

TITLE	Covid-19 Testing
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive at an Extraordinary Meeting on Thursday, 24 September 2020
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Adult Social Care and Health - Matt Pope
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services - Charles Margetts

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

For Wokingham to have a robust COVID 19 outbreak response supported by adequate testing

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive is recommended to:

- 1) note the gaps in Covid testing provision in Wokingham Borough ;
- 2) approve a supplementary estimate of up to £120,000 for the purchase of Covid swab test service for emergency provision;
- 3) approve that this supplementary estimate will be drawn down in stages as tests are needed for essential workers or outbreak management;
- 4) approve that the decisions relating to the draw down on this supplementary estimate are delegated to the Director for Adult Social Care and Health in consultation with the Lead Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Services on the advice of the Public Health Consultant.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Residents of Wokingham who display symptoms of Covid-19 must undertake a Covid test. Positive cases are followed up by NHS Test and Trace, their contacts identified, and the spread of the virus contained through control measures. Current testing provision through NHS Test and Trace is strained with the demand for tests exceeding the laboratory capacity to analyse the tests.

Where key workers are not able to access testing they must self-isolate for 14 days with potential detriment to local authority service capacity. Where there is not timely access to testing in the case of an outbreak there is the potential for an outbreak to grow into a larger situation, more difficult to contain.

Having a local provision of Covid testing to cover emergency situations such as key worker capacity or outbreak containment would provide assurance that these risks are mitigated. Agreement to the request for supplementary funding of up to £120,000 would enable the purchase of Covid tests (including lab analysis, report issue and PHE notification) for use in a response situation for Wokingham residents.

(This item is deemed urgent and therefore in accordance with Rule 6.3.35b) of the Council's Constitution this decision is not subject to call-in).

BACKGROUND

Following Government guidance all residents of Wokingham who display symptoms of Covid-19 must undertake a Covid test. Identification of individuals who are positive allows them to follow self-isolation advice and for their contacts to be traced and advised to self-isolate also (and seek testing if they too become symptomatic). This is the mainstay of the management of Covid transmission in the community and is an essential part of limiting the spread of the virus.

Testing is provided through the national Test and Trace programme. To book a test residents need to log on to the Government's online portal, answer a series of questions and book a test at the nearest available testing site. There is currently a critical shortage of laboratory capacity to meet the demand for Covid testing. This is resulting in Wokingham residents being sent long distances to access Covid testing or simply not being able to book a test at all. For those not able to access testing at all they must self-isolate for 14 days in case their symptoms are Covid related. The Government is aiming to address this issue but there are no firm timelines regarding when testing will be fully functional again.

Testing for key workers and testing in outbreaks remain two key areas where lack of testing provision has significant risks. Lack of testing availability for educational key workers (and therefore self-isolation for 14 days) poses a potential capacity issue for schools to maintain normal function. Lack of rapidly available testing in an outbreak situation risks an escalation in cases. Whilst there is some provision of testing in schools it remains limited and the consistency of supply is not guaranteed.

Having a local provision of Covid testing to cover emergency situations surrounding key worker capacity or outbreak containment would provide assurance that these risks are mitigated.

BUSINESS CASE

The market has been tested and a value for money approach has been taken weighing up our requirements below, price and lead time

- Our requirements:
 - Contingency plan to enable us to test educational key workers should they be unable to access testing through the NHS Test and Trace and there is a risk to schools capacity
 - Contingency plan to enable us to test other key workers as required should they be unable to access testing through standard routes
 - Contingency plan to enable us to implement rapid testing at the onset of an outbreak if testing through the NHS Test and Trace is not available or is available at a considerable time delay
 - Based on initial data provided by schools and considering likely size of outbreaks, we have estimated that we need around 500 tests with the capacity to increase to 1000 tests at a future point
 - For the testing package to be effective it must include not only the test but also a simple process of transfer of the test to lab by mail, the return of results within maximum 48 hours and the notification of positive cases to Public Health England

The initial information obtained from one of the suppliers is:

- They can deliver 500-1000 kits at a lead-time of one week
- Each kit has instructions enclosed

- Each test kit has a shelf life of 12 months
- The cost of test (which includes product + service) is £105.00 per test
- Tests will need to be returned to the laboratory in the packaging provided using the pre-paid self-addressed envelope
- Specialist fully trained scientists will analyse and advise on the result in 48 hours from receipt of the sample in their laboratory
- If it is an urgent case they may be able to turn around in 24 hours
- Their lab works over the weekend
- As Covid is a notifiable disease, laboratories are required to notify any positive test to Public Health England ensuring that positive cases of Covid are linked into the NHS Test and Trace system
- They will not sell the test if their labs do not have sufficient testing capacity

Two other suppliers have been approached, one is able to provide the same service with a shorter test shelf-life at a greater per test cost, the other is unable to help us as they are at capacity of test sales.

Risks -

- There may be a need of additional admin resource to coordinate the overall allocation of tests and the test results
- A prioritisation process will be required to decide who to test and when
- Further test kits may need to be purchased at a future date
- Risk of tests kits not used
- Testing kits are not available through private suppliers due to increase in demand

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Up to £120,000	No - £120,000	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)		No	
Following Financial Year (Year 3)		No	

Other Financial Information
None

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation
No consultation required.

Public Sector Equality Duty
No equalities assessment required.

Climate Emergency – This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030

Not applicable.

List of Background Papers

None

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