

Corporate Management Committee

Thursday 17 December 2020 at 7.30pm

This meeting will be held remotely via MS Teams with audio access to the public for the Part I items via registered dial-in only

Members of the Committee

Councillors N Prescott (Chairman), J Gracey (Vice-Chairman), A Alderson, I Chaudhri, D Cotty, L Gillham, M Heath, J Hulley, R King, M Maddox, D Whyte and M Willingale.

In accordance with Standing Order 29.1, any Member of the Council may obtain remote access via MS Teams to the meeting of this Committee, but may speak only with the permission of the Chairman of the Committee, if they are not a member of this Committee.

AGENDA

Notes:

- 1) Any report on the Agenda involving confidential information (as defined by section 100A (3) of the Local Government Act 1972) must be discussed in private. Any report involving exempt information (as defined by section 100I of the Local Government Act 1972), whether it appears in Part 1 or Part 2 below, may be discussed in private but only if the Committee so resolves.
- 2) The relevant 'background papers' are listed after each report in Part 1. Enquiries about any of the Agenda reports and background papers should be directed in the first instance to **Mr J Gurmin, Democratic Services Section, Law and Governance Business Centre, Runnymede Civic Centre, Station Road, Addlestone (Tel: Direct Line: 01932 425624). (Email: john.gurmin@runnymede.gov.uk)**.
- 3) Agendas and Minutes are available on a subscription basis. For details, please ring Mr B A Fleckney on 01932 425620. Agendas and Minutes for all the Council's Committees may also be viewed on www.runnymede.gov.uk.

Continued.....

4) You are only permitted to hear the debate on the items listed in Part I of this Agenda, which contains matters in respect of which reports have been made available for public inspection. You will not be able to hear the debate for the items in Part II of this Agenda, which contains matters involving Exempt or Confidential information in respect of which reports have not been made available for public inspection. If you wish to hear the debate for the Part I items on this Agenda by audio via MS Teams you must register by 10.00 am on the day of the meeting with the Democratic Services Team by emailing your name and contact number to be used to dial-in to democratic.services@runnymede.gov.uk

5) **Audio-Recording of Meeting**

As this meeting will be held remotely via MS Teams, you may only record the audio of this meeting. The Council will not be recording any remote meetings.

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b) **Confidential Information**

(No reports to be considered under this heading)

1. **NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

2. **MINUTES**

To confirm and sign the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19 November 2020 (attached at Appendix 'A'). As this meeting is being held remotely, the Chairman will ask the Members of the Committee if they approve these Minutes which will then be signed when this is physically possible.

Runnymede Borough Council

APPENDIX 'A'

CORPORATE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE19 November 2020 at 7.30 p.m. via MS Teams

Members of the Committee present: Councillors N Prescott (Chairman), J Gracey (Vice-Chairman), A Alderson, I Chaudhri, D Cotty, L Gillham, J Hulley, R King, M Maddox, J Sohi, D Whyte and M Willingale.

Members of the Committee absent: None.

Councillors S Lewis, I Mullens, M Nuti and J Olorenshaw also attended.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 15 October 2020 and 28 October 2020 were confirmed as correct records. As the meeting was being held remotely using MS Teams, the Chairman would sign these two sets of minutes when this was physically possible.

NOTIFICATION OF CHANGE TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Group mentioned below had notified the Chief Executive of its wish that the change listed below be made to the membership of the Committee. The change was for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting and thereafter the Councillor removed would be reappointed.

<u>Group</u>	<u>Remove From Membership</u>	<u>Appoint Instead</u>
Conservative	Councillor M Heath	Councillor J Sohi

The Chief Executive had given effect to this request in accordance with Section 16(2) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

BUDGET MONITORING

This item was withdrawn from the agenda.

PAPERLESS TRANSMISSION OF AGENDA AND SUPPORTING PAPERS

The Committee considered a report containing recommendations for a policy on increased roll out of paperless transmission of agendas and supporting papers and the working up of a business case for the Mod.Gov Committee management system which offered a paperless meeting app and other governance features. As any decision on paperless agendas would affect all Members, the Committee's recommendations would be submitted to Full Council for a final decision to be made.

Since May 2015 all Councillors had been receiving agendas electronically for all Committee meetings. Hard copy distribution had continued for those Members who requested receipt of hard copies. In September 2019, the Committee had agreed to allow for preparation and consideration of a business case for the introduction of Mod. Gov from January 2021 and a move to the paperless process from that date and for the contract with the current supplier (Blue Mushroom in Chertsey) to be extended until 31 December 2020. This project had been included in the project portfolio for the financial year 2020/21 but in view of the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's financial position, this project had subsequently been deferred by the Committee to the 2021/22 financial year, subject to an extension of the current print contract with Blue Mushroom for another year until December 2021. Blue Mushroom had

indicated in informal discussions that they would be prepared to extend the contract for another year on the existing rates. The Committee expressed their appreciation of the excellent service provided by Blue Mushroom.

Since that decision and separate from the Mod.Gov initiative, the Service and Digital Transformation Member Working Party and the Leader of the Council had recently asked for the Council to progress going paperless for agendas and supporting papers. The report had been prepared to achieve this objective by proactively inviting Members to consider opting in under the law to receipt of papers electronically from 1 January 2021 and to agree to receive all papers electronically from May 2021. This phased approach would allow Group leaders to canvass opinion within their respective Groups and officers to assess take up from Members as this would dictate the residual requirement for hard copy printing and give Members time to adapt to this new way of operation. Moving to a paperless approach would require the agreement of all 41 Councillors. Officers would also have to work in the same system if a paperless approach was adopted, although both Members and officers would have the option of printing out documents under this system if they wished to do so.

In view of the likelihood of Committee meetings continuing on MS Teams until May 2021 and the work that was being undertaken on webcasting meetings, and as implementing Mod.Gov would impact the whole Council organisation, a substantial lend in time up until 31 December 2021 would be required to prepare a business case for the introduction of Mod.Gov on 1 January 2022. In the interim period, Members would be proactively encouraged by other Members who had moved to a paperless way of working to also agree to work in that way. In order to ensure that residual print requirements could be assessed and statutory requirements for agenda despatch were met during the interim period, and as the current Multi-Functional Devices in the Civic Centre would not be suitable for large volume print jobs and it would be detrimental to service delivery for officer time to be spent printing hard copies of agenda, it was proposed that the contract with Blue Mushroom would be extended until 31 December 2021 on the existing rates. The proposed policy's potential impact on anyone with a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 had been considered and an Equality Screening Assessment had been undertaken which was noted by the Committee.

Under the law, no Member could be compelled to consent to receive agenda electronically and a Member could withdraw any consent given. Nor could any person be prohibited from standing as a Councillor because they refused to receive agenda papers electronically. Since Committee and Full Council meetings had been held remotely by MS Teams from April 2020 following the outbreak of Covid, the Member demand for paper copies had increased slightly as some of the 12 Members who had accepted electronic copies hitherto had found it unwieldy to both be present on MS Teams and also to access the agenda papers on the same device at the same time.

The Chairman advised the Committee that eight of the other eleven Surrey district Councils had either moved to Mod.Gov or were moving towards Mod.Gov. He advised that Members would find it easier to access pages electronically under the Mod.Gov system. At present some Members found it difficult to work electronically at Committees when there were a number of different papers to look at rather than all of the paperwork being in one or two complete packages. It was understood that referring to a number of different documents at a Committee would be less problematic under Mod.Gov.

Training would be provided for Members if the paperless approach was adopted which would also assist some Members in making full use of the digital devices which they had received. Members were advised that they should contact Digital Services if they required training on any information technology issue. It was suggested that it would be helpful for Members at some stage to be provided with an illustration of the benefits that would be gained by moving to the Mod.Gov system.

A Member of the Committee had some reservations about the proposals in the report on the basis that only a low number of Members had decided to go paperless so far and some Members would have difficulties with this new way of working. However, a majority of Members of the Committee considered that these difficulties could be overcome with training and supported the recommendations in the report.

RECOMMEND to Full Council on 10 December 2020 that -

- i) Members be encouraged to opt into receipt of electronic agendas and supporting papers from 1 January 2021, and from May 2021 all Members consider agreeing to receipt of all agendas and supporting papers in electronic form only;**
- ii) officers be authorised to prepare a business case on the Mod. Gov Committee management system with a view to its introduction on 1 January 2022; and**
- iii) to ensure residual print requirements can be assessed and statutory requirements for agenda despatch are met during the interim period whilst work is undertaken on i) and ii) above, the contract with Blue Mushroom in Chertsey be extended until 31 December 2021 on the existing rates.**

REFERENCE FROM HOUSING COMMITTEE – HOUSING TECHNICAL SERVICES STRUCTURE REVIEW

At its meeting on 11 November 2020, the Housing Committee had considered a report on a Housing Technical Services Structure Review. This report that provided Members with two options for delivering a comprehensive capital works programme over 5 years commencing in 2021, which were either an in-house client team managing a full programme of investment or an outsourced managed service with a smaller in-house client function.

The Housing Technical Services structure had last been reviewed in 2018 but the Council had been unable to recruit to the new technical posts for Planned Maintenance despite several attempts. In addition, there had been no major planned programme for over ten years. The stock condition survey results showed a significant backlog in Decent Homes compliance and the Council needed to procure and deliver an extensive programme over the next five years to resolve this. As part of the Council's commitment and ongoing communication with the Regulator for Social Housing, evidence had to be provided that plans were in place to address these backlogs in a timely manner with all delivery risks mitigated as far as was reasonably practical.

In order to address these issues and following an options appraisal by an external specialist consultant, Members of the Housing Committee had accepted the Officers' recommendation to utilise an outsourced managed service with a smaller in-house client function which was Option B in the report to the Housing Committee on 11 November 2020. This model retained the current Council in-house team which was supplemented by two additional posts and a refinement of existing posts. The Corporate Management Committee noted that it was proposed in the longer term to equip staff with the necessary skills to undertake this work in the future but agreed that the outsourced solution was the right approach at this time.

The Corporate Management Committee agreed the increased staffing resources which were set out in the Team Structure Option B (Table 2) in paragraph 2.21 of the report to the Housing Committee and noted that the costs of the additional posts would be funded from the Housing Revenue Account. It was noted that the Housing Committee had also agreed to request Officers to build the budgetary provision of £675,600 in the Table referred to above

into the Housing Revenue Account estimates for 2021/22 that were currently being prepared for the consideration and approval by the Housing Committee in January 2021.

RESOLVED that -

- i) the increased staffing resources within the Council's establishment as detailed in the Team Structure Option B (Table 2) in paragraph 2.21 of the report to the Housing Committee on 11 November 2020 on the Housing Technical Services Structure Review, be approved; and**
- ii) It be noted that the costs of the additional posts referred to in resolution i) above will be funded from the Housing Revenue Account.**

(Councillor R King required that it be recorded separately in the minutes that he voted against these decisions as he was opposed to outsourcing Housing Technical Services and he considered that the Council should instead pursue the option of an in-house client team managing a full programme of investment).

FEES AND CHARGES

The Committee considered the proposed fees and charges under its remit for the next financial year, which included garage rents, local land charges and Council Tax and business rates court costs.

RESOLVED that -

the fees and charges as set out in Appendix 'E' to the agenda be approved to be effective from the dates within the Appendix or as soon as practical thereafter.

TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID YEAR REPORT 2020/21

The Committee noted a report on the Council's treasury activity for the first six months of the 2020/21 financial year.

The Council held £70m of investments as at 30 September 2020 and the investment activity during the first six months of 2020/21 was noted. Although there was a fall in investment income as one of the consequences of the Covid pandemic, the Council's balance sheet and earmarked reserves remained strong and the Council's auditors had found that the Council's governance procedures and compliance with Government financial Codes and guidance was good.

In view of the current investment climate resulting from coronavirus and the very low returns on investments that were available, the Committee agreed that the Runnymede average investment rate generated during this period of 0.61% was excellent and the Assistant Chief Executive agreed to pass on the Committee's thanks to treasury management staff.

The Council invested in low risk counterparties or instruments that provided adequate liquidity initially before considering investment return. The Council's commercial income was used for a variety of purposes including making General Fund interest payments and providing the resources for regeneration schemes and discretionary services. It was noted that the Council was outperforming other Surrey local authorities in collection of rental income at a time when businesses were affected severely by coronavirus restrictions.

PROPOSED LETTING OF COMMERCIAL UNIT – ADDLESTONE ONE DEVELOPMENT

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act

1972 on the grounds that the discussion would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

The Committee noted that officers had been negotiating for several months with a business with a view to them becoming a tenant of one of the commercial units in the Addlestone One development. The business was seeking to occupy a particular unit which suited the configuration that they required and the proposed layout and fit out of the unit were noted. Agreement had been reached on proposed Heads of Terms which were set out for the Committee's approval. Provided there were no unexpected delays, the business should be able to open during the summer of 2021.

The financial due diligence which had been undertaken by officers and details of the proposed tenant's current business operation were noted. The Committee recognised that deterioration of market conditions caused by Covid meant that there were greater risks associated with business tenants than before the pandemic and the work done by officers to seek to mitigate those risks was noted. Fit out works would be retained by the Council in the event of vacation.

The Committee approved the Heads of Terms and congratulated officers for bringing forward this letting which would enhance the pedestrian flow and vitality of the Addlestone One development.

RESOLVED that –

the Heads of Terms for the letting of the commercial unit in the Addlestone One development to the business as reported, be approved.

COMMUNICATIONS – PROPOSED STAFF REORGANISATION

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the discussion would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

This item was withdrawn from the agenda.

COMMERCIAL SERVICES – PROPOSED STAFF RESTRUCTURING

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the discussion would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

This item was withdrawn from the agenda.

(The meeting ended at 8.34.p.m.)

Chairman

3. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

4. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

If Members have an interest in an item, please record the interest on the form circulated with this Agenda and e-mail it to the Legal Representative or Democratic Services Officer by 5.00 p.m. on the day of the meeting. **Members are advised to contact the Council's Legal section prior to the meeting if they wish to seek advice on a potential interest.**

Members are reminded that a non-pecuniary interest includes their appointment by the Council as the Council's representative to an outside body and that this should be declared. Membership of an outside body in their private capacity as a director, trustee, committee member or in another position of influence thereon **should be regarded as a disclosable pecuniary interest, as should an appointment to an outside body by the Council as a trustee.**

Members who have previously declared interests which are recorded in the Minutes to be considered at this meeting need not repeat the declaration when obtaining remote access to the meeting. Members need take no further action unless the item in which they have an interest becomes the subject of debate, in which event the Member must withdraw from the meeting if the interest is a disclosable pecuniary interest or if the interest could reasonably be regarded as so significant as to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest.

5. **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE
(ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE - PETER MCKENZIE)**

Synopsis of report:

The Council has received reports on the effect of the pandemic on the Council's finances for the current financial year 2020/21. This report sets out the longer-term financial implications for the Council and how it will balance the capital and revenue budget over the next three financial years.

