

Cllr Jane Hanna OBE

Chair

Oxfordshire Joint Health
Overview and Scrutiny
Committee

Cllr Tim Bearder
Cabinet Member, Adult Social Care

By email
Tim.bearder@oxfordshire.gov.uk

13 June 2022

Dear Cllr Bearder

Re: Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Care Home Response / National Covid Inquiry

Firstly, can I share my congratulations with you on your move to the Adult Social Care portfolio. The Committee had a good relationship with your predecessor, Cllr Jenny Hannaby, and I look forward to such relationships going forward.

You may be aware that in November 2021, the Committee considered a review by co-opted members Dr Alan Cohen and Barbara Shaw on ‘The First Thirty Days’ of the Covid-19 pandemic. This report is available [here](#) and the response to that report, from the now Interim Chief Executive and Director of Public Health is [here](#).

You will be aware that on 27 April 2022, the High Court determined that the policy not to isolate people discharged from hospitals to care homes in the first weeks of the pandemic, without testing, was ‘irrational’. You may also be aware that one of the litigants, whose father died in an Oxfordshire care home, is also an Oxfordshire resident. This has placed into sharp focus for the Committee their previous work on this subject and as such it was discussed at our Committee meeting on 10 May. Specifically recommendation four,

‘That Senior Officers are able to re-affirm a commitment to a review of the response of the system partners to the pandemic, in so far as this would provide a plan of what would be included and a reasonable time scale, given the unpredictability of the current situation’.

You will see from the full response given by The Interim Chief Executive and the Director of Public Health that,

‘We expect that any local review in Oxfordshire will be aligned with a national review of the UK-wide response, which we anticipate the Government will undertake in due course’.

We were grateful to have our Interim Chief Executive in attendance at our meeting on 10 May. He shared with us the challenges of undertaking a local review whilst we awaited the plans associated with the national one. The Committee recognised the challenge, specifically in relation to resourcing such a review, and the need to engage thoroughly with the national one; but it would appear that there are no concrete timescales for the national review that we are aware of. Furthermore, the Committee does not want to see system partners across Oxfordshire miss any opportunities to learn from the pandemic and especially the conditions which led to so many elderly Oxfordshire residents losing their lives in our care homes. The Interim Chief Executive did express sympathy with the Committee’s

position. To that end, we are seeking an updated response to the recommendation above to be considered formally by the HOSC at a future meeting which we will confirm with you in due course.

In accordance with The Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013, could you please treat this correspondence as a recommendation and that you must respond in writing within 28 days of the request dated above – 11 July 2022. As is reasonable, I will present this letter to Cabinet on 21 June and, given the timescales, the Committee expects to receive shortly after. If there are any issues with meeting this deadline, do correspond with me.

I share this letter with the Board Secretaries of the BOB Integrated Care Board, Oxford Health NHS FT and Oxford University Hospitals NHS FT for it to be duly considered but given a 'system response' is likely required in this space, the Committee would be grateful for a single response to this letter. I trust that officers will handle appropriate arrangements in respect of coordinating that response.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Jane Hanna OBE
Chair, Oxfordshire Joint Health Scrutiny Committee

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