

Record of Decision taken by Chief Executive

Decision title: Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payments (TTSP)

Chief Executive / Director making the decision: James Hassett

Author Contact Details: Richard Sealy
Tel: 01823 217558
e-mail: R.Sealy@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Date of Decision: 12 Oct 2020

Details of decision:

The Chief Executive has approved the adoption of a Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme for Somerset West & Taunton. The scheme is detailed in Appendix 1.

The discretionary scheme is additional to the standard Test and Trace Support scheme, in respect of which the Government have prescribed the rules.

Test and Trace Support payments are for people on low incomes who have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, either because they have tested positive for coronavirus or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive, and who cannot work from home.

This decision has been taken in accordance with the urgent decisions provision contained in paragraph 5 of the Budget and Policy Framework of the Council's Constitution because it is not practical to convene a quorate Full Council meeting within the required timeframe.

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Wren, has been consulted and agrees that this decision is required as a matter of urgency and that it is appropriate for it to be made under the urgency provisions. A report will be made to the next available Full Council meeting to explain the reasons for the urgent decision.

Background:

From 28 September 2020, central Government introduced legislation requiring certain people to self-isolate to reduce the spread of coronavirus.

It has introduced a package of measures to ensure those who need to self-isolate and are on a low-income can get help towards their finances to encourage compliance with the new rules.

From 28 September 2020, certain individuals will be entitled to a Test and Trace Support Payment (TTSP) of £500 if they meet prescribed criteria.

The scheme will be administered by local councils such as Somerset West and Taunton and, at the present time, will run until 31 January 2021.

Government has also provided SWT with £36k with which to make £500 payments to people who are required to self-isolate but do not meet the criteria within the Government's standard scheme. This funding will allow us to make a maximum of 73 £500 Local Discretionary Test and Trace Support payments.

In common with other Billing Authorities we are required to develop, publish and implement our local approach to awarding this funding.

Consequently we quickly developed a scheme in collaboration with Sedgemoor District Council and in consultation with the Portfolio Holder (Cllr Henley), and agreed with the Chair of Scrutiny (Cllr Wren) that this scheme could be signed off by the Chief Executive under the urgent decision powers. The Chief Executive's decision dated 12/10/2020 refers.

Full details of the discretionary criteria are set out in Appendix 1.

Reasons for proposed decision:

The scheme adopted, as detailed in the attached document, provides our approach to awarding the discretionary Test and Trace Support Payments in order to:

- Provide financial support for those on low incomes in order to practically support their ability to self-isolate, and thereby control the spread of Coronavirus;
- Ensure the total monies awarded remain within the limited funding made available;
- Include reasonable safeguards to avoid fraudulent claims;
- Ensure the scheme is manageable from an administrative perspective;
- Meet the expectations around purpose and timescale set by Government.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

We believe the approach chosen best targets the limited funding available to meet the objective of supporting those on low incomes to self-isolate, in a transparent, equitable and administratively efficient way. Other approaches were considered, but did not best meet these objectives.

The below has been completed:	Name(s)	Date
Relevant Portfolio Holder(s) consulted	Cllr Henley	8/10/2020
Relevant ward councillor(s) consulted	This potentially affects all wards & there is insufficient time to consult all Members	
The following are if appropriate / applicable: Yes/No. If yes the implications should be attached to this decision notice.		
Finance implications	No, as the proposed scheme allows us to keep the cost within the funding provided. Administrative costs will be met by New Burdens funding.	
Legal implications	These payments support compliance of self-isolation rules for those on low incomes who have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, either because they	

	have tested positive for coronavirus or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive, and who cannot work from home.	
Links to corporate aims	Homes & Communities - tackle economic, social and health inequalities within the groups and communities that need extra support.	
Community Safety implications	The payments are to encourage compliance with self-isolation rules and thereby prevent the spread of Coronavirus within our communities.	
Environmental implications	No	
Equalities Impact Safeguarding Implications	A specific EIA has not been undertaken due to time constraints for implementing this scheme. No disproportionate impacts are anticipated to affect any of the protected groups. There are NO safeguarding implications	
Risk management	The proposed scheme contains appropriate measures to help prevent fraud and to keep expenditure within budget	
Partnership implications	The discretionary scheme has been co-created in collaboration with Sedgemoor District Council.	

Any conflicts of interest declared by Leader or Portfolio Holders consulted on the proposed decision. If Yes provide confirmation from Chief Executive to grant dispensation for the Leader's / Portfolio Holder's views to be considered.

The Portfolio Holder, Cllr Henley, has been consulted regarding this decision and has declared no conflict of interests.

Financial Implication Summary

The funding for this scheme is provided by Central Government. Our scheme has been designed in a way that presents us from spending more than the allocated funding.

Central Government will be providing funding under the New Burdens funding arrangements to cover the administration costs.

Decision Maker

I am aware of the details of this decision(s), considered the reasons, options, representations and consultation responses and give my approval / agreement to its implementation.



Signed:

Name: James Hassett

Date: 12/10/2020

Note – This decision record is for decisions taken by Chief Executive/Director. The decision(s) can be implemented in accordance with the approved delegations.

Note: A copy should also be sent to the Governance Team – governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Appendix 1 – Test and Trace Support Payments Discretionary Payments Scheme