

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO AND DECISION OF ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE ON 20 JANUARY 2022

SUBJECT: AWARD OF CONTAIN OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT FUNDING

REPORT AUTHOR: Nat Slade, Group Head of Technical Services
DATE: 08 December 2021
EXTN: 01903 737683
AREA: Place Directorate

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report seeks Member approval to apply Contain Outbreak Management Funding received of £144,364.

The report outlines a number of conditions associated with the award. Failure to comply with these could result in clawback. In addition, Member approval complies with the Council Constitution which states that application of grant awards greater than £5,000 requires approval by the relevant service Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the application of the £144,364 external funding as outlined in the body of the report be approved.

1. BACKGROUND:

Government has provided Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) money to upper tier local authorities to assist with Covid-19 interventions. In June 2021 West Sussex County Council (WSCC) invited District and Borough Councils to submit expressions of interest (EOI) to the Director of Public Health to access COMF.

On 23 July 2021 Arun submitted a joint bid it prepared on behalf of the Environmental Health services of all the District and Borough Councils across West Sussex which equated to 361K per local authority.

On 21 October 2021 WSCC notified Arun that because so many EOIs had been received and because of the changing nature of the Government's rules around use of the money, WSCC had decided the best approach was to provide an allocation to each District and Borough Council. This approach was selected in order to provide each Council with the maximum flexibility. The total COMF funding provided to all West Sussex District and Borough Councils is 700K, and Arun's allocation, based on the Covid-19 Relative Needs Formula is £144,364.

The funding has been made available to support risk management work that Environmental Health undertake such as providing advice, enforcement activities and workplace-based outbreak control work across a range of sectors.

Environmental Health play an important role as regulators in engaging with businesses and can influence covid practices. These are likely to be a combination of reactive following complaints made to Environmental Health by customers and staff, and targeted proactive interventions with high-risk workplaces.

Throughout the pandemic, Environmental Health has been involved in advising workplace settings of the preparatory steps to take to reduce the risk of workplace-based outbreaks and to minimise business disruption, help and advice businesses when outbreaks do occur. The number of workplace-setting based outbreaks has waxed and waned with the prevalence of cases in the population. Case numbers are currently high, and likely to remain so over the coming months. It is therefore expected that demand on District and Boroughs to engage with businesses to manage outbreaks and liaise with other partners including West Sussex County Council Public Health and UK Health Security Agency is likely to remain significant.

The winter months increase transmission, there are risks associated with the spread of variants of concerns, and with the potential for further restrictions being imposed, the resource burden on Environmental Health is significant. It has been supplemented throughout the pandemic through various external funding streams with temporary staff.

It is therefore proposed that the funding is used across the Environmental Health Service to provide sufficient staffing capacity to be able to continue to deliver reactive and proactive interventions without impacting on capacity to deliver other important Environmental Health functions. This will principally be by way of engaging temporary staff through employment agencies, as well as overtime payments to permanent staff.

2. PROPOSAL(S):

That the application of the £144,364 external funding as outlined in the body of the report be approved.

3. OPTIONS:

- Alternatively we can return the funding allocation from West Sussex County Council.

4. CONSULTATION:

Has consultation been undertaken with:	YES	NO
Relevant Town/Parish Council		✓
Relevant District Ward Councillors		✓
Other groups/persons (please specify)		✓

**5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES:
(Explain in more detail at 6 below)**

	YES	NO
Financial	✓	

Legal	✓	
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		✓
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		✓
Sustainability		✓
Asset Management/Property/Land		✓
Technology		✓
Other (please explain)		✓

6. IMPLICATIONS:

Financial

The award of £144,364 is welcome and protects the Council's base budget. Any expenditure above the award will have to be met by the Council. It is expected any unused sum will be returned to the awarding body. It is expected any unused balance will be placed in balances if not required to be returned to the awarding body.

Legal

The Council must comply with the grant conditions which include providing information on how it has been spent and what activities it has delivered.

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:

To allow the Council to effectively use the award of £144,364 in respect of supporting capacity to deliver the eligible ongoing Covid-19 outbreak management interventions by Environmental Health.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Contain Outbreak Management Funding Guidance & Grant Conditions [Contain Outbreak Management Fund: 2021 to 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91121/Contain_Outbreak_Management_Fund_2021_to_2022_-_GOV.UK.pdf)