

	CHIEF OFFICER IN CONSULTATION WITH COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN DELEGATED POWERS REPORT
Title	Test and Trace Support Payment Policy
Report of	Chief Executive
Wards	All
Status	Public
Enclosures	Appendix A – Test and Trace Support Payment Policy Appendix B – Government Guidance
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Summary

Government have set up a Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme aimed at supporting those on low incomes who have been contacted by NHS Test and Trace and required to self-isolate. This scheme consists of two elements (1) the main scheme; and (2) the discretionary scheme.

The funding provided to Barnet for this scheme is £160,000 for the main element and £96,051 for the discretionary. The Department of Health and Social Care have provided eligibility criteria for both the main and discretionary elements of the scheme. Local authorities can introduce additional criteria to determine eligibility for discretionary payments in their area, as long as these operate in addition to, rather than instead of, the criteria set out.

This report proposes to implement a temporary scheme based on additional discretionary eligibility requirements alongside Governments requirements.

The policy underpinning the decision is in Appendix A.

Decisions

- 1. To approve the policy within Appendix A to this report.**
- 2. To delegate authority to the Director of Finance (S151) to review and alter the policy and administration of the scheme as necessary to meet local requirements.**
- 3. To note the grant value of £256,051 and its disbursal under the policy at Appendix A.**

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 Government announced a new payment support scheme for those who are legally required to self-isolate. Included within this scheme was a discretionary element providing local authorities some flexibility over payment disbursement.
- 1.2 Government have provided Barnet Council with funding totalling £299,859 for the purpose of paying and administering this new payment scheme. This is broken down into £160,000 for the main payment element of the scheme, £96,051 for the discretionary element of the scheme and £43,808 for setting up and administering the scheme.
- 1.3 The Council has designed a policy to administer the scheme, attached at Appendix A. The Government guidance provided as a framework for local authorities is attached at Appendix B.

2. REASONS FOR DECISION

- 2.1 Government has announced the scheme as part of the response to COVID-19. To ensure Barnet can administer the scheme and disburse monies to eligible residents the policy requires approval and delegated authority for the Director of Finance (S151) to make alternations to the policy to allow for a nimble response to local situations. The ability to alter the policy will also allow the Council to bring its policy in line with other London Boroughs where appropriate. This decision has been taken in line with Government requirements.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 No alternatives have been considered. This is the result of Government guidance and a need to ensure a swift response to support our local residents who are required to self-isolate, cannot work from home and are on low incomes.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 A team will be established within CSG Revenues and Benefits to administer these grants. The Exchequer team within Finance will oversee the administration.
- 4.2 Communications will be issued to promote this new scheme and encourage applications.
- 4.3 A web form will be made available on Barnet's website to enable residents to apply.
- 4.4 A dedicated email address will be created to administer applications and ensure enquiries and support is not sent to other areas supporting the response to COVID-19.
- 4.5 Post payment checks will be carried out on 10% of monthly payments made. If its identified that an employ has continues to receive income from their employer, the case will be referred to the Corporate Anti-Fraud Team.

- 4.6 Analysis will be carried out on all payments and where there is any suspicion of possible fraudulent activity, this will be referred to the Corporate Anti-Fraud Team.
- 4.7 The policy will be regularly reviewed by the Exchequer team in consultation with Director of Finance (S151) and Assistant Director of Finance and any amendments to the policy will be recorded by a Chief Officer Decision and the updated policy will be published online.
- 4.8 Expenditure against the grant will be monitored and the Director of Finance (S151) will receive weekly updates on levels of use and a forecast of when the grant is likely to be exhausted.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1.1 In addition to helping support resident during the current Coronavirus pandemic, this support payments helps to deliver the council's wider goals, as set out in the Corporate Plan. Specifically: Supporting our residents who are older, vulnerable or who have disabilities, to remain independent and have a good quality of life.