Recommendation:

The draft Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22 to 2025/26 be noted, as attached at Appendix 'B', with a view to making recommendations in January 2021 to Council as follows:-

- 1. The Council capitalises up to £7 million of transformation and Covid-19 related costs in 2020/21 and 2021/22, subject to Secretary of State approval**
- 2. The £7 million is funded from cash set aside in previous years to repay debt in 2063 totalling £14 million.**
- 3. The Band D council tax rate is increased by 2% or £5 a year, whichever is higher.**

1. **Context of report**

- 1.1 For almost a decade the Council has set a balanced budget and funded significant capital investment projects in Addlestone and Egham, which includes a purpose-built leisure centre and swimming pool. It has achieved this while setting the lowest tax rates in Surrey. While a number of Councils have been forced to cut services over the last ten years this Council has expanded the services it delivers to residents, especially the discretionary services.

- 1.2 The remainder of this report details how the Council will continue balance its revenue budget over the next three years and fund a significant capital programme.

2. Medium Term Financial Strategy

Introduction

- 2.1 The budget monitoring and management information systems are projecting a deficit of £4.6m in 2020/21. When the Council set the budget, it anticipated a budget surplus of £0.5m. The deficit is a mixture of increased costs and reduced income . For example, to maintain Egham Orbit operational, the Council has provided a grant facility and released £150,000 of grant to see Achieve Lifestyle through the coronavirus pandemic. A significant proportion of the losses are covered by significant one off Government grants. However, it is unlikely this level of support will continue in 2021/22. In September, officers forecast a budget deficit of over £7.5 million. This has been reduced by officers reducing and deferring expenditure where possible to protect the Council's financial position.
- 2.2 The Council receives less than 9% of the council tax it collects and 4% of the business rates collected and receives very little Government funding in an ordinary year. The income collected from car parks, planning, trade waste and rents pays for services like street cleansing, refuse collection, parks and open spaces and keeping our communities safe.
- 2.3 By tightly controlling our expenditure, cancelling all non-essential expenditure and additional specific Government grant support, the Council has reduced the original deficit from £7.5 to £4.6m. This will still deplete the Council's General Fund reserves over the next two financial years. The income lost from all existing income streams is over £8m and it is not totally clear if some of the debt may force the Council to increase its provision for bad debts.
- 2.4 Most economic forecasts anticipate the pandemic to create major economic disruption and the impact will be felt on the Council;s finances, other local authorities, business, charities and individuals to 2023.
- 2.5 Permanent changes to the way we live such as increased on-line shopping may mean the Council's car parking and retail rent income is unlikely to fully recover. In early December a number of high street brand names ceased trading. It is likely that high streets will look very different in 2021 onwards.

Spending review.

- 2.6 The Government plans to support Councils in 21/22 by continuing to cover the cost of some income lost for the first three months of the year. It is likely most Government support will be directed at adult social care and children and family costs. So as the longer term "Fair Funding "and "Business rates retention" will be undertaken in 2021/22, the Council's financial plans are not anticipating any significant change in Government long term funding from that which has already been agreed. The Spending Review has announced numerous increased Government spending including PPE, homelessness and rough sleepers. Any increase in resources will be reported to Council in the regular budget monitoring updates. The full details of the Local Government Finance Settlement will not be known until late December 2020 and will be a one year settlement.

Referendum Limits – Council tax

- 2.7 On the 25 November the Government announced referendum limits for council tax increases, 2% for general council tax increases with a further 3% for those Councils with specific adult social care responsibilities. To date it is not clear if low tax rate

Councils, including Runnymede Borough Council, can increase their Band D rate by £5 a year.

Capitalisation of Revenue costs.

- 2.8 Capital expenditure is generally where the Council spends on the acquisition of an asset or creates or adds to an existing asset. Capital expenditure can be paid for in a number of ways – sell an asset to provide a capital receipt, a charge to the General Fund revenue account or borrowing. All the above ultimately lead to a charge to the council taxpayer unless the cost is paid for by a third party (Section 106 planning gain, government grant etc.).
- 2.9 Revenue expenditure is the spend on day to day running costs such as salaries, fuel and building running costs and the debt charges if the Council borrows to fund its capital spend. For this Council the debt charges are interest on the loans and Minimum Revenue Provision to repay the sum borrowed when it becomes due if the loan is a maturity loan.
- 2.10 Government legislation, for at least thirty years, prohibits Councils charging revenue expenditure to capital. If it could be done, then some local authorities may borrow to pay day to day running costs. In the late 1970s some Councils sold assets to reduce local taxes or increase revenue spending forcing government to legislate.
- 2.11 A Council may capitalise revenue spending with the express consent of the Government. In December, the Council's Section 151 (S151) officer commenced preliminary discussions with the Government. Any final conditions and the fine detail imposed by Government will be agreed by Members before any capitalisation is implemented at the financial year end.
- 2.12 While the current pandemic is viewed as a "once in a hundred years" event, similar to the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918/19, the Council has spent a decade developing its service provision, only committing to growth when the Members felt the growth was sustainable with existing resources. The services the Council provides will be required by residents during and after the pandemic. The view of the Council is that cutting services to make up for a short term loss of income to rebuild again in 2023 would not be a good use of public money.
- 2.13 The Council has a very strong balance sheet and a number of specific earmarked revenue reserves. These reserves relate to specific risks and it is the view of the Council's S151 officer that depleting those reserves during 2020/21 and 2021/22 will expose the Council to financial and service delivery risk. Including the potential for a Section 114 notice.
- 2.14 It would make operational and financial sense to capitalise the Covid-19 losses for 2020/21 and potentially 2021/22 of up to £7m and use its capital reserves to cover that cost. To date the Council has set aside over £14m to repay debt when it becomes due. This reserve can be used to fund Covid losses and the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2023/24 onwards will make additional contributions to replenish that provision. Members have been clear they wish all loans to be fully repaid when due with no risk of re-financing loans at high interest rates.
- 2.15 While the UK economy should be well into a recovery by 2023 the Council policy is to:
- Continue to make efficiency savings to make resources available to fully fund and enhance front line services.
 - Seek Government authority to capitalise up to £7m of income loss and increased costs in 2020/21 to 2021/22.
 - Make revenue contributions to capital expenditure in 2023/24 onwards as the Council's financial position improves. To be clear, there is no increase in the Council's external borrowing need.

3. Resource implications

- 3.1 The Government continues to provide ongoing support to this Council, the county council, residents and businesses through a wide variety of reliefs, grants and income compensation schemes which will continue into 2021. In March of 2021 the Council and Government will reconcile grants made against expenditure and as part of final accounts reporting Members will be given the final accounting of the Covid - 19 costs for 2020/21.
- 3.2 The Council is committed to significant regeneration schemes in Egham Town, Barbara Clark House and completing Addlestone One commercial and residential lettings. These are pre-commitments on the Council's capital and revenue budgets between 2020/21 and 2022/23. The General Fund working balance has always been maintained well above the minimum to account for delays in construction and delays in generating capital and revenue receipts
- 3.3 The Council's earmarked reserves are part of its risk management strategy in relation to business rates retained, commercial income and dilapidations. It is the S151 officer's view that those earmarked reserves are much more, not less, likely to be called upon for the purpose intended and should not be used to cover the cost of the pandemic.
- 3.4 The Council's significant investments of over £70m and a strong balance sheet allow the Council to fund the capitalisation of the Covid costs from future revenue resources without increasing the Council's external borrowing.

(To resolve)

Background papers

Budget working papers held in Finance section

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22 to 2025/26.

Introduction

1. For several years, the Council has invested significant resources in regeneration projects in the towns of Addlestone and Egham. By the end of 2021/22 the Council will have invested over £150 million in building new dwellings, enhancing the local economy and creating new sustainable employment opportunities. The new dwellings are all a mix of affordable housing, owner occupier and private rental accommodation

2. The Council has also invested £17m in replacing a 30-year-old leisure centre in Egham with a new purpose-built leisure centre which includes a swimming pool.

3. To fund these projects the Council has borrowed sums from Government to fund the construction. The payment of interest on those loans depleted the Council's reserves until the income from rents and sale of some dwellings could be used to replenish reserves and fund the next project on a rolling program. At the same time the Council bought assets to generate a rental income to help pay some of the borrowing costs during construction.

4. The decade 2010 to 2020 has been one where national government has reduced public spending to rebalance the national economy. The Council, in real terms, has lost around £7.5 in government Revenue Support Grant. During that period, it has not cut any service provision, indeed it has been able to develop services over the last decade by implementing:

- An efficiency programme to reduce the employee costs by 16% through redesign of services, implementing a new Customer Services function and develop its ability for residents to transact with the Council electronically 24 hours a day.
- Sell services relating to elderly care to individuals, Surrey police and other local authorities. These include Community transport, care-line, CCTV services etc.
- A commercial asset portfolio where commercial rents supported the Council's regeneration programme with a long-term rental stream.

5. Clearly the Coronavirus (Covid 19) pandemic has caused most organisations serious financial difficulties, in both the private and public sectors, including Runnymede Borough Council.

The UK economy

6. In early October 2020 the UK sovereign credit rating was downgraded from AA2 to AA3. The following week several UK banks saw their credit rating downgraded. It remains to be seen if this will cause difficulties with the local economy and the Council's investment strategy.

7. Generally, inflation remains low, however some inflation rates are running at high levels due to Covid-19 e.g. second-hand car inflation at 8.9% as some people move from public transport to increased car usage. Shortages of printers, webcams etc has led to a 10.9% increase in data processing equipment inflation, however most inflation rates remain low. Some prices, including petrol, fell in 2020. Inflation is expected to average 2% in 2021/22.

8. Various areas close to Runnymede were in lockdown, before the second national lockdown in November 2020. While it is difficult to know how this may affect the income of individual Runnymede residents in the future, between Oct 2019 and October 2020 the number of households claiming council tax support rose by 8.7% from 2,184 to 2,373 claimants. This will impact on the local economy as residents have less disposable income to spend and council tax collection rates have fallen.

9. A year ago, one of the major economic risks was the effect of Brexit on the local economy, that risk still needs to be taken into consideration on the economic outlook as we approach 2021/22.

10. While interest rates are low for investment income and are likely to remain low for the foreseeable future, this has resulted in a significant loss of income to the Council that is likely continue into the next few years. While base rates are low at 0.1% borrowing costs for long term loans has are around 1.5%.

11. A prevailing view, prior to the second lockdown, appears to be the UK economy will start to recover in late 2021 which gains momentum in through 2022 and into 2023.

Council finances 2020/21

12. The outlook for the current financial year has changed considerably since the Council set its budget in February 2020. The original budget showed a surplus of £500k to fund services. Covid-19 has changed this to a projected deficit by March 2021 of £7.2 million which then reduced to £4.6m as government support continued. A swing of over £5 m seriously depletes the General Fund reserves. The main reason is loss of income which is likely to persist into 2021 and 2022. Some economists are looking at the economy returning to near normal levels in the second half of 2022 or early 2023. The table below shows the assumptions made on income shortfalls.

	2020/21		2021/22	2022/23
	Budget	Variance	Variance	Variance
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Community services / transport	119	60	30	0
Day centres	276	180	90	0
Community halls	183	110	55	0
Meals at home	180	(25)	(25)	0
Museum	32	15	15	0
Parks and open spaces	204	70	35	0
Domestic and trade waste	619	370	185	0
Car parks - off and on-street	1,052	620	496	248
Planning and development control	836	120	60	0
Building control	344	104	52	0
Council tax costs not recovered	177	71	35	0
Local land charges	247	150	75	0
	4,269	1,845	1,103	248
Commercial income	24,467	4,000	3,200	640
	28,736	5,845	4,303	888

13. As a planning assumption the Council is assuming that income continues to slowly improve from the spring on 2021. However increased costs and reduced income of at least £11m over a three-year period makes the Council's financial position unsustainable and long-term solutions to bridge the budget gap need to be implemented in 2021 to protect services.

Business rates Retained

14. Local authorities retain only some of the business rates they collect. In Surrey the districts collect business rates and the total collected is split 50% to government, 40% to Runnymede and 10% to Surrey CC. However, the government then applies a “needs based” levy to adjust income for relative need. The government top slices £25m to redistribute to other part of the UK, leaving Runnymede with a starting position of just under £25m. From this a “tariff” of just under £20m is applied. Since the introduction of the scheme all the Surrey councils have increased their business rates tax base and the income collected. To minimise the loss of income to government districts can choose to “pool” resources with other districts and the county council. Since the outset various districts have formed a pool with the County Council to maximise rates retained. The “Surrey pool” is created from the best mix of districts working with the County Council to reduce resources paid to government and maximise resources kept in the county.

15. The “Surrey pool” which provides the highest forecast gains cannot include all the districts as the pool itself is required to pay a levy on the gains. All the districts work together with the County Council to choose a pool that maximises the gains. The pool composition can therefore change every year, but most years it advantages the pool if Runnymede joins.

16. The table below demonstrates that for the financial year 2020/21 the pre-Covid estimate of business rates to be retained in Runnymede increased by £0.8m to just under £4.5m.

2020/21 pooling gain estimates							
	Share of rates collected	Less (Tariff) or top up	Less levy on growth	Add multiplier grant	TOTAL	Pooling gain	TOTAL RESOURCES
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Elmbridge	28.191	-23.108	-1.362	0.204	3.925		3.925
Epsom & Ewell	11.03	-8.939	-0.336	0.084	1.839	0.168	2.007
Guildford	36.486	-31.844	-0.857	0.186	3.971		3.971
Mole Valley	19.118	-16.205	-0.813	0.117	2.217		2.217
Reigate and Banstead	22.232	-19.494	-0.176	0.11	2.672		2.672
Runnymede	24.956	-19.899	-1.602	0.203	3.658	0.801	4.459
Spelthorne	20.303	-16.047	-1.164	0.171	3.263	0.582	3.845
Surrey Heath	16.049	-12.578	-0.952	0.139	2.658		2.658
Tandridge	10.27	-7.952	-0.43	0.093	1.981		1.981
Waverley	16.898	-14.402	-0.246	0.1	2.35		2.35
Woking	20.321	-16.417	-0.885	0.156	3.175	0.442	3.617
	225.854	-186.885	-8.823	1.563	31.709	1.993	33.702
Surrey CC	56.463	63.088	0	4.792	124.343	1.993	126.336
	282.317	-123.797	-8.823	6.355	156.052	3.986	160.038

17. Clearly during Covid the main risk to the Surrey Councils is the income from business rates falling dramatically. That risk is mainly mitigated by the Governments “Expanded Relief Scheme”. While this reduced to zero the tax liability of business in the Borough by around £14m, the government compensated the districts, boroughs and the County Council for the reduced income. While collection rates have fallen the table above anticipates £4.459m being the resources to be received in the collection fund by March 2021. It is estimated Runnymede would need to lose 15.5% of its business rates income before the government safety net would apply. The other districts in the Surrey pool have a similar risk profile which benefits all pool members and the County Council.

18. All the Surrey Finance Officers have taken the view that a significant drop in business rates that would not be supported by the governments rate relief scheme is not likely, so provisionally a new Surrey pool can be formed in 2021/22.

19. Using a similar risk methodology to capture risk and reward, the pool composition for 2021/22 would be the County Council, Spelthorne, Runnymede, Surrey Health and either Elmbridge or Tandridge– Tandridge have agreed to be included

20. The table below shows the makeup of the Surrey pool over the last three years. In each of the three years Surrey County Council led the pool and for one year the London Borough of Croydon joined the pool to reduce the levy paid to government

2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Runnymede	Runnymede	Runnymede
Spelthorne	Spelthorne	Spelthorne
Surrey Heath	Epsom & Ewell	Epsom & Ewell
Mole Valley	Woking	Tandridge

21. The 2021/22 proposed pool is predicted to reduce sums paid to government by £4.2m, of which Runnymede would retain an additional £0.7m giving total resources of £4.1m. The slightly lower yield accounts for some collection difficulty in future years. For budgeting purposes, a significant loss of income of up to 15% would still mean the pool gains, however the Runnymede share is reduced to £2.5m from £4.1m. In the section below the Council has set up several earmarked reserves as part of its risk management strategy including a “Business Rates equalisation” reserve to mitigate this type of risk which will be used in 2021/22.

