

Extract from the Council minutes: 14 July 2020

Revised motion proposed by Councillor Ezeifedi and seconded by Councillor Bashir:

The COVID 19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on our Watford Community. According to a recent Hertfordshire Public Health report Watford and Hertsmere have both the highest rate of COVID 19 cases and the highest crude mortality rate of COVID 19 registered death per 10,000 population in Hertfordshire (12.7 in Watford and 17.6 in Hertsmere – as of 23 June 2020.)

Watford Borough Council has risen boldly to the unprecedented challenge of COVID 19 through an effective partnership with various agencies, the voluntary sector and the wider community. It is great to note that over the past months, political differences have been put aside in pulling together to support our community.

However, the Public Health England (PHE) review (report published 16 June 2020) confirmed that death rates from COVID-19 were higher for Black and Asian ethnic (BAME) groups when compared to white ethnic groups. The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on BAME communities presents an opportunity to create a fast but sustainable change that would mitigate further impact.

As part of its response to COVID 19 and associated recovery strategy, this council resolves to:

1. Write to the NHS, Public Health Hertfordshire, Hertfordshire County Council and other health and regulatory services partners to ensure they have reviewed the PHE report and recommendations and have in place practical actions and support that will have a positive impact on Watford's BAME community now and in the longer-term and, through our Overview and Scrutiny Committee, request regular (quarterly) updates on the progresses achieved for our community.
2. Establish an Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group to provide research and insight into our local BAME community, focusing on the issues that matter to them and working with them to develop recommendations that will deliver change and improved outcomes.
3. As part of Hertfordshire County Council's Local Outbreak plan, work with partners, including the NHS and PHE to implement culturally competent COVID-19 education and prevention campaigns, working in partnership with local BAME and faith communities to prepare the communities to take full advantage of interventions including contact tracing, antibody testing and ultimately vaccine availability.
4. Review the council's equalities objectives and equalities and diversity policy in the light of the findings and recommendations of the Task and Finish Group and use these to provide a robust and focused framework for COVID-19 recovery strategies to make sure they actively reduce inequalities caused by the wider determinants of health to create long term sustainable change.