

Cabinet

14 October 2020

Item

Report of	Assistant Director of Customer	Author	Jason Granger ☎ 508824
Title	Test and Trace Support Payments		
Wards affected	All Wards		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Government has announced Test and Trace Support Payment Schemes to support residents on low incomes who are unable to work from home if they are told to self-isolate due to Covid-19 and will lose income as a result. There is a main scheme and a discretionary scheme.
- 1.2 The schemes are to be administer by Local Authorities and this report outlines proposals for how applications will be assessed, and payments distributed, by Colchester Borough Council.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To agree to the Test and Trace Support Payment Schemes Policies.
- 2.2 The Government has required Local authorities to have schemes ready by 12 October 2020. Considering the timeline an urgent Cabinet decision is being sought in accordance with Cabinet procedure rule 22.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 To implement Test and Trace Support Payment Schemes in adherence to Government guidance.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 None.

5. Background Information

5.1 From 28 September 2020, residents will be entitled to a Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 if they:

1. Have been asked to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, either because they have tested positive for Covid-19 or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive
2. Are employed or self-employed
3. Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result
4. 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.

Additionally, a discretionary scheme payment of £500 is available to those who can satisfy 1-3 above however are not in receipt of a benefit listed under 4. To be considered for a discretionary payment a resident will also need to evidence hardship due to the requirement to self-isolate.

5.2 Eligible payments can be backdated to 28 September 2020, and local authorities are required to have arrangements in place to administer them by no later than 12 October 2020. The scheme will last until 31 January 2021.

5.3 To apply, residents will complete an online form, or if support is needed, by a telephone application. Applications will be assessed and verified by the Benefits service and eligible payments will be issued via BACS to residents within three working days.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

6.1 There are no specific implications relating to equality, diversity or human rights.

7. Strategic Plan References

7.1 The Council's Strategic Plan sets out four themes, one of which being:

'Wellbeing - Making Colchester an even better place to live and supporting those who need most help'

The Test and Trace Support Payments will help residents who are unable to work from home if they are told to self-isolate and will lose income as a result.

8. Consultation

8.1 Government guidance prescribes eligibility to the main scheme and key elements of the discretionary scheme. Considering this and the expectation schemes are operational by 12 October 2020 prevents a meaningful consultation taking place.

9. Publicity Considerations

9.1 A communications plan has been developed to ensure that eligible residents and relevant partners are made aware of the scheme and application process.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1 The Government has confirmed that £50m is being made available nationally for Test and Trace Support Scheme payments which includes administration funding. Colchester Borough Council allocations are as follows:

Funding - Payments to Residents	Amount
Main Scheme -	£75,000
Discretionary Scheme	£45,048

- 10.2 Main scheme funding is subject to a reconciliation process, which could mean the council will need to return funding if the number of payments made is less than the allocation, similarly additional funding maybe forthcoming if applications exceed Government modelling. However, the discretionary scheme funding is fixed. Funding for administration is £31,160.

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 The payments under these scheme are designed to support people on low incomes, if they will lose income as a result of self-isolating, and to encourage them 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.

12. Health and Safety Implications

- 12.1 There are no health and safety implications.

13. Risk Management Implications

- 13.1 Applications and supporting information will be verified against central Government systems, including Test and Trace records, which will help drive out fraud and error. This will be supplemented by a pre and post payment checking regime.
- 13.2 Data share agreement have been reviewed and agreed with Department for Health and Social Care and controls put in place to ensure security of data.

14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 14.1 There are no environmental and sustainability implications.

Appendices

- Test and Trace Support Payments Scheme / Discretionary Scheme Policies