Government grants

22. The government has not been able to provide local authorities with more than a one-year spending settlement. The Comprehensive spending review, including a revised business rates retention system was due to be implemented in 2021/22. A review of the business rates retention scheme, levels of taxation, New Homes Bonus etc. are now deferred until 2021/22. This continued uncertainty and the potential for reductions in government support add weight to the Council’s strategy of becoming self-sufficient as soon as practicable.

23. The Council’s financial plans for the last three years have assumed government funding continues to reduce year on year and this continues into the next financial year.

Council tax

Runnymede BC has one of the lowest council tax rates in England, an average Band D home pays £164.59 a year or £3.17 a week for the Councils services. Council tax rises are limited by government policy to a maximum of either **£5 a year or 2%**. The proposed tax rate increase is £5 a year giving a tax rate of £3.26 a week. The tax the Council collects is dependent on three main variables as shown in the table below.

24. While the number of dwellings in the borough has increased the number of households claiming council tax support has increased by almost 9% in the year to October 2020 and that figure is expected to increase. The main fall in yield is from the in-year collection rate which has fallen from over 98% to 96%. At a collection rate of 98% the Council could expect income of £5.783m as shown below. The actual yield will be £120,000 lower than anticipated which adds further pressure to the budget.

	2020/21	2021/22	Change
Number of dwellings	37,044	37,299	255
Council Tax Support	(2,184)	(2,373)	(189)
	34,860	34,926	66
Band D equivalent	34,748	34,750	
Collection rate	98%	96%	
	34,053	33,360	(693)
Add military houses	46	44	
	34,099	33,404	
	164.59	169.59	
	5,612,394	5,665,018	52,624
Tax collected at 98%		5,782,849	170,455

Commercial income

25. During 2020 the Council has seen its income from commercial rents decrease by around £4m or 15% as shown in the earlier table.

26. In preparing its financial and operational strategies the Council anticipates some loss of income as tenants recover from the pandemic. The Council has always been aware of the risks associated with its regeneration strategy which has required significant capital investment. The difficulty across the UK is that a significant number of businesses continue to have trouble in payment of rent, rates, salaries, wages and general running costs despite significant government support.

27. The Council's financial plans have always recognised the commercial income it generates is vulnerable to market forces and has mitigated those risks in the following ways.

- From the outset the Council has set aside part of the rent income in a reserve to repay the loans to government in full when they become due – the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy.
- Each year the Council budgets for a 2% of its income as potential bad debts on the basis that in each year some businesses will fail, and some debts will be written off.
- Two specific earmarked reserves have been created:
 - one for any potential costs relating to the fabric of the buildings.
 - The second reserve acknowledging that rent income can vary between years if a lease expires and a tenant leaves or the lease is re-negotiated. Both may require a rent free or reduced rent period.

Covid Support

28. Between April 2020 and October 2020, the government provided financial support to local authorities in 4 tranches of £4.6 billion (£4,607,000,184). Runnymede Borough Council received £1.222 million which it used to cover increased costs, support for Achieve Lifestyle and support the Runnymede Food Bank.

	1st Tranch	2nd Tranch	3rd Tranch	4th Tranch	TOTAL
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Runnymede BC	33	880	133	177	1,222
England	1,600,000	1,594,000	494,000	919,000	4,607,000

29. The government has also proposed to reimburse local authorities for some of the income it has lost from reduced car park income, trade waste income etc. However commercial rent income is not included in that scheme.

Council tax and council tax support

30. Due to the ongoing restrictions on business and social contact, many of our residents have been furloughed or been made redundant, and the self-employed have seen their income reduced. Residents are concerned about their ability to pay rent and council tax and so the Council stopped all recovery action for the first half of the year and helped more residents claim council tax support. The number of claimants in the borough increased by 9% to 2,373 prior to the second national lockdown. Most of these claimants are likely to be on other forms of benefit including Universal Credit. It is accepted many residents will not fully pay council tax due and arrears will increase by March 2021

31. In April the Government funded a scheme to further reduce a council tax bill by £150 for all residents claiming working age Council Tax Support. As at 31 October the Council has spent £281,000 of the £337,380 allocated and anticipates spending the full allocation by March 2021.

32. In a similar way the Council is making "Test and trace" isolation payments of £500 to support those on low incomes who cannot work from home following a positive test – so far less than 15 residents fall into this category. However, any resident told to isolate by the NHS is entitled to claim benefits which include Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, Income Support and Housing Benefit.

33. For similar reasons some businesses struggled to pay rent and business rates. The government has therefore required the Council to administer several Covid-19 relief schemes on their behalf. The main ones include:

Discretionary housing payments

Government have provided a fund of £192k and the Council have added a further £30k – the fund is used to support complex residents' issues so we can keep residents in their homes, or if necessary, help them move to more suitable accommodation. In the half year to September the Council spent £100k and it anticipates spending the full allocation for the year.

Covid-19 hardship payments.

The Council has also set up an emergency assistance fund. Residents who are struggling to pay for essential items and are unable to get support from government can receive a one-off grant of up to £2,000 from the Council.

Business rates

Government funding allowed the Council to make grants totalling over £12.8 million to 1,020 local businesses.

34. The government also expanded the retail relief scheme and reduced the rates to be collected by £17 in the Borough – the sums due to this Council and the County Council will be reimbursed by government.

35. Should the Council ever move into tier 3, following the November / December 2020 national lockdown, then additional government support will be made available.

36. In April the Runnymede food bank had an outbreak of Covid -19 and it became apparent the premises could not cope with demand and provide space for social distancing requirements. The Council provided a large warehouse rent free and several Councillors worked full time in the food bank organising deliveries, arranging internet and digital services. Some shielded residents wished to pay for their shopping, so the Council worked with volunteers and shielded residents to undertake “personal shopping”.

37. For first half of the financial year 2020/21 the Council’s finance department moved from collecting over £100 million in council tax and business rates to administering government emergency funding and supporting vulnerable residents. Staff from every department moved into “welfare cells”, contacting vulnerable residents to arrange several services including providing hot meal delivery, medicines and essential supplies to be delivered.

Treasury management

38. In 2018 the Council entered into an advance borrowing agreement for £40m to be drawn down in May 2021 to fund the Egham Gateway project. The loan is a straightforward annuity loan over 40 years at 2.88%. That does mean another £35 to £40m remains to be funded over 2021/22 and 2022/23 to complete the project. The Council only borrows to fund its regeneration strategy, including building the new leisure centre, Egham Orbit.

39. A similar loan from Government (PWLB or Public Works Loans Board) would be at a rate of between 2.70% and 2.76%. However short-term rates are considerably lower at the present time and PWLB rates will fall in 2021 following a government review of the margin they add to the cost of borrowing. The Council has delayed borrowing to fund capital projects which has made considerable revenue savings in the expectation long term borrowing rates will fall. In addition, the credit rating for the UK and some UK banks has been downgraded from AA2 to AA3. While this is not causing any immediate change to the Council’s investment strategy it will be kept under review as the Council has around £70m invested. As there is a significant margin between borrowing and investment rates the Council has maintained a significant under borrowed position of between £13m and £22m, using cash flows rather than long term borrowing to reduce costs by an average of £250k to £300k a year. This under borrowed position does advantage the Council if interest rates remain low and the Council borrows long term at rates of around 1.5% fixed for 50 years.

40. The base rate for investment purposes has been low for some time at 0.1%, and it is forecast to stay that way for some time, it is even possible that negative interest rates may apply in the future. As it is unlikely long-term investment rates will increase it makes sense to reduce investments which are currently producing very low returns, reduce the credit risk and leave options around locking into long term deals fluid should rates reduce further in the medium term. Maintaining this under borrowed position also reduces costs to the General Fund.

41. The PWLB now restricts local authority borrowing to regeneration and housing schemes. A quote from HM Treasury is “The government intends to cut the interest on all new loans from the PWLB, subject to market conditions, following the development and implementation of a robust lending framework co-designed with local authorities through this consultation.”

Financial Strategy 2021/22

42. For several years, the Council's overarching strategy has been to make efficiency savings and generate new income streams to reduce reliance on government funding. During that time the Council has not cut any services to residents. As savings have been made it has been able to increase spending on service delivery every year since 2013. The Council has detailed plans to make efficiency savings of £1m in the next 12 months in addition to the £800,000 already found from removing previously agreed growth items from the budget.

43. Most economists believe Covid-19 is a once in a hundred-year event with economic recovery starting to take hold in late 2021 and continuing in 2022 and 2023. The regular reports to Council show that the loss on income from car parks, trade waste, commercial rents together with the increased costs of fighting the pandemic seriously deplete the Councils reserves to an unacceptably low level.

44. The Council has always set a budget with some sustainable growth when safe to do so. As Covid-19 is a "once in a century" event and the services provided by the Council are all essential to the health and wellbeing of the Runnymede communities, especially our senior citizens, depleting the balances as shown above is considered to be not only high risk but will still require significant reductions in service.

45. The Council's financial strategy for 2021/22 is to:

- Continue to make efficiency savings through its project management, service review process and its digital services transformation programme.
- Continue with the assumption that the delayed long-term spending review of local government finance will not increase resources in the medium term.
- Commercial income will decline in 2020/21 to 2023/24. The Council will use some of its commercial income earmarked reserves to cushion the impact until the local economy recovers.

46. The Council will seek permission to capitalise some of its budget deficit as shown below. But as cash investments total around £70m the Council will not borrow from external sources. It has already set aside over £14m in capital reserves to repay debt in 2064. In the table below as a fallback position the Council could take a short-term loan at 1.5% interest to protect services until the local economy recovers. It is highly unlikely an external loan would be needed.

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	TOTAL
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Projected income loss	5,845	4,303	888					11,036
Borrowing requirement		8,000						8,000
Less repayment			-500	-1,000	-1,000	-2,500	-3,000	-8,000
Balance outstanding		8,000	7,500	6,500	5,500	3,000	0	0
Interest at 1.5%		120	113	98	83	45	0	
TOTAL COST TO GENERAL FUND		120	613	1,098	1,083	2,545	3,000	8,458

47. The Council has significant cash reserves to fund the capitalisation of the Covid19 costs in 2020 and 2021/22.

48. The Councils treasury management strategy is very clear that investments are prioritised according to security, liquidity and lastly yield. As previously mentioned, as credit ratings have fallen, borrowing internally and reducing investments would be a lower risk option.

49. Council tenants are also taxpayers, so investing the Council's reserves, including part of the HRA balances if required, has the following advantages:

- Security – as mentioned earlier credit ratings in the UK have fallen. While there appears to be little risk the Councils General Fund is a low risk investment.
- Liquidity – The Council would prefer not to borrow from the government as this would increase costs and loans taken would be for fixed periods. The timing of making a revenue contribution to fund the capital costs of Covid 19 is without penalty and will be at the complete discretion of elected members
- Yield – investment rates are below 1% but a five to ten-year loan from government would carry an interest rate of between around 1.5%. In the model above a rate of 1.5% has been used to illustrate that a series of short-term loans is affordable.

50. The Council believes this is the correct strategy as it is not clear how long the economy will take to recover.

General fund working balance and earmarked reserves.

51. For several years, the Council has placed less reliance on government funding and has generated funds from the services it sells to residents, business and other councils. It has maintained a deliberate policy of growing reserves to fund those regeneration strategies and to mitigate the risks involved in major capital projects. The Council has invested around £150m in the towns of Addlestone and Egham. The Egham scheme commenced around the same time as the Covid-19 pandemic took hold. Construction has continued and the project is broadly on track to be delivered on time and within budget. But borrowing at long term rates of over 2.5% and funding the costs of Covid-19 will seriously deplete the Council's reserves to a dangerously low level. The strategy outlined above protects all the reserves, especially the one linked to regeneration and the commercial portfolio.

52. The earmarked reserves have been set up by the Council to mitigate specific risks and the onset of the pandemic does not remove those risks, in many ways the likelihood of those risks crystallising is more acute.

53. The Council has chosen the financial strategy that does not run down the General Fund or the earmarked reserves which will be needed for their explicit purpose:

- The risk of further falls in commercial income for several reasons is more acute. E.g. Voluntary arrangements via the courts to have debt written off.
- Tenants not able to pay existing rents and seek reductions in future years
- Government "expanded retail relief" scheme expires in March 2021 – the Council may be expected to collect an additional £14m of rates over and above the 2020/21 target
- New rent agreements based on turnover of profit not a fixed sum per Sq. Metre
- The business cases for Addlestone and Egham may not realise the original income projections.
- Any delays due to Covid on the Egham project due to Covid may incur penalty costs, delayed rent income and capital receipts

- While house prices have increased much of the increase has been in existing homeowners going for larger properties with gardens, moving to rural areas etc. It remains to be seen if the dwellings in Egham produce the planned capital receipts originally envisaged as the housing market returns to normal
- The Egham regeneration project includes student accommodation – the income projections for student rents need to be re-worked in light of post Covid student numbers.

Conclusion

54. While the Council expects to make significant savings in 2020/21 and 2021/22 from its transformation agenda these will not cover the costs or income losses from Covid. The Council has also started on a process of further transforming the way some services are delivered which will probably incur set up costs including some redundancy costs.

55. The government's fundamental review of how local authorities are funded has also been delayed and is not likely to be implemented before 2022/23.

56. The Council anticipates the local economy will recover, some sections faster than others. The timeframe remains uncertain, but the services provided are likely to be more necessary as we move into Covid recovery.

57. For that reason, the Council wishes to maintain its services at the present level and use its capital reserves to fund the General Fund revenue deficits which require government approval.

58. There will be no increase in borrowing, the Council has over £70m in investments which can be used in the short term. To be clear, there is no external borrowing, this is more the accounting treatment of capital financing in the future.

6. **DISCRETIONARY GRANT FUNDING: ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS GRANT FUNDING POLICY AND PROPOSAL FOR DELEGATED AUTHORITY (DIGITAL CUSTOMER AND COLLECTION SERVICES – LINDA NORMAN)**

Synopsis of report:

Following the Coronavirus pandemic, the Government has allocated Runnymede Borough Council £1, 788, 480 towards an Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) funding to be used during 2020/21 and 2021/22.

This additional funding is intended to help local authorities to continue to support those businesses who have been severely impacted by the restrictions put in place to control the spread of Covid-19.

In accordance with the grant conditions, the Government is asking local authorities to:

- Use discretion on how to identify those in most need
- Use the funding to support businesses that supply the retail, hospitality, leisure and events sectors
- Support small businesses in shared offices or other flexible workspaces which do not have their own business rates assessment
- Support B&Bs which pay Council Tax instead of Business Rates
- Businesses should be trading within the Runnymede Borough Council area. Where they are not trading from a commercial property, proof of Council Tax should be provided

The Council has developed the Discretionary Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) Funding Policy to clearly layout how this funding will be allocated. This policy will assist those businesses in most need whilst making sure the Council has a clear robust process in place to protect public funds. The policy clearly sets out the criteria and rationale for administering this local scheme. This includes an officer panel and a review process should the business feel aggrieved with the original decision.

