

Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

16th November 2020

This was a virtual meeting held by Zoom from County Hall.

The meeting started with a presentation on the vaccination scheme in the County. It was reported that although there were minor issues, on the whole they were performing better than average but, as with all departments, preparations were being made for the possible introduction of a Covid-19 vaccine.

This was followed by a presentation by Matthew Hopkins the Chief Executive of the Worcestershire Acute Hospitals Trust. His initial remarks suggested that the implication of Covid-19 had been, and still was a priority and that the Trust was 90% back to normal working. There had been a slight rise in the number of mental health cases and also longer waits for minor operations. The priority had been on Covid-19 and major operations and to help with this the private sector was still being used.

As of the morning of the 16th November 2020 there were 71 cases of Covid-19 in the County with 29 cases being in the Alexandra Hospital and 42 cases at the Worcester Royal Hospital with a further 179 beds being kept ready for the expected influx of Covid-19 patients. There was some concern about the usual Winter problems and Covid-19 plus being able to deal with the usual activities.

The introduction of the new 111 system had produced a 50/50 split between the walk in and the ambulance admittance to hospitals even though the numbers are down due to lock down 2. The trust had a number of digital innovations on line one of which was the monitoring of chronic diseases.

All Members were happy to endorse the acknowledgment that the staff were under extreme stress from Covid-19.

In response to a question it was suggested that endoscopy had reduced by 25%, due to the time taken to change PPE for each patient, however there had been some use of the private sector.

It was anticipated that by March 2021 there would be more than 2000 patients who had waited over 52 weeks. To overcome this there would need to be a 160% increase in diagnosis. This would need more staff but they were currently not available.

Finally, a call for more hand washing, face covering and individual space to reduce the impact of Covid-19.

The Meeting papers for this meeting are available if required.