

Nottingham City Council Delegated Decision



Nottingham
City Council

Reference Number:

4112

Author:

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Department:

COVID Response & Recovery

Contact:

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Subject:

Approval to spend grant funding to provide asymptomatic testing in the community

Total Value:

£522,102 (Type: Revenue)

Decision Being Taken:

To accept the grant funding of up to £522,102 from the Department of Health & Social Care to fund the rollout of a pilot to provide testing for asymptomatic testing

To delegate approval to the Corporate Director for COVID Response and Recovery to allocate funding towards project costs and purchases, as required to deliver the pilot

Reasons for the Decision(s)

The COVID-19 pandemic is an evolving situation that requires strong governance and a flexible approach from Local Authorities and partners to be able to support local citizens, the workforce and the local economy. Over the past months, the Council has undertaken a wide variety of activities from protecting the most vulnerable in our society to enforcing restrictions on local businesses. With the rollout of two vaccines, it is hoped that the coming year will see an end to current restrictions and a shift to recovery from the impacts of the pandemic. The Council is committed to supporting measures to identify those who may have the virus, actively try to suppress the transmission of the virus and to act as a trusted support mechanism for those who are affected by the virus.

As part of this work, the Council has been given the opportunity to bid for funding to rollout a programme of Lateral Flow Device tests for asymptomatic people. This programme is funded by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC). Current test facilities require individuals either to work or live in specific settings, be part of a test programme or to display symptoms in order to secure a test. Pillar 1 tests are given to those in hospital and Pillar 2, or PCR tests, are offered to those who are symptomatic but not in hospital settings. The Council is supportive of the idea to provide alternative testing options, whilst recognising that there are some limitations with the Lateral Flow Device testing approach. In order to assess the demand for asymptomatic testing, assess the impact this approach has in supporting efforts to suppress the spread of the virus, and assess the opportunity that this testing provides to reinforce public health messaging, the Council has put forward a bid that limits the initial test pilot to one specific community and includes evaluation so that an informed decision can be made about the risks and benefits of any future programme.

A full Project Management Plan (PMP) has been developed that sets out the rationale for delivering the pilot and the approach taken to monitor and control this pilot. Alongside this, the Department of Health & Social Care has provide a suite of documentation to guide Local Authorities in developing an asymptomatic test offer, including lessons learned from other projects. The project will have robust governance arrangements in place, forming part of the wider programme of COVID activities under the remit of the Corporate Director for COVID response and recovery. If successful, the Council may decide to put forward more bids and offer asymptomatic testing in other areas of the City.

The funding for the project is primarily retrospective and based on the number of tests that are completed. In order to mitigate any financial risk to the Council, and to ensure that the pilot has the best chance of success, the Director for Public Health has agreed to allocate up to £294,000 of the Contain grant should the costs exceed funding allocated to the Council for these tests.

In order to deliver the pilot, the Council is required to find a venue, workforce and purchase the equipment needed to set up and operate a testing facility. The DHSC has provided guidance on procurement routes for all of these activities and any equipment required will be ordered through these routes, working with colleagues in the Council's commissioning team. The preferred venue is a leisure centre that is currently unable to operate due to the lockdown restrictions so there is no cost for this facility. For workforce, the Council is investigating a number of routes, including redeploying staff who would otherwise be furloughed, recruiting existing casual staff and making use of existing corporate contracts for other roles.

Other Options Considered:

Option 1: proceed with a controlled pilot phase to ascertain the effectiveness and efficiency of providing asymptomatic community testing as part of other activities to identify and control the spread of COVID, focusing on the Hyson Green and Forest Fields are of the City. This is the preferred option.

Option 2: proceed with a controlled pilot (as above) in a different area of the City. A number of areas were considered for the pilot and the decision was made to focus on Forest Fields/ Hyson Green based on data analysis by Public Health.

Do nothing: the Council is not required to deliver a pilot of asymptomatic testing but this may provide useful information to help manage the spread of COVID. As the pilot is funded, and financial risk has been mitigated by using the Contain grant as a contingency, this is not the preferred option.

Background Papers:

None

Published Works:

None

Affected Wards:

Berridge, Hyson Green and Arboretum

Colleague / Councillor Interests:

None

Consultations:

Date: 15/01/2021

Ward Councillors: Eunice Campbell-Clark, Sally Longford, Rebecca Langton

Overview shared with Cllr Langton and Cllr Campbell-Clark by email. Cllr Longford briefed as part of the Engagement Board at the same time.

Date: 05/01/2021

Other City Council Bodies:Corporate Leadership Team

Leadership were supportive of the pilot.

Date: 22/12/2020

Chief Finance Officer:Clive Heaphy

Briefing note issued to Clive Heaphy prior to the bid being submitted to the Department of Health & Social Care

Those not consulted are not directly affected by the decision.