Due to the number of grants that are coming out of central Government to combat the financial impact of the Covid - 19 pandemic on the economy, and to ensure an efficient and immediate response to these grants, it is recommended that Members delegate authority to the Assistant Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer) and the Corporate Head of Customer, Digital and Collection Services to implement these policies in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee.

Recommendations:

- i) The Committee approve Runnymede's Discretionary Additional Restrictions Grant Funding Policy attached at Appendix 'C' and officers start administering the scheme as quickly as possible.
- ii) The Committee approve delegated authority to be given to the Assistant Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer) and the Corporate Head of Customer, Digital and Collection Services to implement further Covid related grants in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee.

1. **Context of Report**

- 1.1 On 31 October 2020, the Government announced the introduction of additional support for local authorities under national and Local Covid Alert Level 3 (LCAL3) restrictions.
- 1.2 Runnymede has been allocated £1,788,480 to be used during 2020/21 and 2021/22 to provide support to businesses that are affected by the Covid - 19 pandemic. It is proposed to allocate £788 480 (Phase 1) for the 2020/21 financial year and the balance of £1,000,000 (Phase 2) to be allocated to 2021/22 financial year to ensure support is ongoing.
- 1.3 In accordance with the grant conditions, in utilising the funding the Council should:
- use discretion on how to identify and support those most in need
 - use the funding to support businesses that supply the retail, hospitality, leisure and events sectors
 - support small businesses in shared offices or other flexible workspaces which do not have their own business rates assessment
 - support market or mobile traders who do not have their own business rates assessment
 - support B&Bs which pay Council Tax instead of Business Rates
 - support businesses operating within the Runnymede Borough Council area
- 1.4 There are many businesses that do not qualify for any of the other Government support packages for various reasons. They now face extreme hardship and are unable to meet their day to day business expenses. It is therefore proposed that the Discretionary Additional Restrictions Grant Funding Policy attached at Appendix 'C' be used to assist these businesses. This will supplement other support grant funding.

2. **Report**

- 2.1 The Government is expecting local authorities to administer additional grants as quickly as possible to those businesses that did not qualify for support through other grants available.
- 2.2 Powers have been granted through the Localism Act 2011, which allow for the granting of discretionary relief to any premises where the authority feels the granting of such relief would benefit the local community.
- 2.3 The Government's measures to relieve the financial impact on businesses have been announced over a very short period and therefore the Council need to react quickly, requiring flexible policies to meet Government's expectations whilst being transparent and robust to protect public funds.
- 2.4 The aim of the Additional Restrictions Grant Funding Policy will be to have a clear and precise process in place that will assist those businesses who have been adversely affected by the pandemic and have not been able to claim assistance from any other scheme.
- 2.5 The Government has ringfenced £1,788,480 to Runnymede Borough Council to administer the Additional Restrictions Grant to help those businesses which, whilst not legally forced to close, are nonetheless severely impacted by the restrictions put in place to control the spread of Covid - 19.
- 2.6 Whilst the Council has discretion, the Government does expect local authorities to include businesses that have been identified as a priority:

- support businesses that supply the retail, hospitality, leisure and events sectors
- support small businesses in shared offices or other flexible workspaces which do not have their own business rates assessment
- support market or mobile traders who do not have their own business rates assessment
- support B&Bs which pay Council Tax instead for Business Rates

- 2.7 Further guidance can be found in the government guidance at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-restrictions-support-grants-lrsg-and-additional-restrictions-grant-arg-guidance-for-local-authorities>
- 2.8 The Council will identify as many businesses as possible that are likely to qualify and invite them to apply using a standard application form. Businesses will be obliged to make a written application with supporting evidence by 8 January 2021. Applications received after this date will not be considered unless there are exceptional circumstances which prevented the business from meeting the deadline.
- 2.9 Where a business has not been forced to close, the Council will consider the fixed costs of that business including commercial rent and business rates. Where the business does not pay rent or business rates, then the Council will consider other unavoidable business-related costs. These costs must normally be in the name of the business applying for the grant. The types of applicants and the grant amounts are set out in the table on the next page.

Type of applicant	Grant Amount – Assumption must be trading on/before 5 November 2020
Eligible mobile sole trader (e.g taxi driver) unable to trade or severe loss of income due to Covid19 and are based in the Runnymede Borough area	£250 per 28-day qualifying period (or pro rata per any further 14-day qualifying restriction period)
Eligible market trader unable to trade or severe loss of income due to Covid19 At least £250 in rent or flexible licence fee per calendar month Regular Market Traders based on location of stall/pitch within the Runnymede Borough area	£500 per 28-day qualifying period (or pro rata per any further 14-day qualifying restriction period)
B&B which pay Council Tax instead of Business rates and unable to trade or severe loss of income due to Covid19	£500 per 28-day qualifying period (or pro rata per any further 14-day qualifying restriction period)
Businesses trading in premises where there is no rateable value, then the Council may consider other business-related fixed costs with a value of £15, 000 or less	£1,334 per 28-day qualifying period (or pro rata per any further 14-day qualifying restriction period)
Businesses occupying a commercial property listed on the Valuation Office list with a rateable value of £15,000 or less Where there is no rateable value, then businesses paying rent of £15 000 per annum or less	£1,334 per 28-day qualifying period (or pro rata per any further 14-day qualifying restriction period)
Businesses occupying a commercial property listed on the Valuation Office list with a rateable value of over £15,000 but less than £51,000 Where there is no rateable value, then businesses paying rent of over £15 000 but less than £51 000 per annum	£2,000 per 28-day qualifying restriction period (or pro rata per any further 14-day qualifying restriction period)
Businesses occupying a commercial property listed on the Valuation Office list with a rateable value of over £51,000 Where there is no rateable value, then businesses paying rent of over £51 000 per annum	£3,000 per 28-day qualifying restriction period (or pro rata per any further 14-day qualifying restriction period)

2.10 Businesses will be required to demonstrate they have been severally impacted by the national restrictions.

2.11 If the fund is oversubscribed, the Council reserves the right to amend the grant levels to a pro-rata basis based on the applications received and approved to ensure the grants are distributed equitably.

2 Policy Framework implications

3.1 The policy links to the Council's Corporate Business Plan of supporting our communities.

3.2 The policy has been created in light of guidance issued by the Government with regards to administration and expediency.

3 Financial and Resource implications

- 4.1 Runnymede's Additional Restrictions Grant Funding of £1,788 480 is funded by the Government and is expected to cover the financial years 20/21 and 21/22.
- 4.2 The Government expect most of the funding to be distributed as quickly as possible and needs a clear application process to maximise take-up of the funding.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Government is making a one-off contribution for the 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial years under Section 31 of the Local Government Finance Act 2003
- 5.2 Powers have also been granted under the Localism Act 2011 which allow Runnymede to grant discretionary relief that would benefit the local community.

6 Equality Implications

- 6.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment is not considered necessary as it is expected that this policy will have a positive impact on Runnymede's business community. An Equality Screening Assessment is attached at Appendix 'D'.

7 Environmental/biodiversity/sustainability implications

- 7.1 This policy will support those businesses that have been adversely impacted by the Coronavirus who are facing financial hardship and have not been able to access other support streams.
- 7.2 If relief is not given, many businesses may not be able to sustain their ongoing commitments which may lead to closure of the business.

8 Recommendation

- 8.1 The Committee is recommended to approve Runnymede's Additional Restrictions Grant Funding Policy so that officers can start administering the scheme as soon as possible.
- 8.2 The Committee is also recommended to approve delegated authority to the Assistant Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer) and the Corporate Head of Customer, Digital and Collection Services to implement further Covid related grants in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

(To resolve)

Background papers

None stated

Business Rates Discretionary Funding

Additional Restrictions Grant APPENDIX 'C'

November 2020



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Runnymede
BOROUGH COUNCIL 

Additional Restrictions Grant Funding

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Additional Restrictions Grant Funding

Introduction

On 31 October 2020, the Government announced the introduction of additional support for Local Authorities under national and Local Covid Alert Level 3 restrictions (LCAL3).

Additional Restriction Grant funding is a one off payment by the Government to local authorities to be used during 2020/21 and 2021/22 to provide support to businesses affected by the COVID19 pandemic. Local authorities are encouraged to provide support to businesses through wider support initiatives, although primarily the support is envisaged to take place in the form of discretionary grant payments

The Government has ring-fenced £1,788,480 to Runnymede Council to administer the Additional Restrictions Grant to help those businesses which whilst not legally forced to close, are nonetheless severely impacted by the restrictions put in place to control the spread of Covid19.

It is proposed to allocate £788,480 (Phase 1) for the 20/21 financial year and the balance of £1,000,000 (Phase 2) to be allocated to 21/22 financial year to ensure support is ongoing.

Additional Restrictions Grant Funding Scheme

In order to provide an immediate response and emergency support to businesses impacted by the current lockdown the Government is asking local authorities to prioritise support for the following businesses:

- Those businesses that while not legally forced to close are nonetheless severely impacted by the restrictions put in place to control the spread of the Covid19
- Businesses which supply the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors
- Businesses in the events sector
- Small businesses in shared offices or other flexible work spaces e.g. industrial parks, science parks, incubators etc, which do not have their own business rates assessment
- Regular Market Traders or mobile traders such as taxi drivers who do not have their own business rates assessment
- B&B's which pay Council Tax instead of Business Rates
- Businesses should be trading within the Runnymede Borough Council Area. Where they are not trading from a commercial property, proof of Council Tax should be provided.

The Government has also given councils the discretion to make support payments to businesses outside of the above list including:

- Businesses which can demonstrate that they have suffered a significant fall in income due to the Covid-19 crisis
- Businesses that were trading on or before 5 November

Further guidance can be found in the government guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-restrictions-support-grants-lrsg-and-additional-restrictions-grant-arg-guidance-for-local-authorities>

Additional Restrictions Grant Funding

Who will benefit from this scheme?

These grants are primarily and predominantly aimed at businesses who:

- Are not entitled to the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) scheme as they are not responsible for payment of business rates
- Were open and trading the day before national restrictions were imposed
- Were required to close under national restrictions (e.g. non-essential market traders, B&B, mobile traders shared workspace)
- While not legally forced to close are nonetheless severely impacted by the restrictions put in place to control the spread of Covid19 (e.g. businesses which supply the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors or businesses in the events sector)
- Are having to pay unavoidable fixed property costs during the period of the business

Eligibility for scheme

This grant funding is for businesses that are **not** eligible for other support schemes. Businesses which have received cash grants from any central government COVID-related scheme are ineligible for funding from the Additional Restrictions Grants Fund. Such grant schemes include but are not limited to:

- Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed)
- Small Business Grant Fund
- Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant
- The Fisheries Response Fund
- Domestic Seafood Supply Scheme (DSSS).
- The Zoos Support Fund
- The Dairy Hardship Fund

Companies that are in administration, are insolvent or where a striking-off notice has been made are **not** eligible for funding under this scheme.

Businesses that were not trading on the first full day of national restrictions. For the purpose of Phase 1 of these grants, the first full day is 5 November 2020.

Administering the scheme

The Council has a duty to carefully consider every application on its individual merits, considering the relevant circumstances affecting each business. There is no statutory appeal process against any decision made by the Council. Whilst there is no formal right of appeal except by judicial review, in the interests of natural justice applicants may seek a review of the decision from the Council.

The Council will identify as many businesses as possible that are likely to qualify and will invite them to apply using a standard application form. This includes those businesses that applied for but did not qualify for the SBGF or the RHLG as they may qualify under this separate discretionary policy.

However, due to the nature of the criteria it may not be possible to identify those businesses who are occupying shared offices or other flexible working spaces without their own business rates assessment. Therefore, the Council will publicise the scheme through the Council's website and Business Runnymede newsletter.

Ratepayers will be obliged to make a written application with supporting evidence to the Council by 8 January 2021. Applications received after this date will not be considered. Evidence should be provided

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Additional Restrictions Grant Funding

to support each criterion in the application.

Government guidance proposes that recipients should have experienced 'a significant fall in income.' Given the ambiguity of this criteria, expressing this in a more transparent manner will help potential applicants understand if they will be eligible and what level of grant, they can expect.

Where a business has not been required to close, the Council will consider the fixed costs of that business, including commercial rent and business rates. Where the business does not pay rent or business rates, then the Council will consider other unavoidable business-related fixed costs. Fixed costs must normally be in the name of the business applying for the grant.

Priority will be given to those businesses that whilst not being required to close have been affected by the closure of other businesses and in particular those in the supply chain to those businesses. This would include businesses that supply retail, hospitality and leisure sectors or businesses in the events sector.

Runnymede will also prioritise businesses and organisations that provide support to local communities within the local area and where the restrictions have impacted on their income.

The Council will also take into account the number of employees and the scale and risk of potential job losses, whether businesses have had to close operations and are unable to trade on-line and the consequent scale of impact of Covid19 losses.

Businesses will be required to demonstrate they have been severely impacted by the national restrictions.

Type of applicant	Grant Amount – Assumption must be trading on/before 5 November 2020
Eligible mobile sole trader (e.g. taxi driver) unable to trade or severe loss of income due to Covid19 and are based in the Runnymede Borough area	£250 per 28-day qualifying period (or pro rata per any further 14-day qualifying restriction period)
Eligible market trader unable to trade or severe loss of income due to Covid19 At least £250 in rent or flexible licence fee per calendar month Regular Market Traders based on location of stall/pitch within the Runnymede Borough area	£500 per 28-day qualifying period (or pro rata per any further 14-day qualifying restriction period)
B&B which pay Council Tax instead of Business rates and unable to trade or severe loss of income due to Covid19	£500 per 28-day qualifying period (or pro rata per any further 14-day qualifying restriction period)
Businesses trading in premises where there is no rateable value, then the Council may consider other business-related fixed costs with a value of £15, 000 or less	£1334 per 28-day qualifying period (or pro rata per any further 14-day qualifying restriction period)
Businesses occupying a commercial property listed on the Valuation Office list with a rateable value of £15,000 or less Where there is no rateable value, then businesses paying rent of £15 000 per annum or less	£1334 per 28-day qualifying period (or pro rata per any further 14-day qualifying restriction period)

Additional Restrictions Grant Funding

Businesses occupying a commercial property listed on the Valuation Office list with a rateable value of over £15,000 but less than £51,000 Where there is no rateable value, then businesses paying rent of over £15 000 but less than £51 000 per annum	£2000 per 28-day qualifying restriction period (or pro rata per any further 14-day qualifying restriction period)
Businesses occupying a commercial property listed on the Valuation Office list with a rateable value of over £51,000 Where there is no rateable value, then businesses paying rent of over £51 000 per annum	£3000 per 28-day qualifying restriction period (or pro rata per any further 14-day qualifying restriction period)

If the fund is oversubscribed with applications received, the Council reserves the right to amend the grant levels to a pro-rata basis based on the applications received and approved to ensure the grants are distributed equitably.

State Aid

All relief under this local scheme is subject to State Aid consideration. State Aid law is the means by which the European Union regulates state funded support to businesses. Providing discretionary relief to ratepayers is likely to amount to State Aid. However, the support for ratepayers will be State Aid compliant where it is provided in accordance with the De Minimis Regulations (1407/2013)².

