

**POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**20/01/2022 at 6.00 pm**



**Present:** Councillor McLaren (Chair)  
Councillors Alyas, Brownridge, Curley, Hobin, K Phythian,  
Surjan and Williamson

Also in Attendance:

Cllr Akhtar

Cabinet Member for Employment  
and Enterprise

Jon Bloor

Head of Enterprise and Skills

Andrea Dickinson

Learning & Development Manager

Kaidy McCann

Constitutional Services

Katrina Stephens

Director of Public Health

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence received.

2 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business received.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

4 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions received.

5 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup>  
December 2021 be approved as a correct record.

6 **COVID UPDATE**

Consideration was given to a presentation which provided an  
update on the Covid-19 pandemic.

Members were informed that there had been a high peak of  
infections in the previous months due to the Omicron variant.  
However, within Oldham the daily average cases in the past 14  
days had been on a downwards trend. Members were advised  
on the breakdown of cases within Oldham by age and gender.  
The bulk of infections within the last 7 days were from school  
age children, with 172 females and 195 males in the 0-9 range  
and 194 females and 198 males in the 10-19 range.

Members were provided with the ethnicity breakdown of cases.  
It was noted that there were similar rates across all ethnicities.  
However, in the past 7 months the rate of infection had  
increased within the White British community. The increase was  
due to the original strain that affected the BAME community

which was no longer in the UK. Members were provided with the Districts data which identified North and East Oldham as the areas with the highest rate of cases in the last 28 days per 100,000 residents.



Within hospitals, the average A&E attendances over the latest 7-day average was 2.6 compared to all attendances which averaged at 181.9. There was an average of 8.1 Covid-19 diagnosis per 7-day average. The total beds occupied by Covid-19 patients were 115 with 8 ICU patients. Overall, this showed a downward trend in patients that needed intensive care. There had been fewer deaths in the current wave with the average now at 4-5 deaths per week.

Testing for Covid-19 was being nationally led with the Council and partners working with the national team to try to match national resources to local need and demand. There were four fixed sites in the borough which offered PCR testing, supplemented by mobile testing units. It was noted that there were challenges with supply routes and many Authorities were not receiving the full orders. However, over the past 3 to 4 weeks the orders had significantly improved.

Members were advised that Oldham Council had a role in contact tracing alongside NHS Test and Trace which involved:  
Tier 1: contact tracing and outbreak management in complex/high risk settings  
Tier 2: follow up of individual cases not reached by the national team within 48 hours of testing positive.

The GM team provided additional 'surge' capacity. The current focus of Tier 1 activity was primarily on supporting schools. Tier 2 were prioritising follow up of cases in areas of highest levels of deprivation to highlight support available. Financial support for self-isolation was available, supplemented by additional practical support such as food vouchers/food parcels.

Members were informed that 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> vaccinations were now available for those aged 12+ with Booster doses available for people aged 16+, and clinically vulnerable 12–15-year-olds. 1st doses were also available for 5–11-year-olds who were clinically vulnerable or who lived with someone who was clinically vulnerable. There was a higher uptake in vaccinations from the older generations and those that live in more affluent areas. Within GM, Oldham ranked in the bottom half for overall uptake.

Members were advised of the key issues for 2022 in regard to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was noted that with the end of the Plan B measures there was a risk of high infection rates. Support was needed for those suffering with long Covid and the impact of services that were stood down due to the pandemic.

**RESOLVED** that:

1. The update be noted.

2. A further update be provided to the Committee in 6 months' time.



**Oldham**  
Council

7

### **THE DIGITAL SECTOR: DEVELOPING A WORKSHOP TO REVIEW APPRENTICESHIPS ACROSS OLDHAM AND THE OFFERING OF DIGITAL APPRENTICESHIPS BY THE COUNCIL.**

Consideration was given to a report which requested a discussion to develop a workshop to address issues related to the development of the digital sector in the town, the review of apprenticeships across Oldham and the offering of digital apprenticeships by the Council, as raised in a Youth Council Motion to Council.

Members were advised that the Covid-19 pandemic had made a significant economic impact upon the business community with both decline and growth of key elements, one of which had been the accelerated growth for digital sector skills. During a three-month period in 2019-20, e-commerce penetration had seen the equivalent of 10 years growth. It was noted that the digital sector and digital skills growth demand was evident in the Greater Manchester and Oldham economy as each sector responded to the Covid 19 pandemic with an increase in digitalisation within every facet of the workforce in both the public and private sector.

Members were informed of Oldham's Digital Strategy which set out the ambition to deliver a Digital Oldham for everyone. One of the strategic areas of focus was a Digital Workforce which would ensure that by April 2024, Team Oldham would have the digital skills and confidence to exploit and deliver digital service improvement. To prepare, Team Oldham had engaged with both Oldham colleges as part of the commitment to provide work placements for T-Level students. In 2021, a partnership was formed with Oldham Sixth Form College which provided four Digital T-Level placements to students across IT, Communications and HR OD as part of the pilot rollout with a pledge to offer more placements each year.

#### **RESOLVED** that:

1. A workshop be set up with those identified at point 3.3 in the report.
2. The workshop be held between 4.00pm and 7.00pm to accommodate maximum attendance by the Youth Council Members.

8

### **POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22**

**RESOLVED** that the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme be noted.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.33 pm