

WEDNESDAY, 13 JANUARY 2021

**REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR – GROWTH AND REGENERATION**

**APPOINTMENT OF TEMPORARY ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH COVID-19 OFFICERS & CO-ORDINATOR**

**EXEMPT INFORMATION**

None.

**PURPOSE**

This report proposes how a ring fenced grant of £38,725 from the Government will be spent to create two EH COVID-19 Officer posts within the Environmental Health team for a 4 month temporary period to fulfil the role of 'COVID-19 Secure Marshals'. To oversee these new posts it is proposed that an existing Environmental Health Officer be seconded to this project for 2 days per week over the 4 month period as a 'Project Co-ordinator'.

These temporary changes will be funded entirely from the Covid-19 Local Authority Compliance and Enforcement Grant. Due to the tight time constraints, a Business Case was submitted to the Chief Executive and Executive Director – Organisation for their urgent approval under their delegated powers which was granted on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020. The funding needs to be spent by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. This report is to make the Committee aware of this decision and request that it be endorsed.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Committee consider the content of this report and endorse the decision to appoint 2 temporary EH COVID-19 officers and a part time EH COVID-19 co-ordinator for a 4 month period.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

On 22 September, the government announced the allocation of £60m to local authorities and the Police to support a range of additional COVID-19 compliance and enforcement activity. As part of this funding, Tamworth Borough Council was awarded with a grant of £38,725 by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG). The funding made available was for a 4 month period and is ring-fenced for any activity which will support COVID-19 compliance and enforcement of measures to support public health measures, including social distancing, to control the spread of COVID-19 across individuals, businesses and in the community. Any money not spent on these activities will need to be returned.

An urgent business case was submitted in November to create two EH COVID-19 Officer posts within the Environmental Health team for a 4 month temporary period to fulfil the role of COVID-19 Secure Marshals. These officers will provide essential help to the public and local businesses on the latest Covid-19 rules and guidance, offering guidance in and around business premises. These posts will not only provide support within the Town Centre and Market but will also cover all other parts of Tamworth including other workplaces, industrial estates and areas subject to local spikes in infection. To oversee

these new posts it is proposed that an existing Environmental Health Officer be seconded to this project for 2 days per week over the 4 month period.

### **EH COVID-19 Environmental Health Coordinator**

This part time post (2 days per week) will help co-ordinate the project, train the new team and report qualitative and quantitative outcomes that can be reported back to the Government (which is a condition of the funding).

### **EH COVID-19 Officer x 2**

The EH Covid-19 Officers will report to the EH COVID-19 Environmental Health Coordinator, and their duties will include:

- Solve problems and concerns related to the latest COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions
- Liaise with the SME business community and other relevant stakeholders
- Respond to public enquiries and provide advice/support on the latest Covid-19 restrictions relating to the public.
- Provide direct advice and support to local businesses on Covid-19 Secure measures in line with the latest restrictions and regulations.
- Deliver public information and business facing communications campaigns

## **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

The proposed posts will be funded entirely by the Covid-19 Local Authority Compliance and Enforcement Grant which has provided £38,725 funding to Tamworth Borough Council.

### **EH COVID-19 Environmental Health Coordinator**

It is proposed that an existing Environmental Health Officer contractor be used to fulfil this role for 2 days per week over the 4 month period at a cost of £10,656.

### **EH COVID-19 Officer x 2**

It is proposed that we appoint 2 positions at Grade E, which will cost a total of £21,363.84 over the 4 month period.

### **Contingency funding for Over-Time, Signage, Communications, PPE and Staff Training costs**

It is proposed that the remaining £6705.16 be spent on over-time if the officers need to work weekends or evenings, signage that may be needed around the Borough, Communications activities, PPE for the new team and any additional staff training needs.

## **LEGAL/RISK IMPLICATIONS**

It is not anticipated that there will be any significant legal/risk implications by creating these posts, as the proposal fully complies with the guidance from central government.

## **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

None.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

On 8<sup>th</sup> October 2020 the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government wrote to the Borough Council confirming that the Council would be provided with £38,725 of funding to be spent within a 4 month period. This funding is ring-fenced for any activity which will support compliance and enforcement of measures to support public health measures, including social distancing, to control the spread of COVID-19 across individuals, businesses and in the community.

The Prime Minister recently set out several steps to help increase compliance in relation to measures to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, including encouraging authorities to introduce COVID-19 Secure Marshals and their equivalents. Many local authorities already use marshals, wardens, stewards or their equivalents, helping to educate the public and explain rules, offering guidance in and around business premises to relieve pressure on Environmental Health Officers and the police. Indeed the Borough Council was recently operating a 'shop safe team' with ERDF monies to carry out business facing Covid advice and guidance with significant success following the first lockdown.

In response to this funding and framework, it is proposed that two new posts are created called EH Covid-19 Officers who will fulfil the above role. These posts will be either be filled by using officers from within the Council, temporarily seconded into completely new roles, based on their current role's skills set, or where this is not possible by recruiting externally. It is proposed that this structure will be in place for an initial 4 months, to support both the public and businesses within the whole of Tamworth between mid-December 2020 and March 2021 (or 4 months from the point of recruitment).

## **REPORT AUTHOR**

Gareth Harvey – Head of Environmental Health

## **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-local-authority-compliance-and-enforcement-grant/guidance-to-support-local-authority-compliance-and-enforcement-activity-including-covid-19-secure-marshals-or-equivalents>

## **APPENDICES**

None.

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