

Item No. 8.	Classification: Open	Date: 19 January 2021	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Covid-19: Update on local infection rate and response	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Kieron Williams, Leader of the Council Councillor Evelyn Akoto, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Community Safety	

FOREWORD – COUNCILLOR KIERON WILLIAMS, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

I am so proud of all in our borough who continue to work together and support each other to get through these most difficult and challenging of times in this long pandemic. Whether that's our local health workers, who day in, day out are working flat out to keep us well. Our local businesses, who are trying to get by, providing jobs and skills in a world full of uncertainty. Our key worker heroes who are working tirelessly to keep all in our borough safe and secure. Our voluntary and community led organisations who are providing a helping hand to those residents in need of extra support. And most crucially our residents who continue to play by the rules and make sacrifices to protect each other, their loved ones and all who call Southwark home.

This report provides a snapshot on what's happening across the borough in the weeks since we all went back into lockdown on 6 January, the third such time in ten months that we have needed to stay home, where we can, and do all we can to protect our local health service and each other. Hope comes with the roll out of the vaccine, first to older age groups and those most in need. I know the council stands ready with all in our community to do what we can to support the roll out of the vaccines and more so to take our borough together to a better place in the weeks and months ahead.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. Note the latest position on Southwark's COVID infection rate (Appendix 1) and overall local response following the move to national lockdown on 6 January 2021.
2. Thanks residents, staff, schools, partners, volunteers, providers, suppliers

and all in our community for their continuing work and dedication in supporting our residents and businesses through the pandemic safely.

3. Expresses condolence to all those who have lost loved ones at this time, noting that work continues as part of the local humanitarian response.
4. Welcomes the early progress on the vaccination programme roll out and stands ready for the Council to support future roll out to residents.

PURPOSE & SUMMARY

5. The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an update on the local COVID infection rate and a brief summary of borough activity underway as part of the local COVID response at this difficult and challenging time for all. This update follows the move to a national lockdown on 6 January 2020.
6. Given the move to national lockdown, this report focuses on the most recent activity including the ongoing community support alliance work and work on local testing and vaccination. Support to schools, the impact on local services and business and wider health impacts are considered.
7. The report should be read in conjunction with the regularly published updates on the Council's website and to residents, all councillors, local MPs and other local stakeholders.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

8. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a hard and lasting effect on residents, public institutions, businesses and voluntary and community organisations. Since the virus first struck our borough almost twelve months ago, it has required a phenomenal response; one that has mobilised the resources, skills and good faith of many across the borough to ensure all, especially the most vulnerable, stay safe, well and protected.
9. Like London, since the first national lockdown and before this latest lockdown, the borough has moved through different stages of restrictions (known as 'tiers'), including a second lockdown, with different changes announced by government sometimes at speed and with limited notice. This has required strong resolve and a swift, effective response from all in our community.
10. Tragically, people in our communities have left us much too soon. In total 271 people in our borough have sadly lost their lives to COVID-19. There were 297 excess deaths in Southwark in 2020 (i.e. the number of deaths in excess of what would 'normally' be expected from any causes in a 'usual' year). The hurt attached to those who have lost loved ones is indescribable.

11. A local humanitarian assistance steering group brings together partners including the NHS, the police, and voluntary and faith sectors to oversee the humanitarian assistance effort. The Council's Strategic Director for Children's and Adults acting is the Council's Humanitarian Assistance Lead Officer, known as HALO.
12. Hope for a better, different way of living and being closer again to loved ones comes in the form of the roll out of a programme of vaccination for our residents, beginning with those identified most at risk or vulnerable alongside key health and social care workers. Further details on initial roll out are set out in this report.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

13. This section provides an update on local infection rate and highlights key areas in our local response. Further details and data analysis are set out in Appendix 1.

Overall position of local health system

14. Overall, across London there are early indications that levels of infection are stabilising, with all boroughs now beginning to show reductions in newly confirmed cases.
15. While this is a positive development, it remains the case that levels of infection remain high and significantly above rates seen in the autumn and early winter. This means that continuing to observe government guidance, staying home wherever possible remains critical to limiting the impact of local transmission of the virus.
16. Continued pressure is evident within the NHS, with high levels of bed occupancy within both general & acute and critical care across London and within our local hospitals. A rapid and sustained reduction in new infections will be important in order to reduce pressure within the NHS as quickly as possible.

