encourage people to comply with Covid regulations.

The Assistant Director of Adult Social Care also gave a verbal update and highlighted that they are preparing for shielding and hospital discharge in event of a second lockdown.

There are currently 7,200 people shielding in Merton. The Community hub has been commissioned to provide support since the national programme ended in August.

The Assistant Director said plans are in place in the event of a second surge. There currently increases in hospital admissions and discharge and more people with Covid.

The Assistant Director gave an overview of the Warm and Well Merton campaign, which gives energy advice and helps people to claim benefits. Since March they have assessed 636 people. They are working across the East and West of the borough but there is greater need in East.

In response to a question from the Panel it was reported that long term Covid sufferers can access hub as it is open to any resident who needs support at this time.

7 WORK PROGRAMME 2020-21 (Agenda Item 7)

The work programme was noted.

8 BUSINESS PLAN 2020-2022 (Agenda Item 8)