

**Report To:** Cabinet

**Date of Meeting:** 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021

**Report Title:** Contain Outbreak Management Fund - remaining allocation proposals

**Report By:** Jane Hartnell, Managing Director

**Key Decision:** N

**Classification:** Open

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### **Purpose of Report**

To set out proposals for allocation of the remainder of Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF)

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### **Recommendation(s)**

1. That delegated authority is granted to the Managing Director or relevant nominee, in consultation with the Leader to:
  - allocate the remainder of the COMF fund (£90 351.45) in line with the scheme criteria
  - ensure further scoping and feasibility of the headline proposals and indicative budget allocations outlined in this report where appropriate
  - decide on the final proposals and associated budgets to be progressed

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### **Reasons for Recommendations**

1. To set out intended direction of travel in terms of the remainder of the COMF.

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## Introduction

1. Cabinet approved schemes to support response to and recovery from the pandemic as part of their [June](#) meeting, including Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF).
2. In terms of COMF, delegated authority was given to the Managing Director ‘to allocate £80,000 to the Environmental Health and Licensing Team to help reduce the spread of coronavirus and support public health initiatives, and £10,000 to the Parking Services Team towards enhancing communication via digital signage.’
3. This report sets out COMF fund background and criteria, and headline proposals for allocating the remainder of this funding so that remaining monies (£90, 351.45) are used to best effect in Hastings.
4. Associated risks, governance arrangements and options are also outlined, to assist with consideration of the recommendations proposed.

## Background and COMF criteria

5. The COMF provides local authorities (LAs) with additional financial support as announced in the Government's Covid Response – Spring 2021.
6. Government COMF payments are based on the government's Covid-19 Relative Needs Formula (RNF) which gives a weighting to both population and deprivation levels, based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation. Therefore, funding has been targeted at areas with high infection and enduring transmission rates. In addition, the RNF allocates funding to both Upper Tier LAs (UTLAs) and Lower Tier LAs (LTLAs).
7. This split recognises that LTLAs hold responsibilities for activities critical to the management of the Covid pandemic including enforcement activities, which form a core component of the local response to the pandemic and the measures that COMF funding is intended to support.
8. The following headline proposals for remaining monies (£90, 351.45) cover the following COMF criteria areas: ‘testing, vaccine deployment, support for vulnerable groups and targeted interventions.’

## Headline Proposals

9. The headline proposals below give oversight of the types of work the Council intends to do with the remainder of the COMF, in response to the criteria areas identified. Rough indicative budgets have been identified but need further refinement prior to progressing.
10. The recommendations in this report make clear the need for delegated authority to take final decisions on which headline proposals and allocations to take forward, subject to further scoping and feasibility work where appropriate.

### Additional support to boost testing and vaccination

11. The Council's [recovery plan](#) recognises the disproportionate impact of the pandemic among individuals and communities with a protected characteristic as identified in our Public Sector Equality Duty, and how such impact is exacerbated by longstanding areas of deprivation within our town.

12. During the pandemic to date, the Council has a good track record of working with partners to locate and promote vaccination and testing sites, mindful of our deprivation challenges and our Public Sector Equality Duty.
13. It is proposed that **a proportion of this fund** be allocated to strengthen officer capacity to continue this work through the recruitment of a **support officer(s)**.
14. Given the time constraints associated with COMF funding, it is proposed to recruit internally where possible for the support role outlined, potentially increasing hours of our part time staff to contribute to the role.
15. The Customer Services, Communications and COVID Manager is in the process of drafting an associated job description, and it is envisaged that the support role will directly support this Manager in the first instance.
16. Complementing the support role, **additional marketing resources** are required to continue to promote awareness of testing and vaccine opportunities.
17. At present, there is some emerging work with partners identifying ways to boost take up in St Leonards, matching vaccination take up with housing and mental health information and providing more leaflets in different languages as required.
18. HBC colleagues will continue to work in partnership and as this work is firmed up, it may be appropriate to use COMF funds and the marketing budget proposed to enable strands of this developing work.

### **Support for vulnerable groups and targeted interventions**

19. While the proposal for a support officer role above emphasises the Council's desire to support testing and vaccination across the breadth of our local communities, we are also keen to potentially use the role to assist with an internal equalities audit.
20. A key outcome from this audit would result in better intelligence from Council service areas to support the specific targeting of testing and vaccination messages to those in our community with protected characteristics e.g. BAME. It is proposed that this work will be further scoped and costed in due course, in line with health inequalities partnership working.
21. The Council is also keen to support initiatives in some of the town's most deprived areas as identified in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation in the form of targeted intervention.
22. The Council is currently considering proposed work with families disproportionately impacted by the pandemic in Hollington and North East Hastings.
23. This work will potentially commission partners to bridge the gap for these families in terms of positive networks and influences, including safety messages and the need for compliance with Covid safety measures.

### **Encouraging Vaccine take up -Young people focus**

24. Given the gradual vaccination roll out across our local schools, levels of uncertainty, vaccine hesitancy and mistrust among some young people and associated misinformation in terms of anti-vaccination efforts, it is proposed that the Council allocate **part of the COMF fund for the development of a marketing** campaign made by **young people** for young people to boost vaccine take up.

