INTRODUCTION

1 The development of the attached Plan for the Management of a Pandemic Influenza Outbreak (Appendix 1) began some two years ago. It has recently been updated further following the outbreak of Swine Influenza.

2 In response to this outbreak, the Chief Executive has set up a Pandemic Influenza Executive Team comprising of the Executive Directors of the Trust plus Dr Nigel Waskett as Lead Member, Jo Davies, HR Director, Keith Williams, Emergency Planning Officer and Sue Appleton, Corporate Communications Manager. The team meets on a regular basis to assess the developing situation and to determine the Trust’s response to the swine flu threat.

3 The attached Plan for the Management of a Pandemic Influenza Outbreak was considered by the Risk Management and Modernisation Committee at their meeting on 20 May and they agreed to recommend the Plan to the Board for approval. However, it should be noted that the plan that was considered by the Committee did not cover the role of NHS Direct Wales (NHSDW) in the event of an outbreak because the NHSDW section of the Trust’s pandemic flu plan was still in development. Attached therefore at Appendix 2 is the NHSDW section for the Trust’s pandemic flu plan.

4 The Board are asked to note that the Plan is a dynamic document and will require amendment to reflect the changing circumstances as events develop. Members are therefore asked to approve the current Plan but note that regular updates will be brought to the Board as necessary.

5 The information below gives the Board an overview regarding the purpose of the Plan, the principles surrounding it and identifies what further work is required to respond to this matter.
RECOMMENDED: That

(1) the Trust’s Plan for the Management of a Pandemic Influenza Outbreak be approved; and

(2) the Plan is subject to regular review and amendment to reflect the prevailing position at any given time and therefore further reports will be presented to the Board as necessary.

PURPOSE

Pandemic Influenza Preparedness for WAST

6 WAST is regarded as a category 1 responder in terms of the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) [CCA] thus placing the fullest range of legislative duties upon the Trust, which includes the management of all foreseeable emergencies. The 4 Local Resilience Fora for Wales along with the National Risk Register identify the potential for a Pandemic Influenza at a “very high” risk in their respective risk registers.

7 The purpose of this paper is to provide assurances to the Board that actions have or are being taken by WAST to address pandemic preparedness and thus comply with legislation, as well as developing an organisation capable of reacting to such an emergency.

Background

8 The Swine Influenza (Influenza AH1N1) outbreak which occurred in Mexico and the USA has focused the health sector and partners to revisit their respective Pandemic Influenza plans.

9 As part of the Trust preparedness arrangements the Executive Team and Emergency Planning Officers have reviewed the Trust plan to ensure that it is capable of providing a robust organisational response and is integrated into the assumptions of the Welsh Assembly and those of the local health partners.

10 Furthermore, the Welsh Assembly are, as part of the coordinated response to the Mexican Swine Influenza outbreak are reviewing all Welsh NHS Influenza Pandemic plans with feedback expected very soon. This feedback will be used to enhance future iterations of the Trust plan.

Principles which Support the WAST Planned Response

11 The Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust plan recognises the potential for an Influenza Pandemic to lead to extensive disruption to service
delivery and patient activity. In response the Trust has developed the plan
to minimise and mitigate the potential effects and establish a framework
within which to work. This plan defines the operational response
arrangement, to be invoked to meet the statutory duties under the Civil
Contingencies Act and its obligations to patients, staff and other
stakeholders.

12 The plan recognises that the impact of Pandemic Influenza will exceed
existing capabilities with regard to staff and resources. Therefore,
business continuity arrangements, logistical preparedness and
communications mechanisms have been described which will underpin
these arrangements.

13 Recognising the dynamic nature and unfolding knowledge of how the
pandemic will manifest itself this plan will reflect changes to planning
assumptions or response arrangements and therefore ensure thorough
regular up-dating that this plan is fit for purpose.

Key Shortfalls in Preparedness

14 In respect of the Mexican Swine Flu Outbreak, the Trust has identified a
number of shortfalls in its capability, these shortfalls are identified as:

- Assess to stockpiles of infection control Personal Protective Equipment
  (PPE)
- Staff competency to use specialist infection control PPE in the form of
  Filter Face Piece (FFP3) respirator masks
- Introduction of AMPDS Card 36.

Action Plan

15 The identified shortfalls in preparedness are being addressed by:

- An initial procurement of infection control PPE has taken place which
  increased availability of infection control PPE to all staff groups and
  volunteers.
- WAST is waiting on definitive Welsh Assembly and Department of
  Health Guidance on the use of FFP3 respirators, following receipt of
  this guidance and an appreciation of work being taken forward by the
  South Coast Ambulance Service WAST will develop a plan to role out
  training and testing on the use of FFP3 respirators to all appropriate
  staff groups.
• Upgrades to the CAD have taken place which will allow Card 36 to be loaded with staff training having taken place on paper copy over the preceding weeks.

Conclusion

16 In conclusion, it is evident that the Trust has developed a degree of organisational resilience with the development of a response plan and progress made in procurement of PPE. Further work is needed to ensure that staff groups requiring specialist respiratory protection are provided the equipment and training.