

Notes of the quarterly meeting held with Chair and Vice Chair of HW&E scrutiny committee and Tracey Shewan, Director of Communications and Corporate Services, Integrated Care Board.

Present: Councillors Ian Wilkes and Rupert Adcock, Denise French, Tracey Shewan ICB

Covid update

Tracey gave an update on the current situation with Covid: there had been a recent surge in cases across the UK with the current case numbers at 266.3 per 100,000 population. The current hospital bed occupancy for patients with Covid at Royal Stoke was 214 with 2 patients requiring ventilation. Staff absences due to Covid had now started to fall and was at 7% compared to the usual rate of 4%. The current Covid strain was referred to as a strain of Omicron, rather than a new name.

ONS data showed a downturn in cases across all age groups except for the 45-60 age group where cases were level.

The hospital remained busy with challenges around ambulances being stuck there due to patient flow through the hospital.

Recruitment

Recruitment was good for the ambulance service. In the West Midlands new starters would begin in an Ambulance Technician role. There was ongoing recruitment to student paramedic roles. There were difficulties in recruiting to various other roles including nurses, medical roles, midwifery and GPs. There were also challenges in recruiting to social care which added to the pressure on the hospital system.

Schemes to retire and return had been introduced for staff who had retired at 55 but wished to return to work in the NHS.

Walley's Quarry

Tracey advised that no issues had been highlighted with her at the moment regarding health issues relating to the quarry.

Vaccination Programme

The current focus for Covid vaccinations was on children and areas of deprivation although there were no wards in Newcastle under Lyme Borough requiring focus.

It was hoped that both flu and Covid vaccinations could be administered at the same time. It was intended to make the vaccines as accessible as possible and consideration was being given to vaccines being administered at pharmacies; a clinical lead was required to be at every vaccine centre. People would be invited to book their jabs. A report would be submitted to the County Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the vaccine programme in due course.