Infection and related statistics – latest position

17. There have been 2,564 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Southwark in the week up to 12 January and Southwark's 7-day incidence rate stands at 804 per 100,000; a decrease of 22% on the previous week. This compares to London's 7-day incidence rate of 811 per 100,000; a decrease of 23% on a week earlier.
18. Case rates have decreased among all age groups in the past week. Overall, the highest number of cases, at 1,025, are among 40-59 year olds. Analysis by geography is set out in Appendix 1.
19. Across London, 3 boroughs (as at 18 January) have incidence rates above

1,000 per 100,000 with Barking and Dagenham experiencing the highest incidence rate in London at 1,192 per 100,000. In total, there are almost 7,600 patients with COVID-19 in hospital across London - this compares to 1,701 on 1 December 2020.

20. Overall, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) report that 1 in 30 people in London had COVID-19 between 27 December and 2 January. The 'R' (or reproduction) rate in London is between 0.9 and 1.2. A new strain of COVID-19 was identified in December 2020, which is estimated to be up to 70% more transmissible than previous strains. However, Public Health England state there is no evidence of increased in risk of death, serious illness or re-infection from the new strain.
21. There are 75 local testing sites across London. In Southwark, in the week up to 15 January, there were 12,620 community tests with more than one in five people testing positive. The overall community-testing rate is 568 per 100,000 population for Southwark. Almost half (45%) of community testing is through home testing.
22. NHS Test and Trace enables monitoring of the local spread of COVID-19 through testing of suspected cases and following up of an individual's close contacts. Local contact tracing stands consistently at over 80%, with 83% of local cases successfully followed up and 91% of local contacts successfully followed up. The figures for London are 85% and 93% respectively.
23. Since mid-December, there has been a continuing and rapid rise in the number of hospital local admissions with COVID-19, consistent with the picture across London. In the week to 14 January, combining admissions and inpatient diagnosis there were a total of 130 cases in Guys and St Thomas' and 380 at Kings College Hospital.

Local community testing sites (rapid lateral flow tests)

24. There are a number of facilities across the borough offering COVID-19 tests either for those who have COVID-19 symptoms or for those who are not displaying any symptoms but may be infectious to others (known as asymptomatic testing). Testing for individuals who have COVID-19 symptoms are available at Peckham Pulse, Burgess Park with a third site expected to open at Bel Air, Dulwich on 19 January.
25. A new testing facility at the Damilola Taylor Centre offering rapid lateral flow tests (for asymptomatic testing) to residents (particularly aimed key workers unable to stay at home) and staff opened on Monday 18 January. The facility will be open daily from 9am to 7pm. Individual results will be available usually within an hour. The centre has capacity to over 2000 tests per day at full capacity. A second facility, at Southwark Park, will open on 25 January. This is subject to meeting of local demand, appropriate agreement and other necessary requirements.

26. An online booking system for the rapid lateral flow test went live on Wednesday 13 January. As at Friday 15 January, there were 1510 bookings. A full communications plan is in place contacting and publicising the facility to residents alongside 10,000 emails sent to local businesses plus communications to voluntary and community sector, faith sector and key sectors such as Transport for London and local construction firms. Initial estimates (as at Friday 15 January) show that the Council, in 48 hours, reached some 6,000 people by directing them through our communications channels to the website or online booking form.
27. A fuller description of the current working model for the local community (rapid lateral flow) test is set out in Appendix 1.

Vaccination roll out

28. The local COVID-19 vaccination programme began roll out in December 2020. Major regional hubs (for London, the Excel Centre) are in place as part of the national roll out of vaccinations; North Southwark Primary Care Network (PCN), South Southwark PCN and local acute hospital hubs (GSTT and Kings) are delivering the local programme. The roll out is in line with priority groups as identified by the Joint Committee and Immunisation (JCVI).
29. The council is working closely with the CCG to help coordinate and facilitate roll out as part of a well-established Southwark Immunisation Strategy. Furthermore, local government continues to make the case nationally that the definition of key workers in the next phases of vaccine roll out is widened to include key operations such as waste collection, mortuary staff and other local frontline operations. To improve coverage of the vaccination programme and reduce inequalities a local task force is in place. Members will receive further data vaccine roll out as it becomes available.