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- 5.2.1 The total expenditure should equal the Government grant allocation for Test and Trace Support Payments. This amounts to £299,859. As such there is not an expectation that there will be a revenue pressure arising from the disbursement of the funding.
- 5.2.2 If the Council has fully utilised the funding relating to the main scheme, Government will top this fund up as applicable. However, the discretionary funding is limited to £96,051 meaning when this is exhausted, discretionary payments will either have to cease or be contained within existing resources.
- 5.2.3 The disbursement of funding is not anticipated to materially impact on the current MTFS and strategic financial direction of the Council. The disbursement of the funding will support the local economy and ensure the local taxation base remains stable into recovery from COVID-19. As such it represents value for money on both a tactical and strategic level.
- 5.2.4 Staffing requirements to administer the grant will be funded from the £43,808 element of the Government funding.
- 5.2.5 IT will provide a webform and email address to facilitate the delivery of the grant scheme.
- 5.2.6 There are no expected implications arising for Property or Sustainability.

5.3 Social Value

- 5.3.1 The decisions taken within this report will provide financial support, in line with

Government requirements, to local residents in financial hardship owing to self-isolation requirements.

5.4 Legal and Constitutional References

5.4.1 The Government has provided a grant to relevant local authorities to provide local welfare provision to individuals who are required to self-isolate as notified by NHS Test and Trace. The Government guidance sets out eligibility criteria which should be applied and a maximum limit on funding, whilst allowing local authorities some discretion to set their own criteria over and above the Government's criteria. As this financial assistance is for individuals for the purpose of meeting an immediate short-term need arising out of the exceptional events caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and is required in order to avoid a risk to the well-being of an individual, the Department for Works and Pensions is permitted to share information with the local authorities for the purpose of administration of the scheme.

5.4.2 The Urgency Committee on 27 April 2020 agreed to: "Delegate authority to Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of the Policy & Resources Committee any decisions within the remit of that committee that need to be taken in response to the Coronavirus pandemic or other related matters, or in response to directions given by HM Government, London Strategic Coordination Group and London Local Authority Gold. In the event of the Chairman's absence, the Committee Vice-Chairman shall be consulted. Any and all such decisions shall be reported back to Committee for post-decision scrutiny." The funding has been received from the Government in relation to the Coronavirus pandemic and this delegated powers report details the policy required to support local implementation. Consultation with the Chairman of the Policy & Resources Committee has taken place and this decision will be reported to that Committee for post-decision scrutiny.

5.5 Risk Management

5.5.1 No risks have been identified in this report.

5.6 Equalities and Diversity

5.6.1 The Equality Act 2010, section 149, outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires Public Bodies **to have due regard** to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not

The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day to day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services.

This funding will have a positive impact on working adults who are on low incomes and will suffer financial hardship in the absence of such support.

5.7 Corporate Parenting

5.7.1 In line with Children and Social Work Act 2017, the council has a duty to consider Corporate Parenting Principles in decision-making across the council. The outcomes and priorities in the refreshed Corporate Plan, Barnet 2024, reflect the council's commitment to the Corporate Parenting duty to ensure the most vulnerable are protected and the needs of children are considered in everything that the council does.

5.7.2 It is not believed that the decisions within this report will negatively impact on our most vulnerable or the needs of children.

5.8 Consultation and Engagement

5.8.1 The need to move quickly with these measures in response to Governments requirement that scheme are live from 12 October 2020 has meant there is no time to consult on these matters.

5.9 Insight

5.9.1 Not Applicable

6 BACKGROUND PAPERS

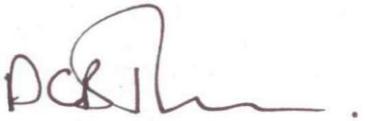
6.1 Government guidance on the creation of this policy is contained within Appendix B

7. DECISION TAKER'S STATEMENT

7.1 *I have the required powers to make the decision documented in this report. I am responsible for the report's content and am satisfied that all relevant advice has been sought in the preparation of this report and that it is compliant with the decision-making framework of the organisation which includes Constitution, Scheme of Delegation, Budget and Policy Framework and Legal issues including Equalities obligations. The decision is compliant with the principles of decision making in Article 10 of the constitution.*

Chairman: Councillor Dan Thomas
Has been consulted

Signed



Date 09/10/20

Chief Officer: John Hooton, Chief Executive
Decision maker having taken into account the views of the Chairman

Signed



Date
09/10/20
