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## **NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TO BE MADE**

The following Executive Decisions are due to be made by the CABINET MEMBER FOR BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION AND CUSTOMERS on FRIDAY, 9 OCTOBER 2020.

1. Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payments Scheme (Pages 3 - 16)

Reports relating to the decision(s) to be taken are attached to this notice, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. A meeting will not necessarily take place when the decision is made. Please contact Democratic Services for more information.

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## For publication

### **Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme**

|                           |                                                          |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Meeting:</b>           | Cabinet Member for Business Transformation and Customers |
| <b>Date:</b>              | 9 October 2020                                           |
| <b>Cabinet portfolio:</b> | Business Transformation and Customers                    |
| <b>Directorate:</b>       | Customers, Commissioning and Change                      |

#### **1.0 Purpose of the report**

- 1.1 To approve a Local Authority Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment scheme for Chesterfield Borough Council.

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Chesterfield Borough Council's Local Authority Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is approved and implemented from 12 October 2020
- 2.2 That the Assistant Director – Customers, Commissioning and Change, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Business Transformation and Customers and Arvato's Head of Operations, is given delegated authority to regularly review the scheme and revise the scheme criteria where necessary.

#### **3.0 Reasons for recommendations**

- 3.1 To enable the Council to implement a Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment scheme, which will benefit eligible local people who have to self-isolate and who do not meet the criteria of the national Test and Trace Support Payment scheme.

#### **4.0 Report details**

- 4.1 On 20 September 2020, the government announced the launch of a new scheme which provides a financial support payment of £500 to people on a low income who are instructed to isolate by NHS Test and Trace, and as a result will suffer a reduction in their income. The scheme is known as the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme and local authorities have been asked to administer it on behalf of the government.
- 4.2 The Test and Trace Support Payment scheme came into force on 28 September 2020 and is currently set to end on 31 January 2021. Local authorities are asked to have the scheme application process operational by 12 October 2020 and be willing to accept backdated applications from 28 September 2020. Local authorities are also asked to implement a Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment scheme to run alongside the national scheme.
- 4.3 Government have set out eligibility criteria for the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. A £500 support payment will be made to people who meet the following criteria:
1. Employed or self-employed
  2. In receipt of any of the following benefits
    - Universal Credit
    - Working Tax Credit
    - Income-based Employment and Support Allowance
    - Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
    - Income Support
    - Housing Benefit
    - Pension Credit
  3. Instructed to isolate by NHS Test and Trace
  4. Unable to work from home and will lose income as a result
- 4.4 Chesterfield Borough Council has been allocated £48,500 of funding for the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. This funding will be regularly reconciled, and additional money will be provided by the government if demand for the scheme exceeds the funding which has been provided. Surplus funding must be returned to the government.
- 4.5 The government has also allocated Chesterfield Borough Council a fixed funding amount of £29,210.43 which should be used to provide a 'discretionary' Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme to

residents of Chesterfield borough. The government have confirmed that they will not reconcile this funding.

- 4.6 This report sets out the criteria under which individuals will qualify for the Chesterfield Borough Council Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment scheme, and the evidence which will be required to support their application. Details of the scheme are attached at Appendix A.

## **5.0 Alternative options**

- 5.1 Consideration was given to determining eligibility for the discretionary support payment by assessing income and expenditure. However, taking this approach would have attracted applications from high earners with high outgoings, which does not meet the intent of the original government scheme.

## **6.0 Implications for consideration – Council Plan**

- 6.1 Provision of a Discretionary Test and Trace Support Scheme will help to improve the quality of life for local people whilst they are self isolating. Delivery of the scheme is not expected to adversely impact on the delivery of other Council Plan activities.

## **7.0 Implications for consideration – Financial and value for money**

- 7.1 The government will provide Chesterfield Borough Council with a finite funding allocation of £29,210.43 for its Discretionary Test and Trace Support Scheme. This will allow the Council to award a maximum of 58 discretionary payments.
- 7.2 The government will provide Chesterfield Borough Council with £27,216.80 to administer the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme and the Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. Some of this funding will be directed to Arvato, who are the Council's Revenues and Benefits service provider. This will be agreed through the Council's existing change control process.
- 7.3 The Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment scheme must be open for applications from 28 September 2020 and, as it currently

stands, will close to applicants on 31 January 2021, in line with the national Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. It is recommended that priority access to the funding is afforded to those who have made claims to the government for benefit support prior to being asked to self-isolate, but whose claims have not yet been set to payment. It is also recommended that priority is given to those people who may have fallen out of benefit entitlement within the last two months and to those who are in receipt of Council Tax support only.

