

Meeting: Cabinet

Date: 15 June 2021

Wards Affected: All wards

Report Title: DHSC COVID Funded Project Delivery

When does the decision need to be implemented: Immediately

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1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to bring to Cabinet's attention the current arrangements and plans for the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) which sits under the Director of Public Health.

This report also looks for cabinet support of the process for management and distribution of COMF funding proposals (both those previously agreed by SLT and those in the 'pipeline'). It is also to draw to Cabinet's attention to the issues and risks currently associated with the programme.

2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

The planning proposals for COMF are fundamentally with the aim to benefit the community in Torbay through the use of a more dynamic grant which is to provide public health activities to support the local authority's response to COVID (see section 1 in background information for more detail).

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

That Cabinet note the update.

Appendices

None.

Background Documents

None.

Report Clearance

As required by SLT.

Supporting Information

1. Introduction

Background

This paper focusses on the COMF (Contain Outbreak Management Fund). So far the council has been allocated £4.202m in what was effectively two waves of funding. An initial allocation of £2.095M in late 2020, with further allocations totalling £2.107m.

There are limited conditions attached to this grant other than that they must be used in the following way:

The COMF remains ring-fenced for public health purposes to tackle COVID-19, working to break the chain of transmission and protecting the most vulnerable.

Per the letters confirming previous COMF allocations....., release of this further (national 21/22) £400 million is dependent on each UTLA having provided their monitoring return to account for how their COMF allocation for the Financial Year 2020/21 has been used. We will not be able to release your allocation of the £400 million in the absence of this return.

The regular payments from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund can be used for public health purposes to tackle COVID-19. Whilst the specific public health activities that can be funded are subject to your judgement in coordination with your Director of Public Health, activities that this funding could be used to support may include :'

List of DHSC conditions for COMF spending (reported back to DHSC monthly)

- *Targeted testing for hard-to-reach groups out of scope of other testing programmes.*
- *Additional contact tracing.*
- *Enhanced communication and marketing (e.g. towards hard-to-reach groups and other localised messaging).*
- *Delivery of essentials for those in self-isolation.*
- *Targeted interventions for specific sections of the local community and workplaces.*
- *Harnessing capacity within local sectors (e.g. voluntary, academic, commercial).*
- *Extension/introduction of specialist support (e.g. behavioural science, bespoke comms).*
- *Additional resource for compliance with, and enforcement of, restrictions and guidance*
- *Targeted support for school/university outbreaks.*
- *Community-based support for those disproportionately impacted such as the BAME population.*
- *Support for engagement and analysis of regional areas to assess and learn from local initiatives.*
- *Providing initial support, as needed, to vulnerable people classed as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable who are following tier 3 guidance.*

As we have managed the pandemic our understanding of the barriers to testing, contact tracing and self-isolation has increased and it is expected that COMF funding will be used to implement measures for overcoming these barriers.

COMF allocations and projects

The COMF allocations have been through a process of project idea generation, consideration and approval through SLT, initially in January and February 2021 and again in late May 2021. There are currently 67 projects currently underway in COMF across the breadth of Torbay Council totalling £3,319,697. The benefits of the COMF projects are spread across a wide spectrum of the Torbay community in a pandemic response context. Mental health, homelessness, opiate addiction, support for children and families, education and self-isolation support being some thematic examples. Project Budgets range from half a million pounds to tens of thousands e.g. Mental Health: £350,000, opiate overdose prevention kits: £4,000. These projects are in various stages of delivery and completion and are shown in the summary table below.

Grant recipient theme	Example projects	Lead dept.	Value (£)
Discretionary School Grant support	To enable schools to implement additional Covid measures for vulnerable children.	Education	£450,000
Specialist community and community safety support including ensuring compliance with guidance	Funding for projects including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • debt advice service to aid self-isolation • enhancing resource through the covid compliance team • voluntary sector to deliver a homelessness prevention service in Torbay • Additional financial allocation to discretionary self-isolation payments and to fund temp accommodation costs • Multi-storey car park additional cleaning, increased capacity in seasonal response team and increased covid compliance in care homes. 	Community Safety and Customer services	£1,116,552
Mental health support for communities	A range of projects to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online adult mental health and wellbeing support service • Resilience and sustainability of the Torbay Helpline mental health offer • Covid-related anxiety and agoraphobia service • Wider support for those with complex needs • Suicide prevention and awareness campaign 	Public Health	£364,000

Targeted interventions for CYP and family support	<p>A range of projects including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced family support for wellbeing and resilience during lockdown and periods of self-isolation Educational Psychology Support to Vulnerable Children and Young People System support for enhanced 3-4 year old free play provision across a range of setting including refreshing community playgrounds 	Public Health	£442,083
Support for staff resilience and wellbeing	Wider support for staff & community organisations to improve mental health and wellbeing on frontline of Covid response	Human Resources	£100,000
Adult social care interventions for targeted communities	De-sensitisation work for those with learning disabilities to assist uptake of vaccinations and client transport to vaccination centre	Adult Social Care	£155,000
Support for Gypsy and Traveller sites	Support to set up a Temporary Stopping Site for Gypsy & Travellers to facilitate self-isolation	Planning	£50,000
Substance misuse interventions	<p>A range of interventions to support resilience and harm reduction during lockdown including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training in engaging individuals online and delivering online psychosocial interventions. Improve access to emotional and mental wellbeing support for substance misuse staff and service users To further increase accessibility of Naloxone in services and pharmacies Developing digital services to prevent covid in a vulnerable group provide alternative and adjunctive evidence-based support resulting from Covid-restrictions Commission a post supporting GP's to work with individuals to reduce the exacerbated risk of harm during the Covid pandemic. 	Public Health	£132,000
Miscellaneous other projects and programme support	<p>A range of provisions, specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional technological support for online meetings 	Various	£61,062