Community support alliance

30. In response to the first lockdown, a local Community Hub was set up as a joint initiative between the council, voluntary sector organisations and the local health service to support those who were either shielding or required additional support with food and essential supplies.
31. On 8 September the Cabinet received an update report on the local Community Hub. The Cabinet agreed to move to a broader Southwark community support alliance, which is a coalition of community groups, the NHS and the council that together is providing ongoing support for vulnerable residents affected by the pandemic. To deliver an emergency operating model in the event of a further spike in Covid-19 or a further lockdown, a local community support plan is in place.

32. The community support alliance ('the alliance') continues to operating well. In total, some 10,797 people are on the Shielded Patient List in Southwark. All those shielding were written to by the government to inform them of the reintroduction of shielding and the available support options. The Council also wrote to those shielding including those who were Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) with advice prior to Christmas and ahead of the national lockdown. At that time, some 141 shielded residents requested further support, an average of 8 per day.
33. Further communications to those most vulnerable took place following the move to national lockdown. Latest data shows that demand remains below the levels experienced in the first lockdown and the necessary resources are in place to manage current demand. The alliance continues to closely monitor local demand.
34. Voluntary and community sector providers continue to receive referrals for local support. In the majority of cases, people are being assisted with access to priority supermarket deliveries. The alliance has contacted the local food hubs and Tenants and Residents Associations in the borough, detailing our and requesting they check in on any particularly vulnerable residents they are aware of. Emergency food parcels remain available to those most vulnerable and food insecure where needed. The phone lines and other forms of contact and referral remain open 24 hours a day.

Support to schools

35. All schools across the borough, including nursery and special schools, remain open for children of key and critical workers, similar to the first national lockdown in spring 2020. The definition of key and critical worker list has however been extended when compared to the first national lockdown putting additional pressure on local schools.
36. More specifically, the public health protection team provides advice and support to schools with managing single cases or outbreaks of COVID-19, and with interpreting and applying COVID-19 guidance and protocols. This includes supporting secondary schools to plan for the current roll out of rapid lateral flow mass testing. Eighty five percent of local schools have been provided with some form of public health protection support since September, with additional bespoke support provided through school nursing support. Specific details are set out in Appendix 1.
37. In addition, a collaboration of local schools, the council and health partners has established feedback loops relating to staff and student anxieties, supported the communication of public health guidance, and support to vulnerable children and families in the borough.

Local enforcement and public safety

38. A key priority for the Council throughout the pandemic has been ensuring through an effective communications strategy that the public follow government guidelines on social distancing to decrease the impact of local community transmission. At the same time, Council teams have been working with the Police to support a robust approach to local enforcement, including warning and ultimate prosecution of any businesses who continue to operate in breach of government guidance.
39. Recognising the importance of safeguarding local residents, local authority enforcement officers have taken an active role in enforcing the Coronavirus (Business Restrictions) Regulations throughout their many changes. From the end of March 20 to the end of December 20 officers undertook 7631 business interventions, have served 173 legal orders, including 9 Direction Orders, and awarded 31 businesses with the 'Covid Compliant' accreditation marque.
40. Partnership plans for the disruption of potential gatherings were successful around Halloween and Bonfire Night and on New Year's Eve when four Unlicensed Music Events were identified early and stopped by the Police. The Service has also had a very productive partnership arrangement with the Police, Borough Market and the Better Bankside BID to address issues of public overcrowding and street drinking, eating and socialising in SE1
41. The council's enforcement team are speaking at national fora on lessons learnt from our local enforcement approach. Regulatory Services are now receiving information from Public Health regarding premises where outbreaks are actually, and potentially, occurring.

Local business support

42. Local businesses continue to face significant impact in the light of the third national lockdown to take place in a period of 10 months. A number of business support grants are available reflecting the ongoing impact of the pandemic and the move between different levels of local restrictions. Particularly affected is the retail and hospitality sector, although all businesses continue to face uncertainty and difficult conditions in the weeks ahead.
43. In total, some 4,500 businesses have received support through business rate relief and other related measures equating to some £158.2m. In addition, through the Council's local economy team we have administered some £6.42m in additional discretionary business grant relief supporting 1272 businesses. Demand remains high for this additional relief, with the current round of additional restrictions grant receiving 1,644 applications in a period of 28 days.

