

CABINET  
22 SEPTEMBER 2009

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### **H1N1 'SWINE' INFLUENZA UPDATE**

#### **Executive Summary**

At the end of April 2009 the World Health Organisation (WHO) detected an emerging strain of A type influenza virus H1N1 originating from Mexico. Known as Swine Flu, this virus was identified as having the potential to become a pandemic, as the majority of the population would have little or no immunity to it.

On 11 June 2009 the WHO declared Pandemic Alert Phase 6 confirming a global pandemic of Swine Influenza.

Further to the July Cabinet Paper this report provides an update on the Swine Influenza Pandemic to date and describes future planning as we look towards the Autumn and Winter.

The Cabinet should recognise the continued threat of the Swine Flu pandemic and endorse the continued need to plan and build resilience in preparation for the predicted increase of numbers and impact.

#### **Proposal**

The Cabinet considers the update report, providing comment as necessary and endorses the overall pandemic response and future planning proposals.

#### **Reason for Proposal**

This update report has been prepared by the Joint Director of Public Health to provide a further essential update on the current impact and future planning implications of the H1N1 Influenza pandemic.

**Maggie Rae**  
Joint Director of Public Health

**George Batten**  
Director of Transport Environment and Leisure

## **UPDATE AND PROGRESS ON THE SWINE INFLUENZA RESPONSE**

### **Purpose of Report**

1. To update the Cabinet on the Swine Influenza pandemic, including progress on local planning and response.

### **Background**

2. An Influenza Pandemic has been recognised in the UK National Risk Register as the highest risk to the country due to its catastrophic impact and probable likelihood for considerable period of time. Commensurate with this rating the Emergency Planning Service of Wiltshire Council has been actively involved in Pandemic Influenza and excess deaths planning and preparation for a number of years. Wiltshire NHS is leading the multi agency planning and response arrangements on behalf of partner agencies within the Wiltshire and Swindon Local Resilience Forum.
3. At the end of April 2009 the World Health Organisation (WHO) detected a new emerging strain of A type influenza virus known as H1N1. The virus originated in from Mexico and became widely known as Swine Flu. As a new strain of the virus 'Swine Flu' was quickly recognised by national experts as having the potential to reach pandemic levels, as the vast majority of the world's population would have little or no immunity to it.
4. On the 11<sup>th</sup> June 2009 the WHO declared Pandemic Alert Phase 6 confirming a global pandemic of H1N1.

### **Current Situation**

5. A significant rise in H1N1 prevalence rates was noted throughout July 2009. To meet the increasing demand and ease pressure on primary care services the government launched the National Pandemic Flu Service on Thursday, 16 July 2009. After an initial peak of demand the service has coped well with a large number of enquiries both via telephone and internet.
6. In Wiltshire 53 pharmacies signed a contract to act as Antiviral Collection Points providing excellent and widespread access for the local population. Over 5,000 Wiltshire residents have accessed antiviral medication since the Flu Service has been in operation.
7. As expected our numbers of cases have declined during August, similar to the rest of the UK, however prevalence rates are predicted to rise again and indeed it is possible we may see a greater number of incidences as we move into the Autumn and the UK's flu season.
8. The government has announced that the pre-ordered supplies of H1N1 Vaccine are expected to be licensed and ready for distribution in October this year.

The Department of Health recently announced that the following groups should be prioritised for vaccination in the following order:

- Individual aged 6months and up to 65years in the current seasonal flu vaccine clinical at-risk groups.
- All pregnant women, subject to licensing conditions on trimesters
- Household contacts of immunocompromised individuals
- People aged 65 and over in the current seasonal flu vaccine clinical at-risk groups.

These groups were selected because they are at highest risk of severe illness.

9. In addition to these groups, frontline health and social care workers will be offered the vaccine at the same time as the first clinical risk group as they are at increased risk of infection and of transmitting that infection to susceptible patients.

