

Cabinet Member Briefing Note
Covid-19 Response – Urgent Decision
Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF)

To: Cabinet Member for Adults and Health

Date: 25th March 2021

Author: Director of Public Health

Wards: All

Parishes Affected: All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 The Government as part of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic has provided the Council with funding from Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF). This fund can be used for the prevention and management of Covid-19 as outlined in the Local Outbreak Management Plan. The local authority has the discretion on what this funding can be spend on.
- 1.2 To seek agreement to use £200K of the fund to provide support to external organisations for the prevention of Covid-19 and the reducing vaccine hesitancy whilst tackling inequality. This fund will be awarded on behalf of the Council by Voluntary Action Swindon (VAS) to organisations bidding for funding ranging from £250-£20k
- 1.3 The report links to the Council’s priority four “Help people to help themselves whilst always protecting our most vulnerable children and adults”.

2. Recommended Action to be Authorised by a Cabinet Member Under Delegated Powers

Recommended that the Cabinet Member agrees to:

- 2.1 The Director of Public Health, using his delegated authority under Paragraph J of the Council’s Scheme of Delegations (Part 8 of the Constitution) be authorised to:
 - 2.1.1 Allocate funding of £200k to VAS from the COMF to support external organisations in community level efforts to prevent Covid-19, reduce vaccine hesitancy and tackle inequality.

3. Detail

- 3.1 The Council has received funding from Government every month through the COMF Fund. The amount received every month has depended on the circumstances of restrictions that month. Up to the end of February 2021 the Council has received £4,993,691 and there will be a further payment in March. The COMF can be used at the

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Steve Maddern, Telephone Number 07971093148, SMaddern@swindon.gov.uk.

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discretion of the Council on a wide range of activities designed to prevent and contain the spread of Covid-19 across the Local Authority area. The suggested activities that this funding could be used to support may include:

- 3.1.1 Targeted testing for hard-to-reach groups out of scope of other testing programmes.
- 3.1.2 Additional contact tracing.
- 3.1.3 Enhanced communication and marketing (e.g. towards hard-to-reach groups and other localised messaging).
- 3.1.4 Delivery of essentials for those in self-isolation.
- 3.1.5 Targeted interventions for specific sections of the local community and workplaces.
- 3.1.6 Harnessing capacity within local sectors (e.g. voluntary, academic, commercial).
- 3.1.7 Extension/introduction of specialist support (e.g. behavioural science, bespoke communications).
- 3.1.8 Additional resource for compliance with, and enforcement of, restrictions and guidance
- 3.1.9 Targeted support for school/university outbreaks.
- 3.1.10 Community-based support for those disproportionately impacted such as the BAME population.
- 3.1.11 Support for engagement and analysis of regional areas to assess and learn from local initiatives.
- 3.1.12 Providing initial support, as needed, to vulnerable people classed as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable who are following tier 3 guidance.
- 3.2 VAS will advertise the opportunity to bid for funding to a wide range of organisations across the voluntary and community sector. They already have established links within the Council and are a trusted organisation.

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- 3.3 VAS will be responsible for developing a simple application process, designing and marketing the grant programme, managing incoming applications and queries, completing due diligence checks, developing a scoring matrix, organising a shortlisting panel, manage grant allocations, payments and rejections and manage reporting and feedback resulting in a summary report.
- 3.4 The Council will fund VAS at a rate of 2% giving a total of £4,000 from the COMF funding to cover the above activities and costs incurred.
- 3.5 The shortlisting panel will have representation from the Council and VAS to ensure accountability and equity.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 There are two alternative options that have been considered. The first option is for the Council to manage the administration of the bidding and issuing of funds, however this has been deemed to be resource intensive on an already busy public health team. The other option is to consider another organisation to manage the administration of the funding, however for timeliness, this has not been considered.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 The total COMF to date is £4,993,691, of which the Council has budgeted an allocation of £200k for community based activities as set out in the conditions of the funding. Further funding can be considered if there is demand for appropriate schemes from voluntary and community groups.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 The distribution of these funds will support communities most affected by Covid-19 to reduced risk of the spread of the infection by reinforcing key Covid-19 secure messages at community level, challenging vaccine hesitancy and tackling Covid-19 related inequalities.
- 5.3 Terms and conditions for receipt of the bidding for funding will be sent to bidders by VAS and will require agreement before payment from the grant is made.

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Climate Change Impact

- 5.4 The proposals would not bring a change in service delivery and Officers believe that there is no expected effect on the Council's carbon footprint.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.5 The COMF supports the protection of staff and reduces the risk of exposure to the Covid-19 infection.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.6 A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) has not been undertaken. No adverse effects have been identified by the implementation of these grants. There are benefits as the grant will support the communities most affected by Covid-19, improve local level Covid-19 secure messaging and intervention, improve vaccine uptake in eligible groups and tackle known inequalities.

Risk Management

- 5.7 The terms and conditions have been circulated to providers to seek agreement in principle in advance of payments being made.

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Corporate Director of Finance and Assets (s151 officer) and Chief Legal Officer (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 There are no background papers.

8. Appendices

- 8.1 There are no appendices.

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9. Declarations of Interest

Cabinet Member(s)

- 9.1 Cabinet Members are reminded to consider whether they have any known interests in any of the matters referred to in this Briefing Note. If such an interest exists this should be declared to the Monitoring Officer (or Committee and Member Services Manager), and they should take no part in the consideration of the Briefing Note and should refer the Briefing Note to the Leader of the Council instead for consideration.

10. Sign-off

- 10.1 The Cabinet Member is requested to respond with 5 days of the date of this report by 30th March 2021.
- 10.2 The Cabinet Member is requested to indicate one of the following responses to the Recommendations set out in Section 2 of this report:

[To be signed electronically and redacted for publication.]