The De Minimis Regulations allow an undertaking to receive up to €200,000 of De Minimis aid in a three year period (consisting of the current financial year and the two previous financial years).

To administer De Minimis it is necessary for the Council to establish that the award of aid will not result in the undertaking having received more than €200,000 of De Minimis aid.

Managing the process

Organisations are required to provide a completed application form (as applicable) plus any such evidence, documents, accounts, financial statements including bank statements clearly showing the business name and account details etc. necessary to allow the Council to make a decision. Evidence of unavoidable fixed property costs incurred by the business such as rent, rates, insurance, flexible licence fees or mortgage costs. This does not mean personal or household costs. This should take the form of lease/tenancy agreements showing an obligation to pay and proof of payment.

Where insufficient information is provided, despite reminders, then no relief will be granted.

For those businesses that are liable for business rates and have monies owing to Runnymede Borough Council, payment of the grant funding will be conditional on the business bringing their payments up to date.

In all cases, the Council will notify the ratepayer of decisions made.

Where an application is successful, the following will be notified to them in writing:

Additional Restrictions Grant Funding

- the amount of relief granted and the date from which it has been granted;
- a requirement that the applicant should notify the authority of any change in circumstances that may affect entitlement to the grant.

Where relief is not granted then the following information will be provided, again in writing:

- an explanation of the decision within the context of the authority's statutory duty; and
- an explanation of the appeal rights (see below).

Appeal rights

Whilst there is no formal right of appeal except by judicial review, in the interests of natural justice and to eliminate the risk of administrative error, applicants may seek a review of the decision from the Council within 14 days.

Powers given to the authority for the granting, varying, reviewing and revocation of discretionary relief under the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Local Government and Rating Act 1997, the Local Government Act 2003 and the Localism Act 2011 shall be delegated to the Corporate Head of Customer, Digital and Collection Services in conjunction with the Revenues Technical Manager.

The amount of funding to be provided by the Council in respect of discretionary grant funding relief shall be determined by the Government's funding allocation and is approximately £1,788,480.

Where the authority receives a request from the ratepayer for a review of the decision regarding the granting or refusal of discretionary funding grant, the case will be reviewed by the Assistant Chief Executive (Resources). This could include cases:

- where the applicant cannot provide evidence to satisfy all the criteria but can still demonstrate a significant loss of revenue.
- the applicant missed the deadline of 08 January 2021 due to exceptional circumstances and might qualify under the terms of the scheme.
- where the applicant is not listed as a priority business under government guidelines but grant funding could ensure the business can survive and the business is important to local economic need.

In exceptional circumstances, the Assistant Chief Executive (Resources) may refer the case to the Corporate Management Committee if it is believed that the case merits further consideration. The ratepayer shall be informed of the final outcome.

EQUALITY SCREENING

Equality Impact Assessment guidance should be considered when completing this form.

POLICY/FUNCTION/ACTIVITY	LEAD OFFICER
Business Rates Discretionary Additional Restrictions Grant Funding Policy	Linda Norman

A. What is the aim of this policy, function or activity? Why is it needed? What is it hoped to achieve and how will it be ensured it works as intended? Does it affect service users, employees or the wider community?

Powers have been granted under the Localism Act 2011, which allow for the granting of discretionary relief to any premises where the authority feels the granting of such relief would be of benefit to the local community.

In response to the Coronavirus, COVID-19, the Government announced there would be support for small businesses, and businesses in the retail, hospitality, leisure and events sectors, delivered through the Additional Restrictions Grant Funding.

The Government have ring-fenced £1,788, 480 to support businesses which whilst not legally forced to close, are nonetheless severely impacted by the restrictions put in place to control the spread of Covid19. Whilst the Council has discretion, the Government does expect local authorities to include businesses that have been identified as a priority in their guidance at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-restrictions-support-grants-lrsg-and-additional-restrictions-grant-arg-guidance-for-local-authorities>

The Council has developed the Discretionary Additional Restrictions Grant Funding Policy to clearly layout how this funding will be allocated. This policy will clearly set out how the Council will administer the grant funding to assist the business community whilst making sure the Council has a clear and robust process in place to protect public funds.

B. Is this policy, function or activity relevant to equality? Does the policy relate to an area in which there are known inequalities, or where different groups have different needs or experience? Remember, it may be relevant because there are opportunities to promote equality and greater access, not just potential for adverse impacts or unlawful discrimination.

Requests for funding can come from businesses which could include sole traders, mobile traders such as taxi drivers and showman who may be in any of the protected characteristics. However, as this policy is about supporting the business community, this policy will have a positive impact on several of the protected groups as they will be able to access much needed funds to support their business during the pandemic.

A written application does need to be made but it can be made online, in writing or with third party assistance. A small number of officers will process applications and they are skilled in obtaining sufficient information to support an application without it being intrusive.

Officers have had training on supporting customers with mental health issues although as applications are coming from the business community, this should not be an issue. There will also be guidance for staff to assist in assessing applications to take into account individual circumstances.

An internal staff panel made up of the Revenues Technical Team Leader, the Revenues Technical Manager and the Corporate Head of Service has been established to discuss overall decision making. individual basis. An appeal process to the assistant Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer) is in place for reviewing and monitoring purposes to ensure transparency of the process.

If the policy, function or activity is considered to be relevant to equality then a full Equality Impact Assessment must be carried out.

C. If the policy, function or activity is not considered to be relevant to equality, what are the reasons for this conclusion? What evidence has been used to make this decision? A simple statement of 'no relevance' or 'no data' is not sufficient.

A full Equality Impact Assessment is not considered necessary as it is expected that this policy will have a positive impact on sole and mobile traders who may be an affected characteristic under the Equalities Act

This screening assessment will need to be referred to the Equality Group for challenge before sign-off.

Date completed: 07.12.20

Sign-off by senior manager: Linda Norman

7. **URGENT ACTION – STANDING ORDER 42
(LAW AND GOVERNANCE – JOHN GURMIN)**

A copy of proforma 972 detailing action taken after consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee is attached at Appendix 'E'.

This Urgent Action was circulated by the Assistant Chief Executive to all Members of the Committee for information and was discussed informally by officers and Members after the close of the Committee's meeting on 15 October 2020.

(For information)

Background Papers

None

RUNNYMEDE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CONSULTATION WITH APPROPRIATE CHAIRMAN AND VICE- CHAIRMAN FOR URGENT ACTION TO BE TAKEN UNDER STANDING ORDER 42

APPENDIX 'E'

TO: Councillors
Chairman and Vice- Chairman of the

Corporate Management Committee

FROM: Ed Bowen

OFFICER REFERENCE: EB TTSP policy

DATE: 15th October 2020

1. **Synopsis of report:**

From 28 September 2020, eligible individuals are entitled to a Test and Trace Support Payment or discretionary support payment of £500. This is to support people on low incomes who are unable to work from home if they are told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace and will lose income as a result.

This report contains the Standard Test and Trace Support Payment and the Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment policies. The NHS have suggested that Local Authorities should have a discretionary policy to allow for any potential local variations within the area. The main difference between the two schemes is that the discretionary scheme covers those people who are not in receipt of any state benefit but would suffer financial hardship.

2. **Reasons why this matter cannot wait for a Committee Decision.**

(Please state if agreement of Chairman and Vice-Chairman required within 24 hours, and why)

The scheme was announced by Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on 20th September 2020 and requires the schemes to be in place by 12th October 2020.

3. **Recommendation(s)**

To approve the two policies for the creation of a Runnymede Standard Test and Trace Support Payment, and a Discretionary Runnymede Test and Trace Support Payment policy.

4. **Context of report**

The scheme starts from 28 September 2020, and local authorities are expected they should have arrangements in place to administer payments by 12 October 2020. Therefore, it has not been possible to bring this before any other meetings.

5. Report and, where applicable, options considered

Standard Test and Trace Support Payment eligibility is dictated by the NHS as follows:

Eligibility for a £500 Test and Trace Support Payment is restricted to people who:

- have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, either because they have tested positive for coronavirus or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive;
- are employed or self-employed;
- are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result; and
- are currently receiving Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit.

Discretionary Test and Trace Support payments, again have the same basic eligibility criteria:

Local authorities can make a £500 discretionary payment to individuals who:

- have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, either because they have tested positive for coronavirus or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive;
- are employed or self-employed; and
- are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result.

In addition, the discretionary payment is for people:

- who are not currently receiving Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit; and
- who are on low incomes and will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work while they are self-isolating.

As Local authorities can introduce additional criteria to determine eligibility for discretionary payments in their area, and long as these operate in addition to, rather than instead of, the criteria set out above, the policy attached recommends the following criteria be adopted:

In addition, the discretionary payment is for people:

- who have less than £6,000 capital; and
- who have not had already had a payment from our Emergency Assistance fund or a council tax reduction made under Section 13A of local government finance act 1992; and
- it is cash limited, so first come first served.

6. Policy framework implications

Existing Discretionary schemes exist under Section 13A of the LGFA 1992, and Section 31 LGFA 2003 and due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, the UK Government is continuing to provide targeted schemes to assist communities and businesses. This is the latest iteration of those schemes.

On 24th September 2020, Corporate Management Committee approved the adoption of an Emergency Assistance policy and the creation of a Discretionary Council Tax Support policy instead of altering the Council Tax Support scheme from April 2021.

The use of discretionary grants is the governments favoured model for delivering support. This discretionary policy prevents overlapping entitlement to multiple sources of help and allows the resource to reach those who may have been previously excluded.

<p>7. Financial and Resource implications (where practicable)</p> <p>Resource implications of suggested course of action:- The standard scheme is demand funded. Initially £25m has been allocated and local authorities will be required to reconcile payments against their allocation, meaning some will have to pay back unspent funds while others may require a top-up.</p> <p>Runnymede will receive £31,000. Equating to support for 62 customers</p> <p>£10m has been allocated for administration costs. This is not subject to reconciliation although additional funding may be provided as necessary.</p> <p>Runnymede will receive £24,612.80.</p> <p>£15m has been allocated for the Discretionary scheme. It is not subject to reconciliation but neither will it be topped up, and so the recommendation is that the policy limit the amount equal to the funding received.</p> <p>Runnymede will receive £18,885.06. Equating to support for 37 customers.</p> <p>£550 plus VAT has been spent on expert advice from the IRRV in developing these policies and approximately £1500 will be required for Cyber Security and PSN security accreditation which is required under the Data sharing agreement with the NHS.</p> <p>No additional staffing are required. The decision and payment processes will all be carried out by existing experienced staff in the Benefits Team.</p>
<p>8. Legal implications</p> <p>On 28th September 2020, The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Self-Isolation) (England) Regulations 2020 came into force.</p> <p>The powers to make payments are part of the local welfare provision.</p>
<p>9. Equality implications</p> <p>The standard and discretionary schemes apply equally to all persons subject to the qualifying criteria.</p> <p>There is no evidence that any group or persons would be discriminated against by virtue of their protected characteristics.</p> <p>A EIA has been carried out and is included.</p>
<p>10. Other implications (Environmental/biodiversity/ sustainability must be addressed) N/A</p>
<p>11. Background papers Standard Test and Trace Support Payment policy Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment policy</p>

12. **Chief Officer(s) Decision**

Signature of authorised officer

I have been consulted and am in agreement with the above

Signature(s) and position(s) of
other relevant Chief Officer, Corporate Heads or authorised representatives

.....

NB: this must include the Assistant Chief Executive or his authorised representative where the decision involves expenditure, loss of income, or future implications for budget or financial forecast.

13. **Chief Executive's Decision**

Signature of Chief Executive

I have been consulted and am in agreement with the above

14. **Chairman and Vice-Chairman Comments**

I concur in the Chief Officer's decision

Signed _____

Date _____

Signed _____

Date _____

I have the following further comments:

Further information may be obtained from _____ on Ext. _____

The completed copy is to be returned by the Councillors to the Corporate Head of Law and Governance (John Gurmin) who will send a copy to the Chief Officer and report to the relevant Committee for information.

Runnymede Borough Council

Test and Trace Support Payments Scheme

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Definitions

The following definitions are used within this document:

'Applicant'; means the individual making an application for a payment under this scheme;

'Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS)'; means the web-based system used by Public Health England to contact and trace individuals who are required to self-isolate;

'CTAS Account ID'; means the unique number provided by Public Health England through the Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS);

'COVID-19'; means the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus;

'Housing Benefit'; means the benefit administered by local authorities under either the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 or the Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) 2006;

'income-related Employment and Support Allowance'; means the means-tested Employment and Support Allowance administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the Welfare Reform Act 2007;

'income-based Jobseeker's Allowance'; means the means-tested Jobseekers Allowance administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the Jobseekers Act 1995;

'Income Support'; means the means-tested Income Support administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the Income Support (General) Regulations 1987;

'NHS Test and Trace'; means the service provided to the National Health Service in England, established in May 2020 to track and help prevent the spread of COVID-19;

'Pension Credit'; means the means-tested Guarantee or Savings Credit administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the State Pension Credit Regulations 2002;

'Qualifying benefit'; means any of the following benefits: Housing Benefit, Income support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit;

'Self-isolation, Self-isolate'; means the legal requirement for an individual to self-isolate when told to by NHSTest and Trace or the NHS COVID-19 app and the legal duty to self-isolate under the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Self-Isolation) (England) Regulations 2020 which came into force on 28th September 2020;

'Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme' ('Standard Scheme'); means the Standard Scheme introduced by Government on 28th September and administered by Local Authorities;

'Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme' ('Discretionary Scheme'); means the Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme which has been agreed by the Council and which *may* be available for individuals who are unable to access the 'Standard Scheme'.

'Universal Credit' means the means-tested Universal Credit administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the Universal Credit Regulations 2013;

'Working Tax Credit'; means the means-tested benefit administered by Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs under the Working Tax Credit (Entitlement and Maximum Rate) Regulations 2002.

1. Background to Self-Isolation and Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme

- 1.1 From 28th September 2020, Government has changed the legislation so that certain people will have to self-isolate due to the current COVID-19 crisis.
- 1.2 A package of legislative measures has been introduced both to ensure that those who are required to self-isolate, do so and, that those on a low income, receive a payment to assist their finances and to encourage compliance with the legislation.
- 1.3 The Council, together with Government, recognises that self-isolation is one of the most powerful tools for controlling the transmission of the Covid-19 virus and this scheme document details who will be eligible and how the Test and Trace Support Payment will be made. It also outlines the approach the Council will take in determining whether a payment will be made or not.
- 1.4 This document, which covers the **Standard Scheme**, should be read alongside the Council's Test and Trace Discretionary Support scheme which *may* be available to individuals who do not qualify for a payment under this scheme.

2. An overview of the Test and Trace Payment scheme (the standard scheme).

- 2.1 From 28th September 2020, individuals will be entitled to a Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 from the Council if they meet the eligibility criteria listed below:
 - (a) Make an application to the Council in the prescribed form and provide all the evidence and verification required;
 - (b) Are a resident within the Council's area;
 - (c) Have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, either because they have tested positive for coronavirus or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive;
 - (d) Are employed or self-employed;
 - (e) Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result; and
 - (f) Are currently receiving any of the following 'qualifying benefit's':
 - Universal Credit;
 - Working Tax Credit;
 - income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
 - income-based Jobseeker's Allowance;
 - Income Support;
 - Housing Benefit; or

- Pension Credit.

