

<b>Report title</b>	<b>Contain Outbreak Management Fund</b>
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<b>Department</b>	Community Services
<b>Exempt</b>	No

**Purpose of report:**

**To recommend for approval by Corporate Management Committee**

**Synopsis of report:**

**To outline the requirements under the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) and set out intentions for the expenditure of the final tranche of COMF monies available to the Council.**

**Recommendation that:**

- i) Corporate Management Committee approves the proposed expenditure plans for the remaining COMF funding held by the Council, in 2023-2024; and**
- ii) Corporate Management Committee approves the use of existing Communities First budgets to fund the balance of £1,174.**

**1. Context and background of report**

- 1.1 As part of the government’s response to the Covid pandemic, local authorities received funding called the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF). The Council received a total of £907,650, with the first tranche of funding received in January 2021.
- 1.2 The Council has been able to spend COMF funding flexibly, within the guidance parameters provided by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).
- 1.3 In late 2022-2023, DLUHC confirmed that any unspent COMF funds could be carried forward into the 2023-2024 financial year, allowing for Officers to await revised guidance, and then consider how any remaining funding could be spent. Currently, the Council has a remaining available COMF budget of £213,829.

**2. Report and, where applicable, options considered and recommended**

- 2.1 The guidance received for expenditure of final COMF monies in 2023-2024 (attached at Appendix 'A'), provides similar guidance to that previously received, including the ability to provide financial support to projects and activities provided by voluntary sector partners both in response to COVID and that address the longer-term impacts of the pandemic and community needs. Other projects which have a clear public health rationale are also potentially possible, although approval from Surrey County Council's Director of Public Health is required.
- 2.2 All funding must be spent by the end of the 2023/2024 financial year. Any unspent allocation has to be returned to DLUHC. Opportunities to develop projects that would meet this requirement in the final year of funding are limited.
- 2.3 Consideration has been given to identify existing projects within the Council to which COMF funding could be applied and spent by the March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024, deadline. New projects which created an ongoing revenue requirement for the Council were also discounted, given the current financial position of the Council and the unavailability of financial growth.
- 2.4 In addition, opportunities have been considered to provide further financial support to voluntary and community sector organisations which supported the Council's work and have played an important role supporting residents during and post pandemic.
- 2.5 Two of the Council's key partners during the pandemic were Citizens Advice Runnymede and Spelthorne, and Runnymede Foodbank. In recent times, both organisations have been in contact with the Council, discussing their own operational and financial pressures, as demand for services continues to grow post pandemic.
- 2.6 The proposed internal projects and financial contributions that the Council intends to make are summarised below. Members are asked to consider these and requested to recommend for approval by Corporate Management Committee.

Table 1: Proposed COMF Funding 2023-2024

<b>Project</b>	<b>Budget Allocated</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Citizens Advice Runnymede and Spelthorne (CARS) – Foodbank Advice Project	£20,000	Funding will be used to support a project operated by CARS, involving having advisors working at the Runnymede Foodbank, to provide information, support and advice to residents attending, who are struggling post pandemic
Financial Support to Runnymede Foodbank	£20,000	Support the continued delivery of Runnymede Foodbank's activities including a contribution supporting managing the organisation's core running costs and the various project strands of the charity.
Floor Maintenance at Chertsey Hall – post vaccination centre use	£10,000	Following a vaccination centre being in place at Chertsey Hall for almost two years, maintenance on the flooring is required to restore it to the standard pre vaccination site.
Contribution to Play Area	£165,000	Improvement to play and recreation facilities in the borough as a legacy of pandemic funding received, recognising the importance of play

Replacement Programme		facilities in the socialisation of children and young people, opportunity lost during the pandemic.
Total	£215,000	
Available COMF	£213,826	
Net Funding Gap	£1,174	

- 2.7 The approval proposal results in a deficit of £1,174, against the available COMF funding. Therefore, to ensure the full award to each project is possible, Members are asked to consider, and recommend for approval that the balance of £1,174 is funded via the existing Communities First budget, within Community Services budgets.
- 2.8 Members are advised that whilst proposals 1,2 and 3 all meet the longstanding criteria for the use of COMF funding, proposal 4, to use funding as a contribution towards the play space replacement programme, required the approval of the County Council's Director of Public Health.
- 2.9 An email detailing the proposal was sent to the Director of Public Health on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2023, with a response received on 26<sup>th</sup> July confirming that the money can be spent in the way outlined. (Attached at Appendix 'B'). As per the suggestion in the application made by the Council, the Director of Public Health has confirmed that the funding should be spent within the identified areas of relative deprivation. These are Addlestone North, Addlestone South, Chertsey St Ann's, Egham Hythe, and Englefield Green West. Where the funding is utilised will be determined through the separate work on play area replacement.
- 2.10 Given that the funding must be allocated or spent by the end of the financial year, Officers are considering the ESPO Outdoor Playground, Fitness & Sports Facilities And Equipment framework, ref 115\_21 as a route to market, utilising either a mini competition, or direct award via a waiver, if this is not possible due to timescales using the £165,000 allocated.

### **3. Policy framework implications**

- 3.1 Whilst the way in which COMF funding is intended to be utilised is largely determined by the guidance attached to the funding, the proposed allocation of funding also supports the Council's corporate objectives.
- 3.2 Priority four within Empowering Communities is to work with the voluntary sector in a range of areas, but in particularly in relation to health and wellbeing. Providing financial assistance to both Citizens Advice Runnymede and Spelthorne and Runnymede Foodbank meets this objective.
- 3.3 In respect of Health and Wellbeing, the proposed funding supports the priorities of creating Healthy Homes. These organisations play a key role in supporting households across the borough, and Healthy Communities through the provision of community facilities and, free at the point of access, play and recreation equipment.

### **4 Resource implications/Value for Money (where applicable)**

- 4.1 There are no resource requirements associated with this report. The coordination of grants to voluntary sector partners will be undertaken by Officers within Community

Services, work to the flooring at Chertsey Hall will be organised by Officers in Assets and Regeneration, and the procurement of appropriate play areas will be coordinated by the Open Space Development team in Community Services, supported by colleagues in the Corporate Projects team, Procurement and Legal Services.

**5. Legal implications**

- 5.1 Grant allocations are required to follow the Government Guidance on the use of COMF which has been confirmed for new types of funding. In the event this was not the case, monies spent could be required to be paid back, leaving the Council at a deficit.

**6. Equality implications**

- 6.1 An Equalities Screening Assessment was completed when reported to this Committee in June.

**7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications**

- 7.1 None.

**8. Other implications (where applicable)**

- 8.1 None

**9. Timetable for Implementation**

- 9.1 Grant funding will be awarded to the two organisations immediately following approval by Corporate Management Committee. Works will be coordinated by Assets at Chertsey Hall, during Q3 of 2023-2024, whilst the procurement of play areas through COMF money will commence immediately following approval being received at Corporate Management Committee.

**10. Background papers**

As below

**11. Appendices**

- Letter containing guidance on the use of COMF funding
- email correspondence with the Director of Public Health