Crime and Disorder Implications:

There are no implications on crime and disorder

Equality:

Please login to the system to view the EIA document: eia-2021-form.docx

Social Value Considerations:

There are no social value considerations as the value of services is below the threshold.

Regard for NHS Constitution:

Local authorities have a statutory duty to have regard to the NHS Constitution when exercising their public health functions under the NHS Act 2006. In making this decision relating to public health functions, we have properly considered the NHS Constitution where applicable and have taken into account how it can be applied in order to commission services to improve the health of the local community.

Any implications affecting IT:

Yes

Relates to staffing:

Yes

Relates to Council Property Assets:

Yes

Decision Type:

Portfolio Holder

Subject to Call In:

Yes

Call In Expiry date:

16/02/2021

Advice Sought:

Legal, Finance, Procurement, Human Resources, Equality and Diversity, IT, Property

Legal Advice:

The acceptance and use of any funding must be in line with any funding requirements. As it appears that funding will be claimed retrospectively the Council will carry the risk of the delivery of the testing until it can show it has complied with the delivery and funding requirements.

Legal Services are working with the Director of Public Health to ensure that systems are in place for testing within the City and will continue to provide support as requested, including working with the Council's procurement team on any purchasing requirements to deliver the testing programme.

Advice provided by Naomi Vass (Senior Solicitor) on 21/01/2021.

Finance Advice:

This decision seeks to provide approval to accept the grant funding of up to £522,102 from the Department of Health & Social Care to fund the rollout of pilot to provide testing for asymptomatic testing, and to delegate approval to the Corporate Director for COVID Response and Recovery to allocate funding towards project costs and purchases, as required to deliver the pilot.

As mentioned in the brief, the majority of funding will be retrospective, based on £14 per test. Based on planned testing volumes, this equates to up to £522,102 as outlined. However, as the funding will be linked to testing uptake, it is possible that funding could vary from the anticipated amount.

Set up and staffing costs, as currently planned, would be fixed, irrespective of total tests completed, and so there is a risk that total funding from Department of Health & Social Care for tests completed does not cover the Council's total costs incurred. In the brief, this risk is mitigated by the commitment of up to £294,000 from the Contain grant if required.

To aid with the mitigation of risk, and to ensure correct levels of funding are received from Department of Health & Social Care, the costs and number of tests are monitored weekly, and forecasted for the remainder of the pilot scheme, and these are included in a weekly monitoring return. Advice provided by Graeme Black (Commercial Business Partner) on 03/02/2021.

Equality and Diversity Advice:

A few minor amendments are required on the EIA. Happy to approve this EIA once minor amendments are made as no adverse impacts on protected groups. Advice provided by Nasreen Miah (Equality & employability consultant) on 22/01/2021.

Advice documents: eia-2021-form.docx

Property Advice:

Property has supported the proposal to implement an Asymptomatic Testing Centre which will be managed by the Council within its existing portfolio. Therefore a legal agreement for the occupation of the Testing Facility within the Leisure Centre is not required. However it is understood that the DOH funding will meet the building management/running costs during the occupation of the service. In view of this Property will work with colleagues to ensure that there is an agreement on how this is to be calculated and to address how potential liabilities will be addressed if they should arise from the project.

Advice provided by Tanya Najuk (Head of Strategic Asset Management) on 20/01/2021.

Procurement Advice:

There are no procurement concerns in relation to accepting grant funding of up to £522,102 from the Department of Health and Social Care for the roll out of the pilot to provide testing for asymptomatic testing. The funding should be used in accordance with the grant funding conditions. If there are additional external purchases required from the funding, these should be made in consultation with the Procurement Team to ensure best value and compliance with Nottingham City Council's Financial Regulations. Advice provided by Nicola Harrison (Procurement Lead Officer) on 14/01/2021.

HR Advice:

The proposals involve recruitment and engagement of a workforce to deliver the project and, as outlined in the business case, attempts will be made to recruit from various pools of internal staff, including those who are unable to work at present (due to closure of sites) or where services have remained open, but at a reduced capacity. Engagement with the workforce will need to be undertaken to raise awareness and obtain interest in these roles. HR will liaise with the project team to provide intelligence on which services and job roles may be available to support the programme. Advice provided by Paul Slater (Service Redesign Consultant) on 13/01/2021.

IT Advice:

Although there are no explicit IT requirements at this stage arising from the delegated decision; the IT Service will work jointly with the project team to support the delivery of the project. Simon Salmon, Head of IT, 15th January 2021 Advice provided by Simon Salmon (Head of IT Strategy) on 15/01/2021.

Signatures

Eunice Campbell-Clark (Portfolio Holder Health, HR and Equalities)
SIGNED and Dated: 09/02/2021
Alison Challenger (Director of Public Health)
SIGNED and Dated: 09/02/2021