



Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET, 5 JULY 2021
Report Number	Agenda Item 5
Subject	CONTAIN OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT FUND ("COMF") FOR THE VISITOR ECONOMY AND BROADER MITIGATION AGAINST COVID-19
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Cllr Jenny Forde, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing Email:jenny.forde@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Philippa Lowe, Business Manager, Localities Tel: 01285 623515 Email: Philippa.lowe@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To agree a broad approach to the use of the COMF including the visitor economy fund.
Annexes	None
Recommendation/s	a) That the proposed approach to the COMF allocations from the County Council and the Government is endorsed and authority is delegated to the Business Manager (Localities) to agree how this funding is used to best effect in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive and Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing
Corporate priorities	Support good health and wellbeing and Recovery from Covid-19.
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Consultation has taken place with the Cotswolds National Landscape, Cotswolds Lakes Trust and Ward members for Bourton on the Water and the Cotswolds Water Park.

I. BACKGROUND

Funding has been allocated to Cotswold District Council (“the Council”) by Gloucestershire County Council from their Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF), as part of the response to Covid-19. The Council, as well as all the other Districts in Gloucestershire, has been allocated £50,000 specifically to reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission linked to the visitor economy, through measures to enable residents and visitors to be and to feel safe.

The general intention is that the potential projects and initiatives which are eligible for funding should be identified and agreed as soon as possible to enable the funding to be spent by the 31st of March 2022. Whilst guidance has been produced, the criteria for spending is not tightly defined. Nevertheless any measures funded should:

- Be with the intention of minimising the transmission of Covid;
- Be related to initiatives in outdoor public spaces where access is uncontrolled or where there is limited control;
- Build confidence in residents and visitors regarding the safe management of areas;
- Reduce the risk associated with high volume of visitors;

In addition, the Council has received a direct allocation of COMF money from the Government for 2021/22 of £97,403.03. This fund is ring-fenced for public health purposes in relation to the mitigation against and management of local outbreaks of Covid-19. The Council will be expected to coordinate its activity funded by this District COMF allocation with the Gloucestershire Director of Public Health. Early discussions have commenced. One option would be to use some of the funding to provide further support for the visitor economy measures identified in this report.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1 In determining an appropriate approach to supporting the visitor economy, the starting point has been to identify locations within the District where there are identified risks around Covid-19 transmission and risk of contamination. In particular, in locations where the volume, intensity and impact of visitors is an issue.
- 2.2 Feedback and evidence has been gathered from targeted locations and by the Covid Recovery Officers all of which has highlighted two particular pressure point areas in the District: Bourton-on-the-Water and the Cotswolds Water Park.
- 2.3 To date resources including the Covid Recovery Officers have been directed to those and other locations but further work is considered necessary in these two pressure points to mitigate the risks and impact of visitors in these locations.
- 2.4 In that context Officers from the Council have contacted key stakeholders, Ward Members, the Chairman of Bourton on the Water Parish Council and delivery partners to explore options for appropriate initiatives and interventions. The approach also aligns with the on-going work of the Water Park Project Task and Finish groups and efforts to tackle identified issues around Anti - Social Behaviour (“ASB”), Littering, Parking etc all of which have been compounded by the impact of increased visitor numbers following the easing of lockdown restrictions.

2.5 Initial thoughts on how the visitor economy COMF funding could be spent are:

- Creation of new waymarked circular trails from Bourton-on-the-Water with digital guide and information on a route to encourage visitors to venture out of the crowded village centre locations;
- High quality signage and map boards in Cotswolds Water Park (CWP) for example to highlight the significance and sensitivity of the area as a wildlife and environmental asset and details of existing walking and cycling routes to neighbouring locations, to influence behaviours and promote dispersal of visitors;
- Infrastructure improvements in the CWP to incorporate creation of new walking and cycle routes to enable dispersal of visitors;
- Interventions that benefit and enable young people, such as mentoring, counselling, peer support and training;
- Engagement with young people and development of communication campaigns around relevant topics including ASB, litter, compliance (Covid-19 regulations), take up of vaccinations to support behaviour change and reduced risks;
- Short videos – Covid-19 related and another to the towns of Cirencester and Tetbury on actions taken around spacing and signage to reassure residents and visitors are aware of safety measures and are encouraged to follow safe behaviour on their visits;

2.6 The District allocation of £97,403.03 is ring fenced for Public Health related activities to help reduce the spread of Coronavirus and support local public health initiatives. This could include, but is not limited to:

- Additional resource for compliance with, and enforcement of, restrictions and guidance;
- Additional resource to undertake audit of existing pressure points and make recommendations to support behaviour change;
- Enhanced communication and marketing, e.g. towards hard-to-reach groups and other localised messaging;
- Targeted interventions for specific sections of the local community and workplaces;
- Extension/introduction of specialist support, e.g. behavioural science, bespoke comms;
- Harnessing capacity within local sectors, e.g. voluntary, academic, commercial;
- Community-based support for those disproportionately impacted such as the BAME population;
- Support for vulnerable people classed as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. The proposed expenditure of £50,000 has already been allocated by Gloucestershire County Council. The District COMF allocation for 2021/22 (£97,403.03) has been received from the Government and there is no further direct financial cost for the Council.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 A Grant Agreement will be prepared which will specifically provide that the Council will have no ongoing liability for the projects to which funding is allocated.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. There is a risk that the projects will not be delivered. This risk is being mitigated by working with existing local partners with experience of delivering similar projects and tightly worded Funding Agreements and Terms of Reference.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 6.1. The projects undertaken through the COMF funding aim to ensure that places are safe and welcoming for all.

7. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The initiatives around new footpath and cycle routes are the most environmentally-friendly option for travelling through and around an area.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 8.1. The Council could choose not to spend its allocations of COMF funding, but this would be a missed opportunity to help its local communities to recover from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and visitor pressure.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1. None.