

## DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
RESOURCES DIRECTORATE	ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE	4 JANUARY 2022	5
<b>PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE – LATERAL FLOW TESTING AND CONTACT TRACING FUNDING EXTENTION</b>			

### PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

### SUMMARY

This report provides Members with an update on the Track and Trace (Covid 19 Contact Tracing) programme in Fylde and requests approval for funding to extend the existing scheme until March 2022 to meet the ongoing demands of the pandemic, to be funded from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF).

The report also seeks Member approval for a fully funded budget increase to cover the actual operational costs of the Community Lateral Flow Testing program (April – November), to be funded from the Lancashire County Council Lateral Flow fund.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To recommend to the Finance and Democracy Committee approval of a fully funded revenue budget increase of £126,674 in 2021/22 to cover the actual operational costs of the Community Lateral Flow Testing programme (April – November), to be funded from the Lancashire County Council Lateral Flow fund, claimed from LCC on a monthly basis.
2. To note that the extension of the Contact Tracing Scheme running to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 has been funded using the Contain Outbreak Management funding.

### SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

Previous funding applications have been approved and funded for both schemes using the COMF (Contain Outbreak Management Fund) as part of the COVID-19 Recovery Plan.

### CORPORATE PRIORITIES

Economy – To create a vibrant and healthy economy	✓
Environment – To deliver services customers expect	✓
Efficiency – By spending money in the most efficient way	✓
Tourism – To create a great place to live and visit	✓

## **REPORT**

### **Track and Trace (Covid 19 Contact Tracing)**

The Track and Trace (national) scheme was set up at the beginning of the initial lockdown (March 2020) with the aim of making phone contact with everyone who provided a positive Covid 19 test and identify all close contacts they may have interacted with during the previous 5 days. Local Authorities were subsequently asked to introduce a local service based within their own area, where contact would be made via a local telephone number, taking over the responsibility for contacting after 3 days of unsuccessful attempts by the national team.

The rapidly increasing infection rate in November 2020 placed greater pressure to set up local schemes within districts including Fylde. After some discussions, it was agreed to 'piggyback' on the successful and established scheme already operational in Blackpool. The scheme is fully funded through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) up until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

To date, the system and service provided by Blackpool has been excellent and at times additional staff have been drafted into the T and T team to accommodate the fluctuating number of cases in Fylde, without additional funding being requested. However, Blackpool have recently taken over the contact tracing of all Fylde cases after the initial 4 hours; this may require an additional contact tracer should number continue to rise as a result the emergence of the virulent Omicrom strain. Should this prove necessary there is flexibility within the COMF to meet any additional costs. The costs to date are shown below for information:

#### **Costing until end of March 2021**

July, Aug, Sept – 12 weeks at £1,160 per week (1 Contact tracer)

Oct, Nov, Dec, Jan, Feb and March – 20 weeks at £2,320 (2 Contact tracers)

Total (estimate) **£60,320**

It is unclear at this time whether there will be an expectation on local authorities to continue with this service beyond the end of March 2022.

#### **Community Lateral Flow Testing**

Lateral Flow Testing provides an efficient means of identifying asymptomatic cases of Covid-19 within 30 minutes to slow down community transmission, lower infection rates and facilitate the easing of restrictions. Fylde Council introduced community testing facilities in February 2021, to meet changing demand as lockdown eased.

The demand for community testing has fluctuated over the past 9 months in line with variable infection rates and the availability of test kits online and at other community locations (chemists, libraries etc.). Since community testing commenced at the start of February, over 4736 face to face LFTs have been carried out by the testing team resulting in 15 positive cases being identified and 1801 home testing kits distributed.

Various locations have been used as testing sites to address the needs of the community and extend testing opportunities to more remote locations. Consideration has been given to the cost benefit of maintaining the community testing scheme however the weekly overheads have reduced since switching to the mobile testing vehicle and certain venues are providing indoor locations free of charge, making the service more efficient.

The recent emergence of the virulent Omicrom strain poses an unknown for the testing team but has once again increased demand for this reliable testing service.

Operating costs of the LFT community scheme were initially met from the Community Outbreak Management Fund (COMF). A dedicated Lateral Flow fund became available retrospectively through Lancashire County Council and claims totalling £126,674 have been successfully submitted to LCC to cover service costs between April and November. Members of the Environment, Health and Housing Committee are therefore requested to consider a funded revenue budget increase of £126,674 to be met from the LCC LFT approved funding stream in respect of the Community Lateral Flow Testing scheme costs for the past 10 months. Approval for this consideration will

subsequently be sought from the Finance and Democracy Committee.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	The report proposes a recommendation to the Finance and Democracy Committee for approval of a fully funded revenue budget increase of £126,674 in 2021/22 to cover the costs of the Community Lateral Flow Testing program (April – November), to be funded from the Lancashire County Council Lateral Flow fund, claimed from LCC on a monthly basis, with subsequent recommendation to the Finance and Democracy Committee.
Legal	No implications from this report
Community Safety	No implications from this report
Human Rights and Equalities	No implications from this report
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	No implications from this report
Health & Safety and Risk Management	No implications from this report

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BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
NA		