- 7.4 Delegated authority is sought for the Assistant Director – Customers, Commissioning and Change, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Business Transformation and Customers and Arvato’s Head of Operations, to complete regular reviews of the discretionary scheme, ensuring funds are fully utilised for the benefit of local people.
- 7.5 Chesterfield Borough Council will provide regular progress reports to Government with regards to the development and implementation of the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme and the Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment scheme.
- 7.6 Chesterfield Borough Council will also provide information to people on their right of appropriation on the £500 payment so that their bank does not use it to pay their overdraft.

## **8.0 Implications for consideration – Legal**

- 8.1 A privacy notice is in place to support administration of the scheme.
- 8.2 A data sharing agreement between Public Health England and Chesterfield Borough Council is required to enable the Council to complete eligibility checks on Test and Trace activity and provide Public Health England with information on the support payments which have been made. On signature of the data sharing agreement, the Council must comply with specific information security criteria within a twelve-month period. A gap analysis is currently being completed.
- 8.3 The government has introduced a new legal obligation on individuals to self-isolate if someone tests positive or is requested to isolate by NHS Test and Trace. Penalties have been introduced for those breaking the rules, including fines on a sliding scale of £1000 up to a maximum of £10,000. The Test and Trace Support payment and the

Discretionary Test and Trace Support payment have been introduced to help people self-isolate and meet their legal duty.

## 9.0 Implications for consideration – Human resources

- 9.1 Responsibility for implementation of the scheme will rest with the Assistant Director – Customers, Commissioning and Change, supported by officers from Arvato’s Benefits.

## 10.0 Implications for consideration – Risk management

| Description of the Risk                                                                  | Impact | Likelihood | Mitigating Action                                                                                                                                                                       | Impact | Likelihood |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------|
| The discretionary scheme is under or oversubscribed                                      | High   | High       | Chesterfield Borough Council’s scheme will be monitored closely. If it becomes likely that the scheme will be oversubscribed an amendment to the eligibility criteria may be requested. | High   | Low        |
| Administration backlogs will delay discretionary payments made to Chesterfield residents | High   | High       | Adequate resources have been identified to support this process, with the ability to scale the team where necessary.                                                                    | High   | Low        |
| Discretionary payments are made to ineligible people                                     | High   | Medium     | The scheme provides clarity on eligibility. The process for a discretionary payment requires                                                                                            | Medium | Low        |

|  |  |  |                                                                                                                                                                              |  |  |
|--|--|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|
|  |  |  | <p>verification of the information provided.</p> <p>The application form is clear that ineligible payments will be subject to claw back and possible fraud investigation</p> |  |  |
|--|--|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|

**11.0 Implications for consideration – community wellbeing**

11.1 The discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment scheme will assist those people on low incomes who experience a reduction in income because they have been asked to self-isolate and are unable to work.

11.2 The scheme will provide eligible applicants with a £500 payment within three days of submission of their application. This payment is intended to provide financial support, helping people to adhere to their legal duty to self-isolate.

11.3 Applicants to the scheme will be signposted to additional help, including how to get access to food and medicine delivery and other community support whilst they are isolating.

**12.0 Implications for consideration – Economy and skills**

12.1 These payments are designed to help ensure that people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and their close contacts self-isolate for the required period to stop the onward spread of the virus. The scheme is also intended to encourage those people who are eligible for this payment and have symptoms to get tested. This is important to help stop the transmission of COVID-19 and avoid further economic and societal restrictions.

**13.0 Implications for consideration – Climate Change**

13.1 There are no implications for climate change.

## 14.0 Implications for consideration – Equality and diversity

- 14.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been produced in development of the scheme. The scheme ensures that discretionary payments are awarded based on set eligibility criteria.
- 14.2 A digital application process has been developed. For those people who are unable to access the internet, a supported telephone application process will also be in place. This will be accessed through the Council's contact centre. A dedicated telephone number will be provided.
- 14.3 Support will be provided for those residents who need translation facilities.