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COMF project manager 		
Community-based support for digitally excluded	Provide additional support for those digitally excluded as this can be a barrier to Covid response	Public Health	£35,000
Support for engagement and analysis	Capacity to improve the surveillance and response to covid related mental and physical health impacts such as substance misuse deaths and suicides and supporting evaluation of projects	Public Health	£45,000
Targeted interventions for sexual health	Targeting sexually active young adults with preventative messaging regarding Covid, safer sex and relationships	Public Health	£25,000
Targeted interventions for older people	<p>A range of projects including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme lead post working across statutory and voluntary partners and communities to maintain physical, psychological and mental wellbeing through Covid response • increase identification of deconditioning/frailty leading to an increase in referrals to strength and balance exercise programmes • expand existing project developing a digital care homes network • Supporting care Homes who have experienced outbreaks during the pandemic to prevent recurrence • Significant support for care homes including digital and mental wellbeing, physical activity in older populations establishing a peer support network 	Public Health/ NHS/ Adult Social Care	£152,000
Other support for ensuring compliance	Procurement capacity to ensure compliant procurement of full suite of projects	Procurement	£192,000
Total			£3,319,697

There is a continuous process of reviewing new projects and proposals as they come on line. There is currently a further £105,000 earmarked against projects in development which, when taken in conjunction with the live projects above, means there is a residual balance currently against the COMF grant of £777k.

3. Financial Opportunities and Implications

The COMF funding provides significant, if short term, opportunities for the local authority to provide interventions and support for communities who have been impacted by COVID. The majority of the funding agreed to date specifically looks at maximising and improving outcomes for our residents. These opportunities need to consider (within the context of capacity of officers currently within the authority) to create and implement new projects, as well as the potential constraints placed on the authority to ensure we spend money in a way that is compliant with due process and allows for sufficient engagement with partners.

Therefore whilst the majority of the projects are community facing, and this should be the main objective of any projects agreed, there are some submissions that look to address the capacity issues faced by the council in stepping up and delivering these projects compliantly at pace, in addition to the current workload.

A number of these projects, whilst clearly confined to a finite budget and timescale, will provide the authority with opportunities to consider longer term support for projects (or the next iteration of them) once the COMF funding expires. This could be through mainstreaming them into custom and practice, or looking for other sources of funding within the council that can maintain these over a further period.

4. Legal Implications

There are no specific legal implications of this funding, although awareness and compliance to any grant conditions is required.

5. Engagement and Consultation

Council departments and SLT have been consulted. Appropriate providers, voluntary sector and community groups have been consulted as appropriate on proposals.

Some formal consultation will be required where large scale procurements are proposed (e.g. online mental health support contract across Devon)

6. Purchasing or Hiring of Goods and/or Services

This is evaluated at individual project level, but a range of procurement processes will be required to deliver these projects. This could result in capacity issues within the procurement department to implement these processes, on scale, at pace.

7. Tackling Climate Change

This proposal does not have a specific Climate Change impact although this may will have influence at the project level

8. Associated Risks

Risk by not implementing proposal

1. That COMF funding is not overseen or constrained by any formal governance process and thus there is a lack of robust reporting and assurance provided to SLT and Cabinet on spend, underspend, risks and opportunities.
2. That the COMF funding is not distributed and managed robustly and therefore is not spent prior to any potential call back of unspent funds by DHSC. There is no known funding deadline currently attached to this but remains a risk.

Risk by implementation of proposal

1. Capacity contracts may be incurred within specific departments where they are ensuring that robust systems and processes are in place to spend COMF funding appropriately. This includes tasks such as undertaking sufficient market testing/warming, specification development and negotiation, and issuing of robust contract documents.
2. Procurement capacity constraints may well emerge as projects take greater form and are required to be urgently managed through a procurement process, where no additional procurement capacity is available. The impact of this is either delays to the COMF project delivery, or existing procurement work plan projects are delayed. Consideration to supporting additional procurement capacity, if required, is recommended.

Equality Impacts

This is to be determined on an individual project level although it is not expected to negatively impact on any populations.

9.	Identify the potential positive and negative impacts on specific groups		
	Positive Impact	Negative Impact & Mitigating Actions	Neutral Impact
Older or younger people			
People with caring Responsibilities			
People with a disability			
Women or men			
People who are black or from a minority ethnic background (BME) <i>(Please note Gypsies / Roma are within this community)</i>			
Religion or belief (including lack of belief)			
People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual			
People who are transgendered			
People who are in a marriage or civil partnership			
Women who are pregnant / on maternity leave			

	Socio-economic impacts (Including impact on child poverty issues and deprivation)		
	Public Health impacts (How will your proposal impact on the general health of the population of Torbay)		
10..	Cumulative Council Impact (proposed changes elsewhere which might worsen the impacts identified above)	<p><i>Cumulative Impacts</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Improved COVID-centric project delivery and a resilient process to manage scaling-up issues</i> • <i>Improved capacity for Project Officers and Procurement</i> 	
11.	Cumulative Community Impacts (proposed changes within the wider community (inc the public sector) which might worsen the impacts identified above)	<p>Cumulative impacts to the community will be felt by the effective delivery of currently 32 COVID-centric projects</p>	