

Meeting: Health and Wellbeing Board
Date: Tuesday 5 March 2024
Classification: Part 1
Key Decision: No
Title of Report: Health Protection Oversight in Southend on Sea.

Executive Director: Michael Marks, on behalf of Krishna Ramkhelawon (Director of Public Health)
Report Author: Dr Margaret Eni-Olotu, Public Health Consultant
Executive Councillor: Councillor James Moyies

1. Executive Summary

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, two sub-committees, namely the Health Protection Board and the Health Protection Oversight & Engagement Board, were established for local governance for all Health Protection matters in Southend.

Since 1st April 2013, the Council, through the Director of Public Health (DPH), has been devolved the statutory responsibilities to advise on and promote local health protection plans across agencies, which complements the statutory responsibilities of UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA – previously known as Public Health England), NHS England (NHSE) and the local NHS and the Mid and South Essex's Integrated Care Board (MSE ICB – previously Southend CCG).

The purpose of this report is to inform the Board that this statutory responsibility will be maintained through the DPH, in collaboration with UKHSA, and the Council's Chief Executive and Cabinet. We are proposing to initiate a joint surveillance and advisory group in partnership with our neighbouring Councils, namely Essex County Council and Thurrock Council. The group will be led by experienced Public Health Consultants and supported by key local partners, including the NHS (ICB and Providers) and UKHSA.

Decisions about the robust public health response to health protection matters is the responsibility of the DPH, in consultation with Southend-on-Sea City Council's Chief Executive Officer and the respective portfolio holder in the Cabinet.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Health and Wellbeing Board discuss and provide their endorsement for this collaborative approach to Health Protection surveillance and advice, to support the DPH in discharging its statutory function.

3. Background

Two Southend-centric Boards were formed at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 and each had distinct roles and responsibilities:

Southend Health Protection Board (HPB) - It was set up in March 2020 as a multi-agency senior executive Board to facilitate information sharing, planning and emergency response across the system and in response to the COVID 19 Pandemic outbreak.

The Health Protection Oversight and Engagement Board (O&EB) - This provided political ownership and leadership and public-facing engagement and communication for outbreak response and responsible for scrutiny and assurance.

These two were subgroups of the Southend's Health and Wellbeing Board and both were supported :

- **UKHSA and the Health Protection Team** - they provided expertise in communicable disease control, epidemiology and outbreak management, while also acting as the conduit with the regional and national advice and support teams.
- **Essex LRF Strategic Co-ordinating Group** - the Southend Health Protection Board also worked with the Essex Resilience Forum to support with co-ordination, across Greater Essex and for a direct link into national government.

In March 2022, at the bequest of the Director of Public Health, the HPB **and** the Health Protection Oversight and Engagement Board unanimously approved that the two Boards will continue to operate as an established governance for all Health Protection matters in Southend and this was endorsed by the Southend Health and Wellbeing Board in June 2022.

In February 2023, the Health Protection Operational Group (HPOG) was formed to manage the response to a wider range of health protection issues. As a result, the HPB stopped meeting and agreed key decisions virtually for the HPOG to implement. All localised outbreaks are managed through an Incident Management Team meeting, led by the UKHSA.

In December 2023 – it was felt in light of re-emerging infectious diseases such as Measles, there was a need for better collaboration and partnership working across

the Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) Councils, as we share same resources such as support from UKHSA and the MSE ICB.

The purpose of the health protection surveillance and advisory group (the final naming of this group will be agreed in March) is to bring focused attention to health protection issues of concern with a view to inform the respective Directors of Public Health of any local action needed to reduce risks and improve outcomes for residents. It is expected that most time will be focused on issues such as infectious disease outbreak, anti-microbial resistance, health care associated infections and improving the uptake of immunisation and screening programmes.

4. Reasons for Decisions

- 4.1. The 3 Health Protection Boards across SET, their partners, UKHSA, the MSE ICB are committed to working together in protecting our residents through active surveillance and being data driven, thereby developing a more effective and strong leadership forum for information sharing and planning between public agencies that have responsibilities for health protection across SET.

5. Other Options

Retaining the Southend HPB - We feel that this will cause duplication in terms of attendance from partners as limiting our ability to co-ordinate surveillance and response more effectively.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. No additional financial or resource implications . It will lead to improved efficiency

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1. There are no legal implications arising directly from this report, with no changes to the DPH's statutory responsibilities.

8. Policy Context

- 8.1 Whilst the health protection function is a statutory responsibility, there are no emergent expectations on members of the Health and Wellbeing Board in the local responses. Where necessary, the DPH will seek support OR provide assurance to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

9. Carbon Impact

- 9.1. There are no carbon impact implications from this report.

10. Equalities

This approach will serve the entire Southend population with an additional focus in reducing inequalities and protect the health of our most vulnerable citizens, tourists and students through preventative programmes.

10.1.

11. Consultation

11.1. Not required

12. Appendices

12.1. None

13. Report Authorisation

This report has been approved for publication by:		
	Name:	Date:
S151 Officer	Joe Chesterton	26/02/2024
Monitoring Officer	Susan Zeiss	n/r
Executive Director(s)	Michael Marks	26/02/2024
Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Cllr James Moyies	n/r