Impact on Council services

44. The impact of COVID-19 has had differential impact across the Council's operation, albeit all Council services (other than those required to close) continue to operate safely and effectively. The closure of libraries, leisure centres and outdoor sports took place in line with government direction. Other services, such as housing repairs and maintenance have been modified to focus on essential works and support to the most vulnerable / at risk. In areas such as street sweeping and waste management rotas have been amended. Supporting staff wellbeing and safety whilst continuing to deliver services to residents is the key priority.
45. On a council wide and individual service scale, monitoring of staff sickness is taking place. Directors continue to track individual service performance and those of contractors with any modifications updated and communicated through the Council's channels and directly to affected residents and groups where required.
46. Our staff are our greatest asset and their safety and wellbeing is a top priority for the Council as we manage our local response. A Covid-19 Wellbeing plan and Toolkit and winter wellbeing plan and toolkit is in place for staff to help support individuals and teams during this challenging period. The council also has confidential Employee Assistance Programme 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Supporting staff is also key to our wider local humanitarian response.

Governance

47. COVID-19 represents a public health emergency and, in response to the move to national lockdown, the Council has put in place the necessary emergency planning arrangements with the Chief Executive (or her nominate) taking on Council Gold for the purposes of directing council wide activity with regards the local pandemic response.
48. An Outbreak Prevention and Control Executive plan and associated governance arrangements are in place under the direction of the Director of Public Health to oversee the local public health response. This involve key partners in health and voluntary and community sector, with reporting on progress also to the Southwark Health and Wellbeing Board which is chaired by the Leader of the Council.

Community impact statement

49. As this report notes, COVID-19 continues to impact residents, partners and businesses across the borough. The purpose of this report is to briefly update on local infection rate and set out key highlights from the local response in the light of the move to national lockdown on 6 January 2020.

50. The wider longer term social, environmental and economic impact on residents and the borough will likely be significant. In considering, planning ahead for and mitigating the long term effects of COVID-19 on our borough the council, working with partners, will undertake the necessary work to more fully understand any specific implications on a particular group or groups of individuals in our community. The Public Sector Equality Duty will be taken into account as we deliver services and respond to the continuing impact of COVID-19 on our borough as well as plan any changes to policy arising from that impact. This will include identification of any vulnerable groups and individuals who may be in particular need of targeted support.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Law and Governance

51. The report to provide cabinet with an update on the local COVID infection rate and a brief summary of borough activity underway as part of the local COVID response at this difficult and challenging time for all. The update follows the move to a national lockdown on 6 January 2020.
52. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, in making this decision, the Cabinet must comply with its public equality duty which requires it to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
53. The community impact statement in paragraphs 49 and 50 clarifies that there will be significant impacts on residents including individuals with protected characteristics.

Strategic Director of Finance and Governance

54. The Strategic Director of Finance and Governance notes the update on the local COVID infection rate and borough activity underway as part of the local COVID response, in particular the ongoing community support alliance work, work on local testing and vaccination, support to schools, impact on local services and business and wider impacts on council services.
55. There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.
56. The Strategic Director of Finance and Governance notes the importance of good governance and accountability to facilitate control of COVID-19 spending during this crisis, and that the finance team will monitor and

track COVID-19 related spend. We will need to continue to ensure that Government fully funds the financial burden of responding to this crisis on local authorities and their residents.

REASONS FOR LATENESS

57. The report is late so officers can take account of the most up to date information pertaining to the infection rate and related local response.

REASONS FOR URGENCY

58. The report is urgent so Cabinet can take account of the latest health, social care and wider impact data following the move to a national lockdown on 6 January 2021. In doing so and noting this report, Cabinet can put in place any immediate, necessary next steps on policy and resource direction for the Council, where required.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	COVID-19 Update to Council Cabinet, January 2021

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Kieron Williams, Leader of the Council Councillor Evelyn Akoto, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Community Safety	
Lead Officer	Eleanor Kelly, Chief Executive	
Report Author	Stephen Gaskell, Director of Response and Renewal Chris Williamson, Head of Public Health Intelligence	
Version	Final	
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Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Governance	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	19 January 2021	