- 2.2 This particular scheme is designed for those individuals (applicants) who:
- meet the standard conditions 2.1 (a) to (e) above;
 - are in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits listed in 2.1(f); and
 - comply with the self-isolation requirements laid down by Government;
- 2.3 Where individuals meet all the requirements but are **not in receipt of a qualifying benefit (2.1 (f))**, no payment can be made; however, they may be able to apply for a discretionary payment under the Council's Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme which is available on the Council's website
<https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/article/19701/Test-and-Trace-Support-Payment-Scheme>
- 2.4 Individuals will **not** be entitled to apply for both a payment under the Standard Scheme and under the Council's Discretionary Scheme.

3. Commencement of the scheme and scheme closure

Commencement

- 3.1 This scheme is available to all individuals within the Council's area who meet the eligibility criteria and who are told to self-isolate **on or after 28th September 2020**.
- 3.2 Individuals who are required to self-isolate **before 28th September 2020** will not be eligible for a payment.

Scheme closure

- 3.3 At the present time, Government has stated that this Standard Scheme will be available until 31st January 2021.

4. Applying for a Test and Trace Support Payment (the Standard Scheme).

- 4.1 Individuals who are resident within the Council's area will be entitled to make an application for a Test and Trace Support Payment under this scheme. In all cases, the 'applicant' will be required to answer **all** of the questions asked and provide the information required by the Council in the specified timescale.
- 4.2 In order to receive a payment, all applicants must meet the full eligibility criteria, details of which are shown within Section 7 of this scheme. The applicant will be required to self-verify certain criteria and also confirm that they will comply with the self-isolation requirements set by Government.

- 4.3 Where the applicant fails to meet the eligibility criteria, they will not receive a payment and will be informed of this by the Council, either at the point of application or as soon as practicable thereafter.
- 4.4 Where the applicant is successful, the Council will notify them accordingly and make payment in line with the timings and methods shown in Section 8.
- 4.5 Applications can **only** be accepted from individuals who are resident in the Council's area.
- 4.6 Applications will be accepted from a third party in respect of any individual who meets the eligibility criteria for a payment. However, the following should be noted:
- The person making the application will need to provide evidence of their identity and also the reason why they are applying on behalf of another person; and
 - That any payment **must** only be made by the Council to the person who is self-isolating. No payment will be made to a third party under any circumstance.
- 4.7 All applications shall be made online using the Council's dedicated webpage <https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/article/19701/Test-and-Trace-Support-Payment-Scheme>. There are no paper or other types of application processes; however, should individuals experience difficulties in making any application, they should contact the Council on 01932 838383.

5. Time limits for making an application for a payment

- 5.1 No application for a payment can be made before the 28th September 2020 or for any individual who has been required to self-isolate before 28th September 2020.
- 5.2 Eligible individuals can apply for a Test and Trace Support Payment at any time up to 14 days after their period of self-isolation ended. The Council will not accept any applications after this point.
- 5.3 Where an individual has been required to self-isolate on or after 28th September but before the Council's scheme opened on 16th October 2020, an application for a backdated payment must be made by 30th October 2020 (14 days after commencement of scheme).

6. Multiple claims within the household and from the same applicant

- 6.1 Individuals in the same household can each make an application to receive a Test and Trace Support Payment, if they each meet the eligibility criteria in full.
- 6.2 An individual may make an application more than once but only:
- If the individual is told to self-isolate multiple times; **and**
 - they meet the eligibility criteria for each individual application; **and**
 - the periods of self-isolation do not overlap.

6.3 The Council is mindful that this can be confusing for applicants and it will be essential, where multiple applications are made by an individual, to ensure correct eligibility. Therefore, a new application will need to be made for each distinct period of self-isolation.

7. The eligibility criteria and evidence required for the Test and Trace Support Payment (the Standard Scheme).

7.1 For payment to be made under this scheme, all of the criteria **must** be met. As with the application form itself, all evidence will need to be provided electronically. The Council provides facilities for all applicants to upload documents, evidence and photographs.

7.2 Where documentation is only held in 'hard copy' or paper form, the Council will accept digital images or photographs provided they show all the relevant information.

7.3 The Council will keep all information supplied by applicants, secure and in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

An individual must make a valid application to the Council in the prescribed form and provide the all evidence and verification required

7.4 As mentioned in Section 4, a valid application must be made via the Council's website:

<https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/article/19701/Test-and-Trace-Support-Payment-Scheme>. All applicants will be required to provide details sufficient to identify themselves, their address and to allow the Council to contact them including:

- Full name;
- Address;
- National Insurance Number;
- Telephone number; and
- Email address.

7.5 In addition to the above, all applicants will be required to submit a copy of their current bank statement(s) in order to:

- Verify that their income has reduced due to having to self-isolate (see later); and
- Provide details of the bank account number and sort code of the account into which a payment would be made.

That they are a resident within the Council's area

- 7.6 The applicant will be required to verify that they have their sole or main residence in the Council's area. The Council will check other records held (and make other enquiries where appropriate) to determine this.
- 7.7 Where necessary, the Council will ask the applicant to provide additional evidence of residence.

Have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, either because they have tested positive for coronavirus or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive

- 7.8 A key requirement of the scheme is that the applicant has been instructed by the NHS Test and Trace to stay at home and self-isolate either because:
- they have tested positive for COVID-19 (coronavirus); or
 - have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive.
- 7.9 All applicants will be required to provide the 8-digit unique ID number which has been provided to them by NHS Test and Trace.
- 7.10 For information, the NHS Test and Trace service uses the Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS) to record information about people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and their contacts. The CTAS Account ID is an 8-digit identifier unique to each case (e.g. 3bla3015c). Most individuals who test positive for COVID-19 or are a contact of someone who has had a positive test, will receive a digital invitation from the CTAS system to undertake the contact tracing journey.
- 7.11 All cases and contacts who have completed the contact tracing journey (including those who were ineligible for the digital invitation such as children or individuals with a landline number only) will receive a citizen advice message upon completion of the NHS Test and Trace questionnaire. The citizen message (sent either via a text message/email or postal service for people with no access to mobile phone or email) contains the 8-character Account ID.
- 7.12 The Council will check that the applicant has a valid Account ID produced by the Contact Tracing and Advice Service. Only this number will allow an application to be processed.
- 7.13 The Council will not make payment to anyone who does not have a valid notification (Account ID) from NHS Test and Trace. It should be noted that there is a legal duty to self-isolate which only applies to people who have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

7.14 The Council will not accept a notification from the NHS Isolation Note service. Where the applicant has provided this only, they will be given an opportunity to provide a valid NHS Test and Trace notification if they have one.

7.15 This scheme does not cover people who are self-isolating after returning to the UK from abroad, unless they have tested positive for COVID-19 (coronavirus) or have been instructed to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

All applicants must be currently employed or self-employed

7.16 Only those applicants who are currently employed or currently self-employed will be entitled to claim a Test and Trace Support Payment. For the sake of clarity, this scheme requires all applicants to provide sufficient evidence of their current employment or self-employment status. In the case of employed applicants, full details of their employer must be given on the application form including contact numbers.

7.17 The Council will also require applicants to provide proof such as listed below:

Employed

- Current wages or salary slips;
- Employment contract; or
- Letter from the employer confirming current employment.

Self Employed

- Self-assessment form;
- Details of HMRC registration as self-employed;
- Current accounts; or
- Current accounts and trading statements

7.18 The above list is not exhaustive.

7.19 As this is an essential requirement in order for a Test and Trace Support Payment to be made, the applicant must satisfy the Council that they meet this criterion.

Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result

7.20 All applicants will have to certify on the application form that they are:

- Unable to work from home; and
- Will lose income as a result.

7.21 The Council will need to be satisfied that any applicants meet these conditions in full.

Unable to work from home

- 7.22 The Council will require applicants to give details about the nature of their work and whether they can undertake this work from home.
- 7.23 Only those applicants that cannot work from home whilst self-isolating will meet the criteria and therefore, each applicant will not only be required to verify the fact, but also provide details of the reasons why this is the case, together with details of the type of work that they would normally undertake.
- 7.24 This criterion applies whether an applicant is either employed or self-employed and Government has provided a number of examples as follows:
- An applicant with a single job whose employer continued to pay them a full wage while they self-isolated would not meet the criteria;
 - An applicant whose employer paid them a reduced wage while they self-isolated would meet the criteria (as they have lost income); and
 - An applicant with two part-time jobs who continued to be paid a full wage by one employer, but whose other employer did not pay them while self-isolating, would be eligible.

Are currently receiving any of the qualifying benefits.

- 7.25 The final criterion is that the applicant **must be in receipt** of one of the following qualifying benefits:
- Universal Credit;
 - Working Tax Credit;
 - income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
 - income-based Jobseeker's Allowance;
 - Income Support;
 - Housing Benefit; or
 - Pension Credit.
- 7.26 Applicants must be **actually** in receipt of the listed benefits. Each applicant will be required to verify that they are in receipt of one of the benefits and provide evidence of that to the Council. Evidence will need to be provided electronically but typically could be copies of bank statements showing the payments, confirmation of benefit entitlement or award /payment summaries (as in the case of Universal Credit). The Council will accept 'screenshots' of any online benefit account.
- 7.27 Where an applicant has yet to apply for a qualifying benefit; is awaiting a decision on a benefit; is currently appealing a negative decision; or is unable to apply for a qualifying benefit, they will not be entitled to a payment under the Standard Scheme and will be directed to apply for a payment under the Council's Test and Trace Discretionary Payment Scheme.

- 7.28 The Council will verify the current receipt of a qualifying benefit with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs (HMRC) as appropriate.

8. How much grant will be paid, methods of payment and timings.

- 8.1 Where an applicant meets all of the eligibility criteria for a discretionary payment, a single payment of £500 shall be paid for each period of self-isolation. Payments will be made direct to the applicant's bank account within 3 working days, starting with the date the application is verified or if that is not reasonably practicable, as soon as possible thereafter.
- 8.2 Where further information or evidence is required from the applicant, the Council will look to make payment within 3 working days starting with the date when all of the required information is received or if that is not reasonably practicable, as soon as possible thereafter.
- 8.3 Full details of the applicant's bank account must be supplied on the application form and this will be cross checked with the copies of the bank statements provided as part of the verification process.
- 8.4 As required by Government, payments can only be made to the applicant's bank account. No payments can be made to third parties whatsoever.
- 8.5 The Council is aware that in some cases, applicants may be overdrawn and may not be able to gain access to the payment. In these cases, the applicant may apply for protection. This protection is called a 'first right of appropriation of funds order'. More details of this can be obtained from the Councils website: <https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/article/19701/Test-and-Trace-Support-Payment-Scheme> or from Citizens Advice.

9. Notification of Decisions

- 9.1 Applications will be considered by officers of the Council and all decisions made by the Council shall be notified to the applicant either in writing or by email.

10. Implications for other benefits and reductions

- 10.1 The Council has been advised by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) that the Test and Trace Support Payment will be disregarded for the purposes of all means-tested benefits.
- 10.2 The Council has decided that any payment made under this scheme shall not affect entitlement to Council Tax Reduction.

11. Review of Decisions

11.1 Whilst there is no statutory appeal process, the Council will operate an internal review process and will accept an applicant's request for an appeal of its decision by a senior officer.

11.2 All such requests must be made in writing to the Council, within 3 days of the Council's decision, and should state the reasons why the applicant is aggrieved with the decision of the Council. New information may be submitted at this stage to support the applicant's appeal. The application will be reconsidered as soon as practicable, and the applicant informed in writing or by email of the decision.

12. Complaints

12.1 The Council's 'Complaints Procedure' (available on the Council's website) will be applied in the event of any complaint received about this scheme.

13. The Discretionary Test and Trace Payment Scheme and its relationship with the Standard Scheme

Standard Scheme

13.1 This 'Standard' Scheme has been determined by criteria set down by Government and is primarily aimed at all applicants who are working or self-employed; are unable to work from home and will therefore have a reduction in income and are in receipt of certain qualifying benefits (Universal Credit; Working Tax Credit; Income-related Employment and Support Allowance; income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; Income Support; Housing Benefit; or Pension Credit).

13.2 The receipt of one of those benefits is essential in order for a payment to be made.

Discretionary Scheme

13.3 The Council's Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme is for any individual who meets all the required criteria **except** that they are not currently in receipt of a qualifying benefit. The reason for this could be, for example, that a claim for a benefit has not yet been made or that the individual, whilst normally resident in the UK, is unable to gain access to public funds.

13.4 Details of the Council's Test and Trace Discretionary Payment Scheme can be found at <https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/article/19701/Test-and-Trace-Support-Payment-Scheme>

Claiming from the schemes

13.5 Individuals who are entitled to a payment from the Standard Scheme are unable to make a claim from the Council's discretionary scheme.

- 13.6 However, an applicant who is refused a 'Standard Scheme' payment on the basis that they meet all the criteria **except** that they are not in receipt of a qualifying benefit, will be directed to make an application for a discretionary payment.

14. Funding of the scheme

- 14.1 Government has confirmed that it will reimburse the Council for all payments correctly made under this scheme.

15. Taxation and provision of information to HMRC

- 15.1 The Council has been informed by Government that all payments under this scheme are taxable. However, the payments will not be subject to National Insurance contributions.
- 15.2 The Council does not accept any responsibility in relation to an applicant's tax liabilities and all applicants should make their own enquiries to establish any tax position.
- 15.3 All applicants should note that the Council is required to inform Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) of all payments made to individuals.

16. Managing the risk of fraud

- 16.1 Neither the Council, nor Government will accept deliberate manipulation of the scheme and fraud. Any applicant caught falsifying information to gain payments will face prosecution and any payment issued will be recovered from them and this may also include other recovery costs.
- 16.2 Applicants should note that, where a Test and Trace Support Payment is paid by the Council, details of each individual applicant will be passed to Government. Applicants should also note that the Council utilises a number of databases and Government systems to verify information in connection with any applications submitted.

17. Recovery of amounts incorrectly paid

- 17.1 If it is established that any Test and Trace Support Payment has been made incorrectly due to incorrect information provided to the Council by an applicant or their representative(s), the Council will look to recover the amount in full.

18. The Council's duties in relation to self-isolation

- 18.1 The duty to self-isolate is an important one. Ensuring infected individuals and their close contacts isolate is one of our most powerful tools for controlling transmission.
- 18.2 We know that someone with the virus can remain infectious to other people for up to 10 days after developing symptoms. It can take up to 14 days for individuals to develop coronavirus symptoms after they catch the virus, and in this time, they can unknowingly pass it on to others, even if they don't have symptoms.
- 18.3 Self-isolating helps prevent family, friends and the community from contracting coronavirus, as well as helping to protect the health and care system.
- 18.4 The changes announced by Government on 20th September 2020 and brought into force on 28th September 2020 (as well as providing for the Test and Trace Support payments scheme):
- introduce a new legal duty on individuals to self-isolate if someone tests positive or is identified as a contact by NHS Test and Trace;
 - introduce penalties for those breaking the rules, including fines of at least £1,000 and up to a maximum of £10,000 for repeated or very serious offences; and
 - place a new legal obligation on employers that they must not knowingly enable or encourage their employees to break the law on self-isolation.
- 18.5 As part of this, the Council has a duty If it becomes aware, either through post-payment verification checks or through other means, that someone has not self-isolated, to refer the case to the police.
- 18.6 The Council has been informed by Government that, in order to ensure compliance with the new legislation NHS Test and Trace call handlers will be increasing contact with those self-isolating. Police resources will be used to check compliance in highest incidence areas and in high-risk groups, based on local intelligence including acting on instances where third parties have identified others who have tested positive, but are not self-isolating.
- 18.7 The Council will continue to focus on the principle of encouraging, educating and supporting self-compliance.

