

27 January 2021

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

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Colchester Borough Council administers Test and Trace Support Payment Schemes to support residents 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 with criteria being broadly defined by central government guidance.
- 1.2 From January 2020, Essex County Council has made available additional funding to districts and this funding is aimed to top up the central government discretionary schemes.
- 1.3 Colchester Borough Council has sought permission from Essex County Council to use this new funding not only to supplement the existing discretionary scheme but to also introduce even wider eligibility which will allow us to support more residents. To do this a local scheme has been developed for Colchester residents.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 To agree to the Test and Trace Support Payment Local Scheme Policy and the associated funding allocation.
- 2.2 To avoid any delay in payments under the new local scheme an urgent Cabinet decision is being sought in accordance with Cabinet procedure rule 22.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 To implement the Test and Trace Support Payment Local Scheme and the associated funding allocations.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Funding could be solely allocated to the central government discretionary scheme. This would not allow for wider eligibility to be introduced and this could in turn affect our ability to best support resident's.

5. Background Information

5.1 Central Government Schemes

Residents are 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 Colchester Borough Councils Proposed Local Scheme

The new Test and Trace Support Payment Local Scheme will still require residents to satisfy (1) above. However, this Local Scheme will be open to those who are not currently employed or self-employed. The resident will need to demonstrate a reduction of income or increase in expenditure due to the fact of having to self-isolate and explain how this will/has led to financial hardship.

5.3 Introducing this new local scheme to those who are currently unemployed or retired will allow us to support many more residents in need of temporary financial assistance and bolster the efforts to contain the spread of the virus.

5.4 It is proposed the new funding allocation from Essex County Council is used predominately to fund the new local scheme, with a proportion to be allocated to the central government discretionary scheme to ensure we can still widely support eligible residents.

5.5 The administration of the new scheme falls within the funding allocation for the main and discretionary scheme.

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 - Local Scheme will help residents are told to self-isolate and will lose income, or face and increase in expenditure, as a result.

8. Consultation

8.1 We have been operating the central government schemes since October 2020 and we have received feedback from applicants, members, community leaders and third sector partners. This feedback has been used to help shape the new local scheme to offer wider support to residents.

9. Publicity Considerations

- 9.1 A communications plan has been developed to ensure that eligible residents and relevant partners are made aware of the new local scheme. It is also planned to promote the schemes at local Covid-19 testing sites.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1 Essex County Council have accessed funding from the Government's Contain Outbreak Management Fund and have distributed £3m across Essex districts on a per capita basis for Test and Trace Support Payments. Please note that a further £1m contingency fund has been set aside by Essex County Council to top-up allocations as required.

- 10.2 Colchester Borough Council has been allocated £390,839. It is recommended the funding is broadly split as follows:

Test and Trace Funding Allocation	Amount
New Local Scheme	£300k
Existing Discretionary Scheme	£90k

- 10.3 To date we have been allocated £93k from central government to fund the Discretionary scheme. It is unlikely further funding will be forthcoming. It is proposed £90k is earmarked from Essex County Council funding to ensure the Discretionary scheme is sufficiently funded to 31 March 2021.
- 10.4 It is recommended the funding allocations are reviewed regularly by the operational leads and flexibility is allowed in how funding is allocated between the new Local Scheme and the existing Discretionary Scheme dependant on prevalence and demand. Additionally, we will keep under review the demand on the scheme to make sure we can provide support to all eligible applicants and consider a variation of award level if necessary.

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 The payments under these schemes are designed to support people who will lose income and suffer financial hardship as a result of self-isolating. This is important to help stop the transmission of Covid-19 and avoid further economic and societal impacts.

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 which will help drive out fraud and error. This will be supplemented by a pre and post-payment checking regime.

14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 14.1 There are no environmental and sustainability implications.

Appendices

- Test and Trace Support Payments - Local Scheme Policy