### **Main Considerations for the Cabinet**

10. The Health Incident Coordinating Centre (HICC) at the NHS Wiltshire headquarters at Southgate House remains open and continues to manage the local health impact and provide advice as required.
11. The Local Resilience Forum continues to have regular updates and is overseeing the multi-agency Swine Flu response including antiviral distribution, excess deaths, fuel or utility disruption and supporting the vaccination program.
12. Many Wiltshire schools were affected by the outbreak before the end of the school term and a range of advice and information was made available by both Wiltshire Council and NHS Wiltshire. It is likely that schools will continue to require support in the new school year.
13. Wiltshire Council is asked to proactively encourage all relevant front line staff to take up the offer of a H1N1 vaccination and offer local and easy access for employees via occupational health teams.
14. The number of frontline social care working 'hands-on' in a clinical or therapeutic role within the public sector is estimated to be 1,100 staff. In addition to this a further 3,000 are estimated to be working in similar social care settings in the private sector e.g. care homes.
15. Predicting the impact of the new virus moving into the Winter is difficult. In line with advice received via the Government Office South West and the Department of Health we continue to refine and build resilience and prepare our staff for the possible implications of Swine Flu.
16. Wiltshire Council is responsible for planning for and responding to the implications of excess deaths i.e. those deaths caused by a pandemic over and above the normal death rate.

## **Environmental Impact of the Proposal**

17. As the number of bodies that may have to be buried could by far exceed normal burial rates, an environmental impact assessment on suitable is being carried out to ensure that there are no adverse effects to water supplies within Wiltshire as a result of this increase.

## **Equality and Diversity Impact of the Proposal**

18. One of the main focuses of the planning and response to Swine Flu is ensuring we meet the needs of the vulnerable.
19. During the planning process much consideration has been given to ensuring that information regarding Swine Flu and in particular antiviral medication is available and accessible to all members of the community.

NHS Wiltshire supported by the Emergency Planning Service is leading on community engagement supported by the Local Resilience Forum.

20. Meeting the needs of the vulnerable and in particular supporting those people in the community without a support network and no available 'Flu Friend' is being achieved successfully through the volunteer network of Community Emergency Volunteers and Parish Councils.
21. An important facet of the excess deaths planning process is to ensure that the deceased are treated in accordance with their appropriate religious and cultural rites and customs. To this end the faith community is closely involved in assisting the Emergency Planning Service with the development of excess deaths arrangements

## **Risk Assessment**

22. Potentially very large numbers of community unwell putting increased strain on local health and welfare services.
23. Increase in virility of the Swine Flu virus causing excess deaths within Wiltshire and the implementation of business continuity measures and plans to manage the a high number of fatalities.
24. The commitment of all Category 1 organisations to the planning and joint response is vital mitigate the consequences of the Swine Flu pandemic.
25. A Business Continuity failure, through a lack of staff or other secondary threat, leading to a direct issue with critical service delivery

## **Financial Implications**

26. Financial implications are likely due to the following:
  - Staff training requirements and purchase of personal protective equipment.
  - Resourcing to increase organisational resilience.
  - Increase on social care demand.

- Implementing a vaccination program for front line staff.
- Mutual aid and support in Swine Flu response coordinated by the Local Resilience Forum.
- The implementation of business continuity plans and procedures.
- Engaging consultants to carry out the environmental impact assessment for increased burials
- The advance procurement of equipment and resources necessary to mount an effective response
- The procurement of body holding premises, staffing and resources to maintain an effective response

Further work is needed in terms of quantifying costs which will need to be absorbed within existing budgets.

### **Legal Implications**

27. Wiltshire Council has a legal duty under the Public Health Act to provide public mortuaries Implicit within this is the responsibility to provide, manage, staff and resource body holding facilities in response to a pandemic situation.
28. There is a statutory duty on Wiltshire Council as a Category 1 responder under the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to plan for emergencies.

### **Options Considered**

29. Planning and response to the Swine Influenza pandemic is statutory function.

### **Conclusion**

30. The Cabinet should recognise the continued threat of the Swine Flu pandemic and endorse the continued need to plan and build resilience in preparation for the predicted increase of numbers and impact.
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