

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

Meeting:	Community Select Committee	
Date:	Wednesday, 4 March 2020	
Place:	Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete	
Members Present:	Councillors:	Sarah Mead (Chair), Margaret Notley (Vice-Chair), Stephen Booth, Adrian Brown, Teresa Callaghan, Alex Farquharson, John Mead and Loraine Rossati
In Attendance:	Councillors:	Jim Brown, Maureen McKay (HCC Health Scrutiny Committee) and Jeannette Thomas (Portfolio Holder – Housing Health and Older People)

1	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
	<p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Liz Harrington and Claire Parris.</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
2	MINUTES - 8 JANUARY 2020	
	<p>It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Community Select Committee meeting held on 8 January 2020 be approved as a correct record</p>	
3	PUBLIC HEALTH DISCUSSION ITEM WITH HCC DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH	
	<p>The Director of Public Health (Public Health Service - Hertfordshire County Council), Jim McManus, was in attendance at the meeting. He gave an update on the new Coronavirus strain (COVID-19). The Director informed Members that the majority of the UK population remains at low risk of COVID-19. The Director highlighted that older people with pre-existing conditions were at risk of a severe form of the disease. COVID-19 was being treated from other viruses because of the ability to spread while showing no symptoms and the speed of growth of numbers.</p> <p>The Director advised the Committee that COVID-19 was moderately transmissible but there was no need to panic.</p>	

Coronaviruses were mainly transmitted by large droplets spread through coughing, sneezing and contact with infected secretions. Planning was underway in local areas. In relation to good practice, the Director indicated that the best way to stop spread was hygiene and cleaning. Currently, there was no dedicated drug for the virus and there were no expectations of a vaccine any time soon.

Members pointed out that local buses did not display any guidance on ways of preventing the spread of COVID-19 and there were no notices on trains. The Committee sought clarification on guidance airline passengers, schools, religious and other public gatherings. Members also asked questions regarding support for care workers, fear and uncertainty in the public, election canvassing and pressures on the NHS 111 (non-emergency) number.

In his response, the Director confirmed that the Public Health team were systematically working with stakeholders including bus operators, Network Rail and train operators. With regard to air travel, the Director referred to recent flight cancellations to areas heavily affected by the virus. It was pointed out that airlines were intensifying cleaning regimes. Travellers were urged to avoid flying to countries and areas where there were high chances of coming into contact with someone with COVID-19. People with vulnerable health were advised not to fly.

The Director of Public Health stated that those responsible for work places, schools, shopping outlets, halls sports establishments and other public buildings should prioritise sanitisation of high risk touch points such as handrails, elevator controls and door handles. Professor McManus confirmed that banknotes could carry bacteria or viruses such as COVID-19.

In response to a question regarding guidance for care workers, Professor McManus stated that carers should minimise contact if there was a high risk of contracting COVID-19. The use of clinical masks would be recommended in some cases.

With regard to religious gatherings, the Director of Public Health reported that FaithAction was Public Health England's strategic partner for information campaigns. He confirmed that Public Health was available to engage with all faith groups in the County and to share guidance on COVID-19.

The Director acknowledged the information gaps and stressed the importance of disseminating accurate and regular updates to the public. He advised that the public should take a measured approach and not assume that colds and flu would lead to COVID-19. Members agreed to take the message back to schools and communities.

The Director of Public Health highlighted the importance of behaviour change in the fight against COVID-19. It was indicated that the public should re-consider the frequency and necessity of public gatherings such as church meetings, political gatherings and sports events. The Director informed the Committee that a guidance document had been prepared for election canvassers.

Members welcomed recent announcements by the government that those in self-isolation would be entitled to sick pay from day one and that COVID-19 had been declared a notifiable disease. However, the self-employed and those under zero-contract hours would be under pressure to work while ill so as to earn a living and this would put colleagues and customers at risk. Professor McManus informed the Committee it was too early to have significant levels of reliable data to enable modelling and better preparations to deal with the disease. The standard notifiable disease procedure would be discarded if there was an influx of cases.

The Director of Public Health reported that there were pressures on the NHS 111 (non-emergency) number, Public Health England helplines and medical laboratories. Public Health Service (Hertfordshire) had established a schools COVID-19 helpline so as to relieve pressure on NHS 111 number, ensure consistency of advice and fill in any gaps in the NHS 111 service.

The Chief Executive thanked the Director of Public Health for guidance and regular updates to local authorities, schools and other public and private institutions in Hertfordshire. He informed Members that SBC had a Business Continuity Plan in place. In his reply, the Director of Public Health commended measures that had been put in place by the Council.

The Chair informed the Committee that due to the COVID-19 health emergency, the Director of Public Health would not be in a position to discuss other public health issues affecting Stevenage.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That Members liaise with the Director of Public Health regarding the posting of COVID-19 advice leaflets on public transport

	<p>2. That the Strategic Director (RP) circulates to all Members the latest guidance for election canvassers</p> <p>3. That the Scrutiny Officer liaises with the Director of Public Health regarding scheduling a meeting to discuss other public health issues affecting Stevenage</p>
4	HEALTHY STEVENAGE STRATEGY
	It was RESOLVED that the item be deferred to a future meeting of the Community Select Committee.
5	URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS
	None.
6	EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS
	Not required.
7	URGENT PART II BUSINESS
	None.