

**Coventry City Council**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board (5) held at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 1 December 2021**

Present:

Members: Councillor J Clifford (Chair)  
Councillor J Birdi  
Councillor R Lancaster  
Councillor G Lloyd  
Councillor A Lucas  
Councillor A Masih

Co-Opted Member: David Spurgeon

Other Members: Education and Childrens Services Scrutiny Board (2)  
Councillors: P Akhtar, J Innes and S Keough,  
S Hanson and K Jones (Co-opted Members)  
  
G Hayre, M Mutton, K Sandhu and P Seaman, Cabinet and  
Deputy Cabinet Members

Employees:

B Atkins, Public Health  
A Cole, Disabilities and Autism  
V Castree, Law and Governance  
V DeSouza, Public Health  
L Gaulton, Director of Public Health and Wellbeing  
L Knight, Law and Governance  
J Reading, Adult Services

Other Representative: H Stephenson, Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust

Apologies: Councillors F Abbott, J Blundell, B Gittins, E Ruane,  
R Simpson, D Skinner, C Thomas and A Tucker

## **Public Business**

### **18. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **19. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> September, 2021 were agreed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

## 20. **Coventry and Warwickshire All Age Autism Strategy 2021-2026**

The Board considered a briefing note of Alison Cole, Senior Joint Commissioner for Disabilities and Autism, concerning the Coventry and Warwickshire All Age Autism Strategy 2021-2026, a copy of which was set out at an appendix to the briefing note. Members of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) attended the meeting for the consideration of this item along with Councillors K Sandhu and P Seaman, Cabinet Members for Education and Skills and Children and Young People. Councillor M Mutton, Cabinet Member for Adult Services and Councillor G Hayre, Deputy Cabinet Member for Public Health and Sport also attended for this item. Helen Stephenson, Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust was also in attendance.

The briefing note indicated that Local Authorities and CCGs had statutory responsibilities to support autistic people. In recognition of these statutory responsibilities and the inequalities faced by autistic people, the Coventry and Warwickshire Collaborative Commissioning Board approved the development of a joint all age strategy for autistic people. This was a joint five-year strategy owned by Warwickshire County Council, Coventry City Council and NHS Coventry and Warwickshire Clinical Commissioning Group.

The Strategy built on the previous joint commissioning plan developed by Warwickshire County Council and Coventry City Council in 2017. The Boards were informed that publication of the local strategy was delayed while the national strategy was being developed, however, work had continued to work towards delivery of the strategy in the meantime. Significant progress had been made since the previous joint commissioning plan to develop diagnostic pathways for adults and children; pilot new support services for autistic people pre and post diagnosis and those in mental health crisis; improve support for young people in education with communication and sensory needs; and deliver autism training for parents, carers and the wider workforce. However, autistic people continued to experience inequalities due to gaps in services and support, hence the need for the strategy.

The autism strategy had been informed by a range of co-production and mapping activity which was completed in 2019 and 2020 with experts with lived experience and key professionals, which was undertaken to build our shared understanding of the experience of autistic people of all ages and their families in accessing support appropriate to their needs and getting a formal diagnosis of autism. An accessible and easy read version of the strategy was being developed and would be published following sign off of the Strategy.

The Board noted that the strategy gave overarching objectives for the next 5 years. These would be delivered in a co-ordinated way across Warwickshire and Coventry and some elements would be delivered differently in the different places to take account of the different services and communities across the area.

In line with the Coventry and Warwickshire Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Inclusion Strategies, the Autism Strategy emphasised the importance of promoting inclusive practice and supporting young people to access their full potential through education. Delivery of the strategy would therefore be

aligned with the Warwickshire SEND change programme and the Coventry SEND Strategy 2019 to 2022 'Lifting the Cloud of Limitation'.

Reference was made to the new national Autism Strategy (2021-2026) launched in July 2021 which built on the previous national Strategy's pre-existing duties placed on commissioners and service delivery providers in relation to adults; and through the SEND Code of Practice in relation to children and young people. Overall, there was close alignment between the local and national strategies, although the priorities were described differently between the two documents.

