

Cheltenham Borough Council
Cabinet – 13 October 2020
Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme

Accountable member	Councillor Rowena Hay, Cabinet Member Finance
Accountable officer	Jayne Gilpin, Head of Revenues and Benefits
Ward(s) affected	All
Key/Significant Decision	Yes
Executive summary	<p>As part of its support measures in response to COVID-19 on 20th September 2020 the Government announced a Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme to be administered by Councils. The scheme will assist people on low incomes who are legally required to self-isolate and will lose income as a result. The scheme is fully funded by the Government.</p> <p>In addition to the standard scheme prescribed by Government funding has been provided for the Council to administer a Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme. The discretionary scheme is aimed at providing support to those who do not qualify for the standard scheme but will lose income and suffer financial hardship as a result of being required to self-isolate. The Government is also providing funding for this scheme.</p>
Recommendations	<p>Cabinet is recommended to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme in Appendix 2 which will be in place until 31 January 2021, subject to funding being available 2. Delegate authority to the Head of Revenues and Benefits to take decisions relating to applications made under the Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme 3. Authorises the Head of Revenues and Benefits in consultation with the Cabinet Member Finance to make changes to the Discretionary Scheme in line with any changes made by Government, or, as required to ensure the successful operation of the scheme. 4. Note the Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme in appendix 3 and delegate authority to the Head of Revenues and Benefits to take decisions relating to applications 5. Authorises the Cabinet Member Finance to extend the Discretionary Scheme beyond 31 January 2021 in line with Government direction and subject to funding being available

Financial implications	<p>As detailed within the report, Central Government is providing this Council with £40,500 to fund the standard Test and Trace Support Payment scheme and £25,000 to fund a discretionary scheme between 12 October 2020 and 31 January 2021.</p> <p>The Government has indicated that funding for the discretionary scheme is a finite sum and no more funding will be available between now and 31 January 2021.</p> <p>Any unspent standard scheme funding will have to be returned to Government but unspent discretionary scheme funding can be retained by the Council.</p> <p>As the funding is limited the discretionary scheme will be closed if the funding has been allocated prior to 31 January 2021.</p> <p>The schemes will only be extended beyond 31 January if this is directed by Government and the appropriate funding is made available</p> <p>New burdens funding will be provided in respect of the administration costs for both the standard and the discretionary scheme.</p> <p>Contact officer: Paul Jones paul.jones@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242 775154</p>
Legal implications	<p>There are no legal implications arising directly as a result of this report.</p> <p>Contact officer: Lorna Lucas Lorna.lucas@tewkesbury.gov.uk, 01684 272</p>
HR implications (including learning and organisational development)	There are none associated with this report
Key risks	See appendix 1
Corporate and community plan Implications	
Environmental and climate change implications	None
Property/Asset Implications	<p>There is nothing in this report which impacts on Council properties</p> <p>Contact officer: Dominic.Stead@cheltenham.gov.uk</p>

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Legislation came in to force on 28 September 2020 requiring people to self-isolate due to testing positive for coronavirus or having been in close contact with someone who tested positive and are instructed to do so by NHS Test and Trace.
- 1.2 On 20 September 2020 the Government announced the Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 to provide support to people who, from 28 September 2020 are required by law to self-isolate, are on lower incomes and have lost income as a result. The payment will be subject to income tax.
- 1.3 Residents of Cheltenham will be eligible if they have been instructed by NHS Test and Trace to self-isolate, are employed or self-employed, are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result; and are in receipt of certain benefits.
- 1.4 This Council has received funding of £40,500 to cover standard scheme payments up to 31 January 2021. This will be topped up if payments exceed the allocation. If payments made are less than the allocation then unspent funds will need to be returned.
- 1.5 In addition to the standard scheme the Government has provided funding to Councils for a discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme
- 1.6 Funding of £25,000 has been received to cover discretionary scheme payments up to 31 January 2021. This funding will not be topped up if payments exceed the allocation before 31 January. The Council is not required to return unspent funds.
- 1.7 Approval is being sought to continue both schemes for a period beyond 31 January 2021 should the Government decide to extend them beyond this date and subject to the appropriate funding being available.

2. Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme

- 2.1 The discretionary test and trace support payment scheme is aimed at people who require similar financial support to self-isolate but do not meet all of the eligibility criteria
- 2.2 The discretionary scheme will be available to Cheltenham residents who have been instructed by NHS Test and Trace to self-isolate, are employed or self-employed, are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result; and are **not** in receipt of any of the benefits referred to in the main scheme
- 2.3 In addition, the discretionary scheme is for individuals who are on lower incomes and will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work while they are self-isolating
- 2.4 The Council is able to add its own additional eligibility criteria. This is shown in points 7.28 to 7.34 in appendix 2.
- 2.5 Approval is being sought to make any necessary amendments to the discretionary scheme due to changes made by the Department of Health and Social Care or to ensure the scheme operates successfully.
- 2.6 As funding for the discretionary scheme is limited it will be closed should the funding be allocated in full before the scheme is due to end.

3. Administration of the Test and Trace Support Payment Schemes

- 3.1** Councils have been asked to put procedures in place to receive applications and make payments between 12 October 2020 and 31 January 2021.
- 3.2** The eligibility requirements and details regarding the application process provided to Local Authorities by the Department for Health and Social Care have been incorporated in to both the discretionary and standard schemes in appendix 2 and 3.
- 3.3** The discretionary scheme in appendix 2 includes the additional local eligibility criteria
- 3.4** Individuals are required to make application for payment within 14 days of the last day of their self-isolation period.
- 3.5** Where individuals have been required to self-isolate by law from 28 September they can make a backdated application from 12 October provided it is submitted within 14 days of 12 October 2020
- 3.6** An on-line application form will be available on the Council's website from 12 October and arrangements are in place to receive application by phone from any individuals without digital capability.
- 3.7** Payments are to be made within 3 days of the application being received and procedures are in place to achieve this.
- 3.8** Before making a payment checks need to be made to the NHS Test and Trace Eligibility Checker database. Arrangements are being made for relevant staff in the Revenues and Benefits team to access the Eligibility Checker but it may be necessary to delay making any payments if this has not been confirmed.
- 3.9** The standard scheme will be revised in accordance with any revisions made by the Department of Health and Social Care

4. Alternative options considered

- 4.1** None
- 4.2** The Government has made the funding available and expects councils to implement the schemes and make payments between 12 October and 31 January 2021.

5. Consultation and feedback

- 5.1** None undertaken.

6. Performance management – monitoring and review

- 6.1** The Department for Health and Social Care will require reporting of payments made under both schemes.

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Appendices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Risk Assessment 2. Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme 3. Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme
Background information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-package-to-support-and-enforce-self-isolation

The risk				Original risk score (impact x likelihood)			Managing risk				
Risk ref.	Risk description	Risk Owner	Date raised	Impact 1-5	Likelihood 1-6	Score	Control	Action	Deadline	Responsible officer	Transferred to risk register
1	If the test and trace support payment scheme is not implemented support will not be available to individual required to self-isolate	Jayne Gilpin	07/10/2020	3	1	3	Accept	Approve the scheme	13/10/2020	Jayne Gilpin	
2	If demand for the discretionary scheme is high then funding may be allocated before the scheme expiry date of 31 January 2021	Jayne Gilpin	07/10/2020	3	1	3	Close the scheme once funding has been allocated	Approve the scheme	13/10/2020	Jayne Gilpin	
Explanatory notes Impact – an assessment of the impact if the risk occurs on a scale of 1-5 (1 being least impact and 5 being major or critical) Likelihood – how likely is it that the risk will occur on a scale of 1-6 (1 being almost impossible, 2 is very low, 3 is low, 4 significant, 5 high and 6 a very high probability) Control - Either: Reduce / Accept / Transfer to 3rd party / Close											