

REPORT TO	DATE
Chief Executive, in Consultation with the Leader of the Council	15 <sup>th</sup> October 2020



TITLE	PORTFOLIO	REPORT OF
Urgent Decision Under Section 35 of the Council's Constitution: Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment of £500	Leader	Director of Neighbourhoods and Development

Is this report a key decision? (i.e. more than £100,000 or a significant impact on more than 2 Borough wards)	Yes
Is this report confidential?	No

## PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To seek approval for the payment of The Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

2. That the Director of Neighbourhoods and Development, Chief Executive and S151 Officer of South Ribble Council be given delegated authority to approve payment of the COVID19 Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment in line with the government guidance and the council's own procedure.
3. That a budget of £86,539.25 is approved to make the payments and manage the scheme. This will be funded through Government funding detailed in the operational guidance of the scheme.

## REASONS FOR THE DECISION

4. The scheme is in line with government requirements to administer grants to individuals who are affected by COVID19 and are unable to work during the self-isolation period.

## CORPORATE OUTCOMES

5. The report relates to the following corporate outcomes:

Excellence, Investment and Financial Sustainability	✓
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Health, Wellbeing and Leisure	✓
Place, Homes and Environment	

Projects relating to People in the Corporate Plan:

Our People and Communities	
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## BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

6. In response to Coronavirus the Government announced there would be support for residents who are struggling to self-isolate as directed due to financial constraints. The support payment is to help ensure that people on low incomes self-isolate when they test positive or are identified as a contact, and to encourage more people to get tested.
7. The Government have provided information on the scheme and have now provided several versions of the official guidance and eligibility criteria.
8. The cost of the scheme will be funded by way of a grant payment from government immediately to cover the cost of providing support payments to eligible individuals and all cost for running the scheme will be recoverable.
9. The Department of Health and Social Care on the 30th September issued operational guidance for the implementation of the Test and Trace Support Payments. Within that guidance the distribution methodology for the allocation of funding to local government was set out. The funding allocated to South Ribble Borough Council:

Test and Trace Payment £38,000.00 = 76 claims

Admin costs of both schemes £25,654.40

Test and Trace Discretionary Payment £22,884.85 = 45 claims

10. The council is administering and managing the schemes essentially on behalf of government and is responsible for the administration and payment of the grant monies. The additional costs involved in the administration of this scheme will be reimbursed by the government using new burdens funding.

## PROPOSALS (e.g. rationale, detail, finance, procurement)

11. Individuals who are required to self-isolate and who don't meet the benefits-linked eligibility criteria could be eligible for a discretionary payment.
12. Provisional estimates of total grant payments will depend on the level of COVID-19 incidence in South Ribble. At current levels of incidence, the government estimate that 800 people per day across England will be eligible for the Test and Trace Support Payment. Therefore, based on this estimate we could expect two

people per day to become eligible. It is expected at least double the number to account for unsuccessful applicants.

13. The Test and Trace Support Payment did come into effect on 28 September 2020. Local authorities are expected to have their systems in place by 12 October; individuals who are eligible prior to that date will be able to make a backdated claim. The application form is now live on the Council's website, but the Council is unable to issue payments until officers have been given access to the Test and Trace database.
14. The process will involve residents making an online application (or a telephone application if they are digitally excluded) and submitting as supporting evidence:
  - a notification from NHS Test and Trace asking them to self-isolate (this will include a Unique ID number);
  - a bank statement; and
  - proof of employment, or, if they are self-employed, evidence of self-assessment returns, trading income and proof that their business delivers services which cannot be undertaken without social contact.
  - information about the household composition including any other incomes and/or savings as well as property related costs to help confirm the applicants low income and potential financial hardship in the absence of receipt of a low income related benefit.
15. The process for administering these support payments has been developed and has been scrutinised by finance and internal audit. The process is subject to change following any additional guidance.
16. Any individual caught falsifying records to gain any support payments may face prosecution and will be required to pay the support monies back.
17. Central government will cover the payments to eligible applicants, as well as the administration of the scheme. Funding will be given immediately to get the scheme running.

## **CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT AND OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION**

18. A dedicated email has been set up to deal with general enquiries from all residents requiring support.

## **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

19. The Government have requested that Local Authorities roll out this grant scheme there are therefore no alternatives.

## **AIR QUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

20. . None

## **RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

21. The process has been developed and has been reviewed by Audit at every stage so that measures are in place to ensure fraudulent activity is minimised.

## **EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPACT**

22. The support payments are available to all eligible residents.

## **COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER**

23. All relevant services have created a process based on the latest government guidance that has been signed off by the Director of Neighbourhoods and Development, S151 and Chief Executive,. This process has been checked by the council's internal audit service.

24. The Department of Health and Social Care on 30th September issued operational guidance for the implementation of the Test and Trace Support Payments. Within that guidance the distribution methodology for the allocation of the funding to local government was set out. The total funding allocated to South Ribble Borough Council is £86,539.25 that is broken down as follows:

- Test and Trace Payment £38,000.00 = 76 claims
- Admin costs of both schemes £25,654.40
- Test and Trace Discretionary Payment £22,884.85 = 45 claims

## **COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER**

25. The payments proposed are in accordance with a Government scheme which is funded through Central Government grants and administered by the Council. Clearly as a responsible public authority we must act with speed to assist those affected residents covered by the scheme. It is also important of course that we have procedures in place to avoid fraud and/or abuse. Internal Audit have advised in this regard.

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

None

## **APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT**

None

**Jennifer Mullin**  
**Director Neighbourhoods and Development**

Report Author:	Telephone:	Date:
Jennifer Mullin	01772 625329	9 <sup>th</sup> October 2020

### **Approval of Urgent Decision**

I confirm that I consider this decision is one of genuine urgency in accordance with section the Council's constitution:



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Councillor David Howarth  
Chair of the Scrutiny Committee

Dated: 16 October 2020

Following careful consideration and assessment of the contents of the report, I approve the recommendations contained in the report in accordance with the Council's constitution in consultation with the Leader of the Council:



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Gary Hall  
Chief Executive

Dated: 18 October 2020



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Councillor Paul Foster  
Leader of the Council

Dated: 16 October 2020