A year 1 strategy delivery plan had been developed to describe activities that have been initiated while waiting for the publication of the national strategy. Priorities identified within this plan were funded and were deliverable. The year 1 plan focussed on reducing waiting times for a diagnosis and pre and post diagnostic support, as well as reducing the numbers of autistic people admitted to Mental Health hospitals. In year 2 priorities would reflect the wider scope beyond health, social care and education.

In reflecting on the national strategy priorities, there was the opportunity to strengthen the focus on workforce development in the local delivery plan for year 2, building the links with education, criminal justice, and public health as well as with the two Councils and CCGs own employment practices in promoting the employment of autistic people. For example, greater consideration needed to be given in the local delivery plan to improving the experience of autistic people in accessing public transport and advocacy services and improving support in and environments of services working with autistic people.

The briefing note set out the following five main priority areas of the Autism Strategy along with the key objectives that had been developed for each area:

- i) Support autistic people and people with social, communication and emotional health needs to help themselves pre and post diagnosis
- ii) Reduce inequalities for autistic people and make Coventry and Warwickshire autism friendly places to live
- iii) Develop a range of organisations locally with the skills to support autistic people
- iv) Develop the all age autism specialist support offer, including redesign of the diagnostic pathway to address waiting times for a diagnosis
- v) Co-produce, work together and learn about autism.

The briefing note also set out a summary of the key activities for year one under these five priorities.

Members questioned the officers on a number of issues and responses were provided, matters raised included:

- Support for the All Age Autism Strategy, including the support of the three Cabinet Members present for the consideration of this item
- What difference would the Strategy make to a primary school teacher with an autistic child in their class
- A request for details about the length of time associated with the long waiting lists for assessment

- What informal support was available for teachers and parents when a child was on the list awaiting assessment
- Details about the partnership working between agencies who support adults with autism and how could these organisations work better together in the future
- Information about the financial implications of providing a service that meets aspirations
- Further information about the numbers of autistic children in hospital and care and the importance of schools making adjustments to support pupils to remain in school
- Concerns about young people and adults with more complex needs who, due to a backlog in the system, were unable to access specific support and were often not known to the Team. Such cases were often picked up at a time of crisis
- Expectations for future funding of the service.

**RESOLVED that:**

**(1) Contents of the briefing note and presentation be noted.**

**(2) Cabinet be informed that the Board supported and endorsed the strategy.**

**21. Director of Public Health's Annual Report 2020-2021**

The Board considered a briefing note and presentation of Liz Gaulton, Director of Public Health and Wellbeing which presented the Director of Public Health's Annual Report 2020-2021, 'Connecting through Covid-19 – Making a difference by working together in unprecedented times'. A copy of the report was set out at an appendix to the briefing note. Councillor M Mutton, Cabinet Member for Adult Services and Councillor G Hayre, Deputy Cabinet Member for Public Health and Sport attended the meeting for the consideration of this item along with Councillor P Seaman, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

The report focused on the value of relationships and connecting with people and communities. It offered a reflection on the city's approach to engagement and working with communities through the pandemic and demonstrated how this had shaped the Covid-19 response, recovery and ongoing defence.

The briefing note highlighted that the One Coventry approach and values had been at the heart of the way the Council had worked. The pandemic had shone a light on the engrained health inequalities that existed in Coventry. Covid-19 had led to 682 deaths in the City by September 2021 and caused long-term health problems which affected the day-to-day activities for thousands of residents. The Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions had disrupted the daily lives of all 379,000 Coventry residents. The Director's report brought together data that showed the impact of Covid-19 and provided an overview of the Council's strategy on communications and engagement. It demonstrated how services and the Council's response was guided by community-led activity.