19. Delegated Powers

- 19.1 The Council has implemented this scheme in line with Government requirements and guidance.
- 19.2 Officers of the Council will administer the scheme and the Section 151 Officer is authorised to make technical scheme amendments to ensure it continues to meet the criteria set by the Council and, in line with Central Government guidance.

20. Data Protection and use of data

- 20.1** All information and data provided by businesses shall be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Data Protection policy and Privacy Notices which are available on the Council's website.

Runnymede Borough Council

Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme

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Definitions

The following definitions are used within this document:

'Additional Eligibility Criteria'; means the additional criteria decided by the Council that need to be met, in order to receive a payment under the Council's Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme. These will be in addition to the standard criteria and are allowable under Government guidance;

'Applicant'; means the individual making an application for a payment under this scheme;

'Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS)'; means the web-based system used by Public Health England to contact and trace individuals who are required to self-isolate;

'CTAS Account ID'; means the unique number provided by Public Health England through the Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS);

'COVID-19'; means the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus;

'face financial hardship'; a key criterion of the Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme is that all applicants will, if not for the payment, face financial hardship solely due to their need to self-isolate;

'Housing Benefit'; means the benefit administered by local authorities under either the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 or the Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) 2006;

'income-related Employment and Support Allowance'; means the means-tested Employment and Support Allowance administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the Welfare Reform Act 2007;

'income-based Jobseeker's Allowance'; means the means-tested Jobseekers Allowance administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the Jobseekers Act 1995;

Income Support'; means the means-tested Income Support administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the Income Support (General) Regulations 1987;

'NHS Test and Trace'; means the service provided to the National Health Service in England, established in May 2020 to track and help prevent the spread of COVID-19;

'Pension Credit'; means the means-tested Guarantee or Savings Credit administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the State Pension Credit Regulations 2002;

'Qualifying benefit'; means any of the following benefits: Housing Benefit, Income support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit;

'Self-isolation, Self-isolate'; means the legal requirement for an individual to self-isolate when told to by NHS Test and Trace or the NHS COVID-19 app and the legal duty to self-isolate under the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Self-Isolation) (England) Regulations 2020 which came into force on 28th September 2020;

'Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme' ('Standard Scheme'); means the Standard Scheme introduced by Government on 28th September and administered by Local Authorities;

'Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme' ('Discretionary Scheme'); means the Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme which has been agreed by the Council and which *may* be available for individuals who are unable to access the 'Standard Scheme'.

'Universal Credit' means the means-tested Universal Credit administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the Universal Credit Regulations 2013;

'Working Tax Credit'; means the means-tested benefit administered by Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs under the Working Tax Credit (Entitlement and Maximum Rate) Regulations 2002.

1. Background to Self-Isolation and the Test and Trace Payments

- 1.1 From 28th September 2020, Government has changed the legislation so that certain people will have to self-isolate due to the current COVID-19 crisis.
- 1.2 A package of legislative measures has been introduced to ensure that those who are required to self-isolate, do so and that those on a low income receive a payment to assist their finances and to encourage compliance with the legislation.
- 1.3 The Council, together with Government, recognises that self-isolation is one of the most powerful tools for controlling the transmission of the Covid-19 virus. The Government has set down the requirements for two payment schemes to be set up by the Council as follows:
- (a) The **Test and Trace Support Payments Scheme (the Standard Scheme)** for those eligible applicants who are in receipt of Housing Benefit, Pension Credit, Income support, income-based jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit (the qualifying benefits); and
 - (b) The **Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme (the Discretionary Scheme)** for those applicants who are **not** in receipt of any of the qualifying benefits but who are on a low income and will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work while they are self-isolating.
- 1.4 This document details who will be eligible for a payment under the **Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme**.
- 1.5 Any applicant who is in receipt of a qualifying benefit, should apply for a payment under the standard scheme details of which are available at <https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/article/19701/Test-and-Trace-Support-Payment-Scheme>

2. An overview of the Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme (the Discretionary Scheme).

- 2.1 From 28th September 2020, individuals will be entitled to a payment of £500 from the Council's Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme if they meet the eligibility criteria listed below:
- (a) Make an application to the Council in the prescribed form and provide all the evidence and verification required;
 - (b) Are a resident within the Council's area;

- (c) Have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, either because they have tested positive for coronavirus or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive;
- (d) Are employed or self-employed;
- (e) Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result;
- (f) Are **NOT** currently receiving any of the following benefits:
 - Universal Credit;
 - Working Tax Credit;
 - income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
 - income-based Jobseeker's Allowance;
 - Income Support;
 - Housing Benefit; or
 - Pension Credit; **and**
- (g) Meet the Council's additional criteria for a discretionary payment.

- 2.2 This particular scheme is designed for those individuals (applicants) who:
- meet the standard conditions 2.1 (a) to (g) above;
 - are **not** receiving a benefit listed in 2.1(f); and
 - comply with the self-isolation requirements laid down by Government;

- 2.3 Where individuals meet all the requirements but **are in receipt of a benefit stated in 2.1 (f)**, no payment can be made under the Discretionary Scheme; however, they may be able to apply for payment under the Standard Scheme which is available on the Council's website
<https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/article/19701/Test-and-Trace-Support-Payment-Scheme>

- 2.4 Individuals will **NOT** be entitled to apply for both a payment under the Standard Scheme and under the Council's Discretionary Scheme.

3. Commencement of the scheme and scheme closure

Commencement

- 3.1 This scheme is available to all individuals within the Council's area who meet the eligibility criteria for a discretionary payment and who are told to self-isolate **on or after 28th September 2020**.
- 3.2 Individuals who are required to self-isolate **before 28th September 2020** will not be eligible for a payment.

Scheme closure

- 3.3 At the present time, Government has stated that this Discretionary Scheme (and the Standard Scheme) will be available until 31st January 2021.

4. Applying for a Test and Trace Discretionary Payment (the Discretionary Scheme).

- 4.1 Individuals who are resident within the Council's area *may* make an application for a Test and Trace Discretionary Payment under this scheme. In all cases, the 'applicant' will be required to answer **all** of the questions asked and provide the information required by the Council in the specified timescale.
- 4.2 In order to receive a payment, all applicants must meet the full eligibility criteria, details of which are shown within Section 7 of this scheme. The applicant will be required to self-verify certain criteria and also confirm that they will comply with the self-isolation requirements set by Government.
- 4.3 Where the applicant fails to meet the eligibility criteria, they will not receive a payment and will be informed of this by the Council, either at the point of application or as soon as practicable thereafter.
- 4.4 Where the applicant is successful, the Council will notify them accordingly and make payment in line with the timings and methods shown in Section 8.
- 4.5 Applications can **only** be accepted from individuals who are resident in the Council's area.
- 4.6 Applications will be accepted from a third party in respect of any individual who meets all the eligibility criteria for a payment. However, the following should be noted:
- The person making the application will need to provide evidence of their identity and also the reason why they are applying on behalf of another person; and
 - That any payment **must** only be made by the Council to the person who is self-isolating. No payment will be made to a third party under any circumstance.
- 4.7 All applications shall be made online using the Council's dedicated webpage <https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/article/19701/Test-and-Trace-Support-Payment-Scheme>. There are no paper or other types of application processes; however, should individuals experience difficulties in making any application, they should contact the Council on 01932 838383.

5. Time limits for making an application for a payment

- 5.1 No application for a discretionary payment can be made before the 28th September 2020 or for any individual who has been required to self-isolate before 28th September 2020.

5.2 Eligible individuals can apply for a Test and Trace Discretionary Payment at any time up to 14 days after their period of self-isolation ended. The Council will **not** accept any applications after this point.

5.3 Where an individual has been required to self-isolate on or after 28th September but before the Council's scheme opened on 16th October 2020, an application for a backdated payment must be made by 30th October 2020 (14 days after commencement of scheme).

6. Multiple claims within the household and from the same applicant

6.1 Individuals in the same household can each make an application to receive a Test and Trace Discretionary Payment, if they each meet all the eligibility criteria in full.

6.2 An individual may make an application more than once but only:

- If the individual is told to self-isolate multiple times; **and**
- they meet the eligibility criteria for each individual application; **and**
- the periods of self-isolation do not overlap.

6.3 The Council is mindful that this can be confusing for applicants and it will be essential, where multiple applications are made by an individual, to ensure correct eligibility. Therefore, a new application will need to be made for each distinct period of self-isolation.

7. The eligibility criteria and evidence required for a Test and Trace Discretionary Payment.

7.1 For payment to be made under this Discretionary Scheme, all of the criteria **must** be met. As with the application form itself, all evidence will need to be provided electronically. The Council provides facilities for all applicants to upload documents, evidence and photographs.

7.2 Where documentation is only held in 'hard copy' or paper form, the Council will accept digital images or photographs provided they show all the relevant information.

7.3 The Council will keep all information supplied by applicants, secure and in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

An individual must make a valid application to the Council in the prescribed form and provide all the evidence and verification required

7.4 As mentioned in Section 4, a valid application must be made via the Council's website:

<https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/article/19701/Test-and-Trace-Support-Payment-Scheme>. All applicants will be required to provide details sufficient to identify themselves, their address and to allow the Council to contact them including:

- Full name;
- Address;
- National Insurance Number;
- Telephone number; and
- Email address.

- 7.5 In addition to the above, all applicants will be required to submit a copy of their current bank statement(s) in order to:
- Verify that their income has reduced due to having to self-isolate (see later); and
 - Provide details of the bank account number and sort code of the account into which a payment would be made.

That they are a resident within the Council's area

- 7.6 The applicant will be required to verify that they have their sole or main residence in the Council's area. The Council will check other records held (and make other enquiries where appropriate) to determine this.
- 7.7 Where necessary, the Council will ask the applicant to provide additional evidence of residence.

Have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, either because they have tested positive for coronavirus or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive

- 7.8 A key requirement of the scheme is that the applicant has been instructed by the NHS Test and Trace to stay at home and self-isolate either because:
- they have tested positive for COVID-19 (coronavirus); or
 - have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive.
- 7.9 All applicants will be required to provide the 8-digit unique ID number which has been provided to them by NHS Test and Trace.
- 7.10 For information, the NHS Test and Trace service uses the Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS) to record information about people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and their contacts. The CTAS Account ID is an 8-character identifier unique to each case (e.g. 3b1a3015c). Most individuals who test positive for COVID-19 or are a contact of someone who has had a positive test, will receive a digital invitation from the CTAS system to undertake the contact tracing journey.

- 7.11 All cases and contacts who have completed the contact tracing journey (including those who were ineligible for the digital invitation such as children or individuals with a landline number only) will receive a citizen advice message upon completion of the NHS Test and Trace questionnaire. The citizen message (sent either via a text message/email or postal service for people with no access to mobile phone or email) contains the 8-character Account ID.
- 7.12 The Council will check that the applicant has a valid Account ID produced by the Contact Tracing and Advice Service. Only this number will allow an application to be processed.
- 7.13 The Council will not make payment to anyone who does not have a valid notification (Account ID) from NHS Test and Trace. It should be noted that there is a legal duty to self-isolate which only applies to people who have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.
- 7.14 The Council will not accept a notification from the NHS Isolation Note service. Where the applicant has provided this only, they will be given an opportunity to provide a valid NHS Test and Trace notification if they have one.
- 7.15 This scheme does not cover people who are self-isolating after returning to the UK from abroad, unless they have tested positive for COVID-19 (coronavirus) or have been instructed to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

All applicants must be currently employed or self-employed

- 7.16 Only those applicants who are currently employed or currently self-employed will be entitled to claim a Test and Trace Support Payment. For the sake of clarity, this scheme requires all applicants to provide sufficient evidence of their current employment or self-employment status. In the case of employed applicants, full details of their employer must be given on the application form including contact numbers.
- 7.17 The Council will also require applicants to provide proof such as listed below:

Employed

- Current wages or salary slips;
- Employment contract; or
- Letter from the employer confirming current employment.

Self Employed

- Self-assessment form;
- Details of HMRC registration as self-employed;
- Current accounts; or
- Current accounts and trading statements

7.18 The above list is not exhaustive.

7.19 As this is an essential requirement in order for a Test and Trace Discretionary Payment to be made, the applicant must satisfy the Council that they meet this criterion.

Are NOT currently receiving any of the following benefits.

7.20 To receive a discretionary payment the applicant **must not be in receipt** of one of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit;
- Working Tax Credit;
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance;
- Income Support;
- Housing Benefit; or
- Pension Credit.

7.21 Where applicants are in receipt of any of the above benefits, then payments can ONLY be made through the Standard Scheme. The Council has designed the application process so that the same form can be used to claim either payment (Standard Scheme or Discretionary Scheme) and applicants who fail to qualify for a Standard Scheme payment because they are in receipt of one of those benefits, will automatically be directed to the Discretionary Scheme.

7.22 Where an applicant has yet to apply for one of the benefits listed; is awaiting a decision on a benefit; is currently appealing a negative decision; or is unable to apply for a qualifying benefit, they *may* make an application under this Discretionary Scheme.

Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result and will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work while they are self-isolating

7.23 All applicants will have to certify on the application form that they are:

- Unable to work from home;
- Will lose income as a result; **and**
- Will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work while they are self-isolating

7.24 The Council will need to be satisfied that any applicants meet these conditions in full.

7.25 The Council will require applicants to give details about the nature of their work and whether they can undertake this work from home.

- 7.26 Only those applicants that cannot work from home whilst self-isolating will meet the criteria and therefore, each applicant will not only be required to verify the fact, but also provide details of the reasons why this is the case, together with details of the type of work that they would normally undertake.
- 7.27 The Council will also require all applicants making an application for a discretionary payment to provide evidence of financial hardship. All applicants will be required to demonstrate that the financial hardship is **solely** due to having to self-isolate.

Meet the Council's additional criteria for discretionary payments

- 7.28 Given that the funding for the Discretionary Scheme is limited (see Section 14), Government has stated that it will be up to each Council to determine additional criteria that have to be met if a payment is to be made.
- 7.29 The Council has decided to introduce the following additional conditions in order for any applicant to receive a discretionary award:
- (a) The applicant must have no more than £6,000 capital/ savings (capital shall be calculated in line with the rules for Housing Benefit); and
 - (b) The applicant must not have already had a payment from the Council's Emergency Assistance fund or a S.13A award (Reduction in liability for Council Tax).
- 7.30 As the scheme is strictly cash limited, all applications will be dealt with on a 'first come, first serve' basis.

8. How much discretionary payment will be paid, methods of payment and timings.

- 8.1 Where an applicant meets all of the eligibility criteria for a discretionary payment, a single payment of £500 shall be paid for each period of self-isolation. Payments will be made direct to the applicant's bank account within 3 working days, starting with the date the application is verified or if that is not reasonably practicable, as soon as possible thereafter.
- 8.2 Where further information or evidence is required from the applicant, the Council will look to make payment within 3 working days starting with the date when all of the required information is received or if that is not reasonably practicable, as soon as possible thereafter.
- 8.3 Full details of the applicant's bank account must be supplied on the application form and this will be cross checked with the copies of the bank statements provided as part of the verification process.
- 8.4 As required by Government, payments can only be made to the applicant's bank account. No payments can be made to third parties whatsoever.