25. Provisional approaches have been made to our Education partners at Hastings College to consider the production of short videos.
26. These would be used across appropriate social media channels to encourage vaccination take up among young people in the first instance and to counter misinformation.
27. There may be scope through this work to link with the Youth Council and take inspiration from a Hastings version of this: [Vaccination | Everything COVID](#)

### **Additional Signage and CO2 monitors**

28. Building on the electric signage to shortly be installed at the Pier is proposed officers explore extending this to enable **electric signage** at Rock a Nore.
29. This digital signage will extend the council's messaging capability at a key area of the town that visitors and residents of the town frequent.
30. In line with the [funding guidance](#) proposed signage will 'enhance communications and marketing' and serve as an 'additional resource' to convey 'compliance with, and enforcement of, restrictions and guidance.'
31. The council plans to purchase, at a cost of circa **£500**, three **Carbon Dioxide monitors** that will be used by our Environmental Health officers for the investigation and monitoring of crowded premises and in response to complaints from members of the public.
32. These will assist with identifying if ventilation is adequate and subsequent enforcement if necessary, in line with Government guidance on working safely.

### **Reducing risk of Covid contraction through homeless initiatives**

33. It is proposed we also use a proportion of this funding to **encourage testing and vaccination** take up and to **reduce risk of covid contraction** among those engaging in homelessness support services.
34. These monies could be used to both fund overtime payments for a Housing Officer being on call at weekends for the Seaview walk in day centre (9am-1pm).
35. This officer would signpost testing and vaccination provision as part of providing additional Housing advice, support and guidance.
36. The monies could also be used to incentivise move on from emergency accommodation and thereby reducing the risk of Covid contraction at emergency accommodation sites where there are varying degrees of transience and turnover.
37. In particular, a furniture voucher to help homeless households leaving emergency accommodation is proposed – potentially in the region of approx. £500 per household to be used at Hastings Furniture Service.

### **Risks**

38. There are also headline risks related to the above proposals put forward that require ongoing consideration:

39. Subsequent waves of the pandemic and flu resurgence could have a further detrimental impact on staff/partner capacity to deliver proposals as set out on top of existing commitments.
40. There may be difficulties in terms of recruiting or filling proposed council officer roles set out in the above proposals or freeing up staff to deliver where a new role or post is not identified.
41. The headline proposals and indicative budgets outlined are greater than the allocation that remains, therefore further prioritising will be required.
42. The feasibility of headline proposals introduced maybe challenged and or need to be altered as the details of each prospective proposals are further worked up, in line with the Council's project management approach, approvals process and corporate standard.
43. Mitigation and monitoring of these headline risks will require robust governance and project management - associated capacity in this regard is already stretched.

## **Governance**

44. The Covid Taskforce group made up of council officers and the leader and deputy leader will continue to monitor delivery and track spend of the COMF funding.
45. Delegated authority should ensure that associated project management documentation will be completed, and project roles assigned to firm up direction of travel for the associated proposals and indicative budgets introduced in this report.
46. This will assist the Covid Taskforce monitor COMF delivery and spend through until March 2022.
47. These roles will need to include overall project management and work package leads for the respective proposals approved.
48. It will be important to capture the management costs both in terms of financial returns and monitoring delivery of headline proposals.
49. At present these costs are not included in this report and indicative figures may need to be further adjusted to do so.

## **Options**

50. The following headline options have also been identified to assist consideration of the recommendations proposed at the outset of this report:
  - i. Return the circa 90k of COMF funding and only submit returns for work already underway as a consequence of decisions made by Cabinet in [June 21](#).
  - ii. Progress headline proposals as set out in this report, mindful of the headline risks and governance considerations introduced.
  - iii. Progress some rather than all of the headline proposals outlined potentially in combination with alternative ideas.

## Recommendation

51. It is recommended that option (ii) is progressed, to ensure that monies made available are used to maximise opportunities to improve vaccination and testing take up, and supporting those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, enabling the town respond to and recover from the pandemic.
52. It will also be necessary to identify the capacity and resource to project manage and further scope headline proposals and or close and finalise returns to Government accordingly.
53. Further appropriate scoping and feasibility will be required to firm up proposals and indicative budgets and crucially, delegated authority to the Managing Director is required to agree final proposals and associated budget allocations in consultation with the Leader.

## Timetable of Next Steps

54. Please include a list of key actions and the scheduled dates for these:

Action	Key milestone	Due date (provisional)	Responsible
Report to Cabinet and recommendations approved and next steps agreed (	Decisions recorded in the minutes.	1st November 2021	Cabinet
Project management arrangements implemented to deliver agreed spend.	Roles assigned and project documentation completed and reviewed, spend and returns completed by March 2022. Benefits realised.	TBD	Managing Director

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## Wards Affected

(All Wards);

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## Policy Implications

Reading Ease Score: TBD.

Have you used relevant project tools?: **Y/Not yet – but identified intentions to do so further to approval of Headline proposals.**

**Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:**

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness      Y/N

Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	Y/N
Risk Management	Y/N
Environmental Issues & Climate Change	Y/N
Economic/Financial Implications	Y/N
Human Rights Act	Y/N
Organisational Consequences	Y/N
Local People's Views	Y/N
Anti-Poverty	Y/N
Legal	Y/N

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## Additional Information

<https://hastings.moderngov.co.uk/documents/b15385/Updated%20Report-%20Welcome%20Back%20Funding%20Contain%20Outbreak%20Management%20Funding%20COMF%20and%20Culture%20Recover.pdf?T=9>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/contain-outbreak-management-fund-2020-to-2021/contain-outbreak-management-fund-guidance-financial-year-2020-to-2021>

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