As residents learnt to live with Covid, the report offered recommendations for improvement and future practice. These recommendations augmented and looked to consolidate the good practice that had taken place over the last 12 months. The

pandemic had required a different approach to be taken to engagement which had heavily relied upon true partnership working in an unprecedented way. The Board noted that the relationships built during the pandemic, laid firm foundations for future growth and joint work.

The report also provided an update on the progress made on the recommendations in the 2019-20 report 'Resetting our Wellbeing'.

The report set out the following five recommendations:

i) Harness the work of the Community Messengers approach established during our Covid-19 response, as an ongoing method of working with communities and a central component of engagement for public health and wider programmes.

ii) Build on the engagement structures created and strengthened during the pandemic such as the Places of Worship and Community Centre Network, and grass-roots community organisations who were funded to support COVID-19 response efforts. Further understand the reach of these community organisations and networks to enable the targeting of work in areas with limited availability of community resource.

iii) Strengthen the existing relationships with GPs, other health professionals and those working with populations at higher risk of a range of poorer health outcomes due to inequality, deprivation, ethnicity and underlying health conditions – building upon the work started through the Vaccinating Coventry Programme.

iv) Embed the partnership approach to maintaining local Covid-19 defence, led by Coventry City Council's Public Health working collaboratively with UK Health Security Agency and in partnership with the wider Council and 'One Coventry' partners. Embed the partnership approach to maintaining local Covid-19 defence, led by Coventry City Council's Public Health working collaboratively with UK Health Security Agency and in partnership with the wider Council and 'One Coventry' partners.

v) Establish strong Covid-19 recovery workstreams with 'One Coventry' partners and communities to embed a robust and coherent recovery for the City, with the aim of building a better future for all.

The briefing note provided examples of some of the work that was currently underway to support the achievement of the report's recommendations including a menu of legacy ideas from the excellent engagement work which was being explored with the community messengers; and building on engagement structures with work starting on mapping and explaining the reach of community organisations and community groups across the city. Work was ongoing on a web-based system to store the information.

The presentation provided an overview of the report and gave the Board an update on the impact of Covid 19 in the city from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. An Impact A-Z of Covid was set out. The presentation also highlighted the population health approach to the Covid-19 defence and detailed the focus on engagement and work with the local communities including the community messengers. The Board were updated on sharing good practice and guidance;

outbreak management; engagement with the vulnerable cohorts; support to schools and early years; and vaccinating the city.

Members questioned the officers on a number of issues and responses were provided, matters raised included:

- Support for the excellent report
- Support for all the successful partnership working
- Concerns about the lack of availability of GP appointments and the need to notify patients of the option of getting a GP referral to the pharmacy for some prescribed medications
- The need to communicate what other support could be provided by pharmacies
- What was the current position for receiving support from health visitors
- Concerns about the impact on A and E arising from the lack of GP appointments
- What was being done to counter the negative messages around Covid vaccinations and boosters
- Would new vaccines be needed to deal with new strains of Covid-19
- Information on the Covid recovery, including what was being done to protect the most vulnerable

The Chair, Councillor Clifford, referred to the Liz Gaulton, Director of Public Health and Wellbeing, who was about to leave the City Council. The Board placed on record their thanks and appreciation to Liz for all her work undertaken during her time as the city's Director of Public Health and wished her well for the future.

**RESOLVED that:**

**(1) The progress on recommendations from the 2019-2020 Director of Public Health's Annual report be noted.**

**(2) The findings from the 2020-2021 Director of Public Health's Annual report be noted.**

**(3) The recommendations from the 2020-2021 Director of Public Health's Annual report be endorsed.**

**(4) The work of health visitors in the city, including the impacts of Covid on the service, to be considered at a future meeting.**

**(5) Engagement be undertaken with colleagues at Coventry and Warwickshire CCG regarding communications to residents about the support that can be provided by local pharmacists following referrals from GPs.**

## **22. Work Programme 2021-2022 and Outstanding Issues**

The Board noted their work programme for the current municipal year.

23. **Any other items of Public Business**

There were no additional items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 3.40 pm)