### Decision information

|                            |                                              |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| <b>Key decision number</b> | <b>980</b>                                   |
| <b>Wards affected</b>      | All wards within the borough of Chesterfield |

### Document information

|                                                                                                                                                  |                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Report author</b>                                                                                                                             |                                                     |
| <i>Damon Bruce – Arvato Head of Operations - Chesterfield</i><br><i>Rachel O'Neil – Assistant Director – Customers, Commissioning and Change</i> |                                                     |
| <b>Background documents</b>                                                                                                                      |                                                     |
| These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when the report was prepared.                                         |                                                     |
| <i>This must be made available to the public for up to 4 years.</i>                                                                              |                                                     |
| <b>Appendices to the report</b>                                                                                                                  |                                                     |
| Appendix 1                                                                                                                                       | Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme |

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## **Chesterfield Borough Council**

### **Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 On 20 September 2020, the government announced the launch of a new support payment, known as the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme and asked local authorities to administer the scheme on their behalf.
- 1.2 The Test and Trace Support Payment scheme has been introduced in response to feedback that some people are struggling to self-isolate as directed due to financial constraints. The scheme is intended to help ensure that people who are on low incomes self-isolate when they test positive for coronavirus or are identified as a contact of someone who has tested positive. The scheme is also intended to encourage more people to get tested when they are displaying symptoms of coronavirus. This will help to reduce the transition of COVID-19 and avoid further societal and economic restrictions, including local lockdowns.
- 1.3 Chesterfield Borough Council has been allocated £48,500 to fund its Test and Trace Support payments. This amount will be regularly reconciled by the government and additional funds will be provided where required.
- 1.4 The council has also been allocated £29,210.43 to implement a Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. This is a fixed amount of funding and is not subject to reconciliation.
- 1.5 Chesterfield Borough Council is responsible for administering the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme and the

Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment scheme to residents located within its boundaries.

- 1.6 This document sets out the criteria under which residents can apply for the Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment scheme and gives details of the evidence which will be required to support an application.

## **2.0 Eligibility for the Discretionary Test and Trace Support Scheme**

- 2.1 Local authorities can introduce additional criteria to determine eligibility for discretionary support payments as long as these operate in addition to, rather than instead of the criteria already set by government.

- 2.2 The government has set the eligibility criteria for a discretionary Test and Trace support payment as:

- Those 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
- Those who **are not** 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; and
- Those who are on low incomes and will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work at home while they are self-isolating;

2.3 The Council has set the following **additional** criteria, in determining eligibility for the scheme.

- Applicants must be in receipt of Council Tax Support; or
- have been in receipt of Council Tax Support or any of the Test and Trace Support Scheme qualifying benefits within the previous two calendar months of the date of isolation; or
- have made a claim for Council Tax Support or any of the Test and Trace Support Scheme qualifying benefits prior to the date of isolation but are still awaiting the outcome.

### 3.0 **The Council's approach**

3.1 The council will accept applications for the Discretionary Test and Trace Support Scheme from people who meet the eligibility criteria and who have been asked to self-isolate on or after 28 September 2020.

3.2 Those people who were in self-isolation before 28 September 2020 are not eligible to apply for the scheme, even if their isolation continues after 28 September.

3.3 The scheme will run until 31 January 2021.

3.4 People from the same household can make individual applications if they each meet the eligibility criteria.

3.5 Applicants can claim for each period of self-isolation as long as they meet the eligibility criteria for each individual claim and as long as their periods of self-isolation do not overlap.

3.6 Eligible individuals can make a claim up to 14 days after the period of self-isolation has ended.

- 3.7 Applicants can apply on behalf of someone else; however, the £500 support payment can only be paid to the bank account of the person for whom the application is made.
- 3.8 The support payment can only be made to those people who have a valid notification from NHS Test and Trace telling them to stay at home and self-isolate. The scheme does not cover people who are self-isolating after returning to the UK from abroad.
- 3.9 The Council reserves the right to vary the terms of the scheme at any time, and without notice, should it be necessary to do so.

#### **4.0 The application process**

- 4.1 An online application or telephone application must be completed. Applicants must provide:
- a notification from NHS Test and Trace asking them to self-isolate;
  - proof of receipt of one of the qualifying benefits; or
  - proof that one of the qualifying benefits is being assessed;
  - a bank statement in the name of the applicant;
  - proof of employment; or
  - evidence of self-assessment returns, trading income and proof that their business delivers services which cannot be undertaken without social contact.
- 4.2 The online application will allow applicants to upload relevant evidence.

#### **5.0 How payments will be made**

- 5.1 Payments of £500 will be credited directly to the applicant's bank account within 3 days of receipt of an eligible

application. A 'faster payments' process will be utilised to transfer funds to the applicant.

- 5.2 Applicants who are overdrawn can exercise their 1<sup>st</sup> right of appropriation on the £500 payment, so that their bank does not use the support payment to pay their overdraft. The Council will provide a template to help applicants where this is required.
- 5.3 Discretionary Test and Trace Support payments will be subject to income tax but will not be subject to National Insurance Contributions.

## **6.0 Other information**

- 6.1 The Government and the Council will not accept deliberate manipulation and fraud and any person caught falsifying records or breaching self-isolation when support payments have been awarded may face prosecution and the support payments issued will be subject to claw back.

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