

MINUTES OF MEETING Cabinet Member Signing HELD ON Friday, 19th March, 2021, 10am

PRESENT:

Councillor Sarah James Cabinet Member for Adults and Health

ALSO ATTENDING: Zoe Robertson, Ayshe Simsek

26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

28. ASYMPTOMATIC RAPID COVID TESTING SITES IN HARINGEY

The Cabinet Member for Adults and Health considered a report which sought retrospective Cabinet Member approval to enter into a collaborative agreement with the Department of Health and Social Care to carry out mass testing of asymptomatic people for the Covid-19 virus at designated sites in the Borough.

The Cabinet Member sought assurance on the costs for the mass testing centres being fully covered by the government funding and not reaching a situation where there was a shortfall of funding and financial support required from the local authority. This was important given that the payments were calculated according to the number of tests administered. In response, it was noted that there was close attention being to collating evidence of cost and spend on the testing sites, including officer resources. The Council was working in line with other borough's activity and taking forward similar actions to ensure government funding covered the costs and resources.

Assurance was provided that the model for the testing of asymptomatic people for the Covid-19 virus would continue to be reviewed to ensure it could be adapted to changing needs. There was consideration of the low demand being experienced by the centres but also factoring that this could increase when lock down eased and people wanted the assurance of a test when going to work or meeting family. It was noted that data collected showed that the location made a difference with most users coming to the centres from their local vicinity. Therefore, access to the testing centre would continue to be a key consideration and was felt likely to be a factor in increased use when the demand for testing increases. The plans outlined in this report would develop over time in response to national directives and local needs. This could also include provision of home testing.

The Cabinet Member highlighted that a significant part of the costs for this provision was staffing and information was sought on how staff could be utilised in periods when demand was lower. It was noted that there was a total of 85 staff working in the 4 testing centres who were mainly local and recruited through Hays and Haringey Works. This arrangement was working well and discussions were being taken forward with Connected Communities Team to understand the potential for these staff to be utilised for contract tracing, if required in the future, or to support Connected Communities resident contact activities.

Further to considering the report, the Cabinet Member for Adults and Health:

RESOLVED

1. To note the delegated authority action taken by officers for and on behalf of the Council to submit a proposal to the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) to participate in its community testing programme to carry out the mass testing of asymptomatic people in the Borough.
2. To note that the proposal was accepted by the DHSC.
3. To note that on 29th December 2020, officers communicated to the DHSC in principle agreement to the terms and conditions which support the collaborative working between the parties.
4. To note that on 29th December 2020, the DSHC acknowledged receipt of the in principle agreement.
5. To note the sites designated by officers to be testing centres in the Borough at Tottenham Community Sports Centre, 701 – 703 High Road N17 8AD; 48 Station Road, Wood Green, N22 7TY; Alexandra Palace Transmitter Hall, N22 7AY and Tottenham Green Leisure Centre, 1 Philip Way, N15 4JA
6. To note that the expenditure on this project is funded by a grant from the DHSC which is anticipated to be of £1,561,000.
7. To Ratify – insofar as it is necessary and for the avoidance of doubt - all of the action taken / to be taken by officers as set out in the report at paragraphs 2.2, 2.4 and 2.6 , such ratification to have effect both retrospectively and prospectively.
8. To authorise the receipt of grant funding and the expenditure referred to at 2.7 in the report.

Reasons for decision

The Council has rapidly rolled out mass community asymptomatic COVID 19 testing centres in line with Department of Health and Social Care specifications in order to identify people with COVID infection proactively to contribute to the prevention of

spread of COVID-19. Accordingly, formal ratification of decisions made by officers to date is required.

Alternative options considered

In view of the high level of infection rates in the Borough at the time of implementation, participation in the collaborative agreement with the DHSC was considered to be the best and currently only Government approved option to implement widespread community testing to help tackle the challenge being presented by the virus being spread by asymptomatic people.

CHAIR:

Signed by Chair

Date