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HEALTH MEETING. FRIDAY 20 NOVEMBER, 2020 - 9.30am to 10.30am

Present: Andrew Bird, Cllr Julie Cooper, Geoff Durham, Tracey Shewan CCG and Cllr Ian Wilkes

Introductions were made by delegates at the meeting, and Tracy Shewan was thanked for making the time meet with representatives of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee, as there were a number of items they wished to discuss.

Councillor Cooper asked Tracey Shewan why patients were being moved from the Royal Stoke University Hospital to other hospitals in order to free up beds. Councillor Cooper also asked if anyone from within the Borough had been moved.

Tracy didn't have the figures but would check and forward the information to ourselves. As of yesterday, the Royal Stoke Hospital had 300 Covid positive patients which was a quarter of the hospital's capacity. In addition, ICU was over capacity with over thirty patients in at the present time. The hospital was also under pressure with high sickness levels amongst its staff.

As people's conditions improved in hospital they needed to be moved to a Covid safe area to continue with their recovery. Therefore, patients were being moved to the Heywood Hospital, Cheadle and also Stafford Hospital.

Councillor Cooper queried why Bradwell Hospital could not be used. Why was it closing when it was needed. It is vital to the area.

Tracey advised that the Surge Plan in place for Covid took pressure off the beds in ICU by looking at other hospitals which provide intensive care. To use Bradwell Hospital, they would have to be able to staff it safely. If the Coronavirus wasn't an issue, the hospital would not be needed.

Councillor Cooper stated that Bradwell Hospital had originally been set up as an infection hospital and asked, as that was the case why was it not being used now during the pandemic.

Tracey advised that capacity was opened where it was safe to do so, where there was the right oxygen equipment, fire doors etc to ensure that it was safe. Critical Care patients could not be put into a Community Hospital as a lot of equipment was needed.

For clarification, Councillor Wilkes asked if Intensive Care referred to patients being 'kept alive' and this was confirmed. The patients would be moved to wherever was necessary to achieve this. Once their condition improved they could be moved to a lower graded hospital closer to home. There was a rehabilitation centre also at the Royal Stoke Hospital.

Tracey stated that luckily, community beds weren't being used when the pandemic hit. Tracey believed that the situation would worsen. There is still a rise in infection rates and there was usually a two week lag before admission to hospital. Nurses were constantly being training to step up to Intensive Care should they be required.

Although there were fewer fatalities during this second wave, depending on the patient's age, the period that they were kept in Intensive Care was much longer. In the over sixties age group, there was more need for oxygen, non-invasive ventilation and Intensive Care.

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Lessons had been learned from the first wave as to what treatment and medications helped best.

Councillor Wilkes asked Tracey for confirmation that the current hospital admissions were higher than the first wave. This was confirmed. Councillor Wilkes stated that the public did not seem to be taking the second wave as seriously as the first. Tracey agreed and stated that it was challenging and that enforcement had been stepped up with Covid Marshalls and more fines being issued. Supermarkets needed to be contacted as families were now being allowed in, together and purchasing non-essential items.

Councillor Cooper stated that she had seen nurses shopping who were still wearing their uniforms whilst the public were being advised to wash their hands etc. Tracey advised that anyone on Covid wards would be wearing scrubs and these would be removed after their shift.

Tracey confirmed that the Royal Stoke Hospital had been visited this morning to be advised on infection control. Clear instructions had been given that there should be no car sharing. People travelling in emergency vehicles should wear a mask unless they wore glasses as there was a risk of them steaming up whilst driving. Tracey asked Andrew Bird for clarity on the position of the Waste and Recycling operatives wearing masks.

Andrew stated that it was a different circumstance due to the conditions they worked in. Due to what they were handling, hands and gloves were difficult to keep clean. There was far greater risk in putting a mask on and taking it off several times a day. Masks could be worn in the cabs but it was not insisted upon and there was hand sanitiser available. The operatives were kept within their working bubble and therefore they knew each other's habits.

Councillor Cooper asked about MRSA and C'Difficile – how things were going there now that there was Covid and the flu season was approaching. Tracey stated that, because of the infection control measures that had been implemented with social distancing etc., there were fewer flu cases. This time of year would also normally see the Noravirus but the measures were reducing all infections and there would also be fewer people with colds. Australia did not have a flu season this time and it was hoped that this country would be the same.

Andrew referred to people's wellbeing and what the Council could do in terms of the parks and open spaces. Tracey mentioned the North Staffs' Healthcare campaign 'You are Not Alone' which advises people where they can get help. The County Council had sent out information on suicide awareness.

There were also issues of people being unable to pay bills. There was a need to do as much as possible to advise people how to maintain their wellbeing.

Councillor Cooper asked how the message was being put out as not everyone had access to social media etc. Tracey advised that the radio and local newspapers were being used plus leafleting. The message could also be relayed by people visiting the elderly and vulnerable and the message needed to be got out to younger people so they could pass information on to grandparents etc.

Councillor Wilkes asked if it would be worth putting pressure onto the government regarding the need for outdoor sports that could be undertaken safely. Tracey confirmed that this was happening through a debate in Parliament on 23 November. There was a need to lobby our MP's.

Councillor Cooper mentioned the imminent vaccine and Tracey said that the Prime Minister was due to make an announcement this afternoon. The NHS was ready to go on the 1 December if the vaccine got the go ahead.

Councillor Cooper asked if Tracey could provide the following:

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The number of C'Difficile cases

The number of Borough residents that had been sent to other hospitals.

The meeting was concluded and Tracey Shewan was thanked for attending the meeting.

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