- 8.5 The Council is aware that in some cases, applicants may be overdrawn and may not be able to gain access to the payment. In these cases, the applicant may apply for protection. This protection is called a 'first right of appropriation of funds order'. More details of this can be obtained from the Councils website: <https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/article/19701/Test-and-Trace-Support-Payment-Scheme> or from Citizens Advice.

9. Notification of Decisions

- 9.1 Applications for discretionary payments will be considered by officers of the Council and all decisions made by the Council shall be notified to the applicant either in writing or by email.

10. Implications for other benefits and reductions

- 10.1 The Council has been advised by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) that all Test and Trace Support Payments (of any type) will be disregarded for the purposes of all means-tested benefits.
- 10.2 The Council has decided that any payment made under this scheme shall not affect entitlement to Council Tax Reduction.

11. Review of Decisions

- 11.1 Whilst there is no statutory appeal process, the Council will operate an internal review process and will accept an applicant's request for an appeal of its decision by a senior officer.
- 11.2 All such requests must be made in writing to the Council, within 3 days of the Council's decision, and should state the reasons why the applicant is aggrieved with the decision of the Council. New information may be submitted at this stage to support the applicant's appeal. The application will be reconsidered as soon as practicable, and the applicant informed in writing or by email of the decision.

12. Complaints

- 12.1 The Council's 'Complaints Procedure' (available on the Councils website) will be applied in the event of any complaint received about this scheme.

13. The Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme and its relationship with the Standard Scheme

Standard Scheme

- 13.1 This 'Standard Scheme' has been determined by criteria set down by Government and is primarily aimed at all applicants who are working or self-employed; are unable to work from home and will therefore have a reduction in income and are in receipt of certain qualifying benefits (Universal Credit; Working Tax Credit; Income-related Employment and Support Allowance; income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; Income Support; Housing Benefit; or Pension Credit).
- 13.2 The receipt of one of those benefits is essential in order for a payment to be made.
- 13.3 Details of the Standard Scheme can be found at <https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/article/19701/Test-and-Trace-Support-Payment-Scheme>

Discretionary Scheme

- 13.4 The Council's Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme is for any individual who meets all the required criteria (including the Council's additional criteria) **except** that they are not currently in receipt of a qualifying benefit and they would face financial hardship due to self-isolation. The reason for this could be, for example, that a claim for a benefit has not yet been made or that the individual, whilst normally resident in the UK, is unable to gain access to public funds.

Claiming from the schemes

- 13.5 Individuals who are entitled to a payment from the Standard Scheme are unable to make a claim from the Council's Discretionary Scheme.
- 13.6 However, an applicant who is refused a 'Standard Scheme' payment on the basis that they meet all the criteria **except** that they are not in receipt of a qualifying benefit, will be directed to make an application for a discretionary payment. It should be noted that in all cases, where an individual applies for a discretionary payment, they will have to satisfy not only the basic criteria laid down by Government but also the additional criteria set by the Council.

14. Funding of the Discretionary Scheme

- 14.1 The Council will receive a fixed amount of funding from Government which will be for the four months that the Discretionary Scheme is intended to last. Government has confirmed that no additional monies will be given to the Council.

- 14.2 In view of this, and to ensure that discretionary payments are available throughout the period to 31st January 2021, the Council reserves the right to change the Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme at any time to ensure funds go to those who face the most financial hardship.

15. Taxation and provision of information to HMRC

- 15.1 The Council has been informed by Government that all payments under this scheme are taxable. However, the payments will not be subject to National Insurance contributions.
- 15.2 The Council does not accept any responsibility in relation to an applicant's tax liabilities and all applicants should make their own enquiries to establish any tax position.
- 15.3 All applicants should note that the Council is required to inform Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) of all payments made to individuals.

16. Managing the risk of fraud

- 16.1 Neither the Council, nor Government will accept deliberate manipulation of the scheme and fraud. Any applicant caught falsifying information to gain payments will face prosecution and any payment issued will be recovered from them and this may also include other recovery costs.
- 16.2 Applicants should note that, where a Test and Trace Discretionary Payment is paid by the Council, details of each individual applicant will be passed to Government. Applicants should also note that the Council utilises a number of databases and Government systems to verify information in connection with any application submitted.

17. Recovery of amounts incorrectly paid

- 17.1 If it is established that any Test and Trace Discretionary Support Payment has been made incorrectly due to misrepresentation or incorrect information provided to the Council by an applicant or their representative(s), the Council will look to recover the amount in full.

18. The Council's duties in relation to self-isolation

- 18.1 The duty to self-isolate is an important one. Ensuring infected individuals and their close contacts isolate is one of our most powerful tools for controlling transmission.
- 18.2 We know that someone with the virus can remain infectious to other people for up to 10 days after developing symptoms. It can take up to 14 days for individuals to develop

coronavirus symptoms after they catch the virus, and in this time, they can unknowingly pass it on to others, even if they don't have symptoms.

- 18.3 Self-isolating helps prevent family, friends and the community from contracting coronavirus, as well as helping to protect the health and care system.
- 18.4 The changes announced by Government on 20th September 2020 and brought into force on 28th September 2020 (as well as providing for the Test and Trace Support Payments Schemes):
- introduce a new legal duty on individuals to self-isolate if someone tests positive or is identified as a contact by NHS Test and Trace;
 - introduce penalties for those breaking the rules, including fines of at least £1,000 and up to a maximum of £10,000 for repeated or very serious offences; and
 - place a new legal obligation on employers that they must not knowingly enable or encourage their employees to break the law on self-isolation.
- 18.5 As part of this, the Council has a duty If it becomes aware, either through post-payment verification checks or through other means, that someone has not self-isolated, to refer the case to the police.
- 18.6 The Council has been informed by Government that, in order to ensure compliance with the new legislation NHS Test and Trace call handlers will be increasing contact with those self-isolating. Police resources will be used to check compliance in highest incidence areas and in high-risk groups, based on local intelligence including acting on instances where third parties have identified others who have tested positive, but are not self-isolating.
- 18.7 The Council will continue to focus on the principle of encouraging, educating and supporting self-compliance.

19. Delegated Powers

- 19.1 The Council has implemented this Discretionary Scheme in line with Government requirements and guidance.
- 19.2 Officers of the Council will administer the scheme and the Section 151 Officer is authorised to make technical scheme amendments to ensure it continues to meet the criteria set by the Council and, in line with Central Government guidance.

20. Data Protection and use of data

- 20.1 All information and data provided by applicants shall be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Data Protection policy and Privacy Notices which are available on the Council's website.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

SCOPING

1. Which of the protected characteristics is the policy/function/activity relevant to and why? It may relate to one or all of the following characteristics: race, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, religion/belief, sexual orientation, marriage/civil partnership and age. Diversity within these strands should be considered.

The proposed Standard (STTS) and Discretionary Test and Trace Self Isolation Support Payment (DTTS) scheme are relevant to all of the nine protected equality characteristics. This is on the basis that DTTS is available to all residents of the borough who may be infected or come into contact with someone who has the Coronavirus (CV-19).

With the above in mind, the impact of the proposed changes on each individual equality strand has been considered as part of this EIA. Diversity within the strands has also been borne in mind.

2. What aspects of the policy/function/activity are particularly relevant to equality? Other aspects should not necessarily be excluded from the assessment, but attention should be focused on the most important areas.

The main aspect of the proposed DTTS scheme, for residents in work is that the fund is restricted and so is on a first come first served basis.

The scheme runs from 28th October 2020 to 31st January 2021, and those who might be affected later are less likely to be paid from the discretionary scheme, regardless of their circumstances.

Should it be appropriate, an infected person may be entitled to the standard scheme if they are entitled to a qualifying benefit. However, some will not be entitled.

The options for alternative support is under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

3. What consultation and involvement has been undertaken in relation to this (or a similar) policy/function/activity? Data may be available from recent consultation activities on a related policy or EIA. If none has been carried out, what consultation will be needed?

The announcement of a scheme was made by Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on 20th September 2020 and required the schemes to be in place by 12th October 2020.

Therefore, RBC been unable to carry out any consultation.

4. Set out here any other available evidence that will help you assess the impact of this policy/function/activity on equality. This could include service-user data, analysis of complaints/enquiry records, existing user feedback, and information about the local community. You may find it useful to compare your service-user statistics against the Runnymede population profile.

As this is a new scheme there is no data other than the figures supplied by NHS on the infection rate and lessons from their pilot.

NHS modelling estimates 800 people per day across England could be eligible for some STTS, though modelling for take-up of DTTS has not been conducted.

NHS advice for students is that in practice, most students will not be eligible for the Test and Trace Support Payment; however, for the discretionary payment, the initial criteria is not as restrictive, and may increase the number of students who are eligible for the £500 payment via this route.

Universities have had over £250m made available to them for the 2020-2021 academic year, in addition to their existing hardship funds, to support students through the coronavirus pandemic. Students will not be excluded from the Discretionary scheme but will need to demonstrate financial hardship to qualify.

5. Are there any gaps in the evidence? If so, set out how these gaps will be filled.

Naturally, there are gaps in the evidence available as this is a new scheme and it relates to residents we may never have previously provided any support to or had contact with.

Looking ahead, the service will continue to do all it can to promote inclusivity and openness. This will be across all sections of the community to ensure that no one section of society misses out, due to an equality issue, on the financial support available.

Where it is not possible to fill data gaps in time to inform this assessment, specific action points to address this will need to be included in the action plan section below, with a focus on monitoring the actual impact of the policy.

ASSESSING IMPACT

It is essential to consider not just the intended consequences of the policy but also any unintended consequences and barriers that might prevent it being effective for certain groups.

6. Did your consultation and involvement activities demonstrate any issues that need to be addressed?

It has not been possible to consult on the policies given the extremely short time scale.

However, a publicity campaign is planned including using the Government's publicity pack, using social media, the website and working with partners and stakeholders, such as the Family Support team, Christians Against PoVerty (CAP) Citizens Advice etc to ensure any potentially affected groups are made aware of the scheme and how to apply

7. Could the implementation of the policy/function/activity or its outcomes lead to a disproportionate or adverse impact on one or more protected characteristics, and if so why?

For example, there might be evidence of higher or lower participation/uptake by different groups.

There is no indication from the EIA undertaken that implementation of the proposed STTS or DTTS policies will lead to a disproportionate impact on one or more of the protected characteristics.

It is anticipated that the Policy has the potential to have a positive impact on the protected characteristic of Age, Disability, Race, Sex (men) and pregnancy and maternity who are more likely to be at risk of contracting COVID and therefore may be more likely to need assistance.

There is a possibility that there could be a negative impact where the scheme will be administered on a first come first served basis if some people are not able to apply through a digital channel. However, Customer Services have been briefed on both the policy and application process and will be able to provide assistance in completing forms either face to face or over the telephone to ensure the application is received in a timely manner.

Discrimination in the STTS is around employment and entitlement to welfare benefits, it is not affected by any of the protected characteristics,

The only discrimination in regards the DTTS would be purely on the timing of a person's Test & Trace results, and the speed in which they make an application, again the other rules relate to employment.

8. If there is a disproportionate or adverse impact on one or more groups, is it appropriate and consistent with the objective? For example, the policy/function/activity may include lawful positive action or other methods to address particular needs. However, this can never include unlawful discrimination.

The objective of the proposed STTS and DTTS policies are to help ensure people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and their close contacts self-isolate for the required period to stop the onward spread of the virus. They are also designed to encourage individuals who are eligible for this payment to get tested if they have symptoms. This is important to help stop the transmission of COVID-19 and avoid further economic and societal restrictions.

9. Does the policy/function/activity miss potential opportunities to promote equality or positive attitudes to (and between) different groups or communities?

Officers do not believe that opportunities for promoting equality have been missed within the proposed revised policies. However, given the time scaled involved in bringing this policy together, it is acknowledged that there is insufficient data to make a definitive comment.

ADDRESSING THE IMPACT: ACTION PLANNING, MONITORING AND REVIEW

10. Does the policy/function/activity require reconsideration or amendment? If not, explain the reasons for this conclusion. **If an adverse impact has been identified, you will need to set out the justification for continuing, or outline measures to mitigate the impact.**

Officers do not believe that the proposed revised policies need further reconsideration and/or amendment.

The scheme ends on 31st January 2021, and funding is allocated on that basis. Should the government choose to change or extend the scheme EIA will be reviewed.

11. What actions have you identified as a result of this equality impact assessment? These might include: improving data collection in order to give a clearer picture of service-users; physical adjustments to a building; arranging for information to be sent out to individuals in alternative formats or languages; or consulting with a wider group of people to understand the impact.

Officers do not believe that any group are adversely impacted in a disproportionate way.

The policies are limited to supporting those in work on low to moderate incomes and are as much about behaviour change as about protecting household incomes.

12. How will you review the actual impact of this policy/function/activity to measure if expected outcomes are achieved in practice? You may have identified 'triggers' that would indicate a problem with the policy and suggest a revision is needed.

Although, the scheme became open on 28th September 2020, it will not be up and running until 16th October 2020, and then shall end on 31st January 2021, with the final backdating provisions allowing claims to be made up to 14th February 2021.

Unless the government choose to revise or extend the scheme, there is no necessity or time to review the policies.

13. Action Plan: Who will be responsible for completing the actions identified in [11] and [12] and in what timescale?

The Corporate Head of Customer, Digital & Collection Services, in conjunction with the Housing Benefit Technical Manager will be responsible for the implementation of the STTS and DTTS schemes.

Information in terms of how the policy has an impact both positively and negatively on anyone with a protected characteristic will where possible be collated in order that any negative impacts in terms of the implementation of the Policy may be identified and where possible addressed for example whether the applications received from one protected group is disproportionately when compared to the local average.

This equality impact assessment must be referred to the Equality Group for challenge.

Date completed: 15.10.20

Sign-off by senior manager: Linda Norman

8. **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

OFFICERS' RECOMMENDATION that –

the press and public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following reports under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the reports in question would be likely to involve disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraphs 1, 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

(To resolve)

PART II

Matters involving Exempt or Confidential information in respect of which reports have not been made available for public inspection

<u>Exempt Information</u>	<u>Paras</u>
9. COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING TEAM STAFF RESTRUCTURE	1 and 3
10. BUSINESS CASE FOR HYBRID MAIL	3
11. REVIEW OF DIGITAL SERVICES - FINAL REPORT	1 and 3
12. COMMERCIAL SERVICES REVIEW	1 and 3
13. CONTRACT FOR MECHANICAL AND ELECTRICAL INSTALLATION MANAGEMENT SERVICES, GENERAL BUILDING REACTIVE WORKS AND LEGIONELLA CONTROL MANAGEMENT SERVICES	3
14. REDUCING THE COSTS OF AGENCY STAFF	3
15. PADD FARM TASK FORCE	3
16. ENFORCEMENT OF PROCEEDS OF CRIME ORDERS – PADD FARM (TO FOLLOW)	3
17. PROPOSED SALE OF A LONG LEASEHOLD INTEREST IN A PROPERTY	3
18. ACHIEVE LIFESTYLE GRANT FACILITY – FURTHER RELEASE OF FUNDS	3
19. URGENT ACTION – STANDING ORDER 42	5

Confidential Information

(No reports to be considered under this heading)