

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE**Wednesday, 9 June 2021**

REPORT TITLE:	CONTAIN OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT FUND UPDATE
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an update in relation to the Contain Outbreak Management Fund, specifically:

- An overview of this temporary fund and Wirral's awarded allocation up to 21/22.
- The current position in relation to use of the fund to date, and the remainder to be allocated.
- An outline summary of emerging priorities and plans, supporting ongoing COVID-19 response and population health recovery over next twelve months.
- Recommendations relating to the development of future spending proposals for this fund, linked to other existing COVID-19 funding and the wider recovery and renewal priorities for Wirral.

This matter affects all wards within the Borough; it is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

1. The Policy & Resources Committee are recommended to note the contents of the report, the progress made to date and to support the ongoing COVID-19 response.
2. The Policy & Resources Committee are recommended to create a Member Working Group be established to consist of eight Members (3;2;1;1;1) to give oversight to future spending proposals for this fund, linked to other existing COVID-19 funding and the wider recovery and renewal priorities for Wirral.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 This report gives an overview of how Wirral Council will work to Keep Wirral Well and protect residents from the impact of COVID-19.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 No other options have been considered.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 This report summarises the temporary funding introduced in mid-2020 during the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, allocated to Local Authorities for use by Public Health, to respond to and address the impact of the virus – the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF).

- 3.2 COMF allocations have been sporadic, with no certainty around future funding until recently. Wirral's COMF allocations are detailed in this report, from the introduction of the funding in June 2020, to the most recent allocation in March 2021.

- 3.3 Public Health are extending and developing further plans for intended continued use of the fund to support ongoing Covid-19 response activities and delivery of Wirral's Local Outbreak Management Plan, as well as supporting the wider local population recovery in the short/medium term.

3.4 Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF)

- 3.5 The COMF provides funding to local authorities in England, to support public health activities directly related to the COVID-19 response. Wirral has been allocated varying sums, at different stages over the last twelve months as the pandemic has developed and the nature of the situation, both on a national and local level, has changed. The scope of the grant and the funding formula for COMF has evolved with the changing landscape, presenting challenges in forward planning beyond the immediate and very short term.

- 3.6 COMF was subject to review earlier this year, and in March 2021 government confirmed the funding would continue for the financial year 21/22, to enable Local Authorities to plan the continued public health response work, aligned to the national COVID-19 Contain Framework, and continued delivery of Local Outbreak Management Plans.

3.7 Allocation and Current Spend

- 3.8 The total COMF allocation for public health activities for Wirral from June 2020 until March 2022, is £14.784m. The following table provides a breakdown of the allocations as they were confirmed/received, from the initial payment in June 2020,

to the most recent confirmed allocation in March 2021, which is expected to cover the period until March 2022;

Wirral Contain Outbreak Management Fund allocations (received / confirmed June 2020 – March 2021)

Ref	Month Received/Confirmed	Allocation Total
1	Jun-20	£2,733,018
2	Nov-20	£2,701,000
3	Nov-20	£866,126
4	Dec-20	£1,018,320
5	Jan-21	£648,022
6	Mar-21	£1,134,039
7	Mar-21	£1,434,906
8	Mar-21	£1,666,343
9	TBC	£2,582,258
		£14,784,032

3.9 In advance of the March 2021 allocations, Wirral’s forecast COMF spend was £7.347m. This was based on extending existing COVID-19 Hub response and to deliver services until September 2022. These plans were developed, in line with the COMF funding confirmed at that stage (£7.966m) and followed the clarification that residual COMF spend allocated during 2020-21 could be carried forward.

- Resourcing the Covid-19 Hub - £2.772m
 - Outbreak management
 - Enhanced contact tracing
 - Environmental health/health protection
 - Business support
- Community Engagement - £1.948m
- Infection Prevention Control - £854k
- Regional Test and Trace Hub - £618k
- Support for Educational settings - £500k
- Communications - £472k
- Intelligence - £163k

3.10 In March 2021, Wirral received confirmation of a further £6.818m COMF funding, for use during 2021-2022. The residual COMF funding therefore to be allocated over 2021 – 2022 is £7.437m.

3.11 Additional Spend in 2021/22

3.12 It is vital local systems continue to work together to develop and implement plans to respond to COVID-19, and that those plans are sufficiently resourced, financially and with the required expertise. Resource and service planning is underway led by public health, to develop spending plans which support the

ongoing delivery of the proactive containment and intervention measures, as well as the wider considerations linked to Wirral's local population health recovery.

- 3.13 Further use of COMF funding will be linked to resourcing and delivering the priorities of Wirral's Local Outbreak Management Plan, last updated April 2021. The update to the Council's Local Outbreak Management Plan has focused on a revised set of priorities, acknowledging the significant developments across the COVID-19 response system. A summary of key progress against these priority actions outlined within the Local Outbreak Management Plan is provided in the table below;

Priority	Progress to Date and Future Plans
<p>1) Effective Surveillance</p> <p><i>Ensure access to timely local data and intelligence to inform local activity to prevent and manage outbreaks.</i></p>	<p>We have an established local surveillance system to capture timely local outbreak data and provide support to a variety of settings through Wirral's COVID-19 Hub. The Microsoft Dynamics case management platform has led to improvements in the collection and reporting of data captured from local settings, as well as proactive identification of exposures and sources of potential outbreaks. The utilisation of this system has enabled closer collaborative working with the Cheshire and Merseyside Hub and the regional Public Health network.</p> <p>Daily and weekly multi-agency surveillance meetings are held at local and regional levels to understand the epidemiology of current situations and to appropriately direct prevention and control measures, community engagement activity and target communications.</p> <p>We have continued to support the development of the CIPHA (Combined Intelligence for Population Health Action) integrated data and analyst network resource for Cheshire & Merseyside, sustaining a regional understanding of the epidemic and likely demands on health and social care systems.</p>
<p>2) Engagement and Communication</p> <p><i>Build trust and participation through effective community engagement and communication.</i></p>	<p>We have ensured a strong focus on engagement and communication as part of our COVID-19 response, with a clear strategic and insight-driven approach. The 'Keep Wirral Well' branding and core values have been embedded across all communication channels.</p> <p>We have developed a test, trace, isolate, vaccinate communications plan which reinforces key messages to reduce COVID-19 transmission. This is aligned to the national Spring 2021 Road Map.</p> <p>Wirral's Community Champions network has now enlisted over 600 local people, with a case study detailing our local programme presented at the LGA Behavioural Science</p>

	<p>Conference in early 2021 and the successful roll out of the EngagementHQ platform to gather insights from our Champions more effectively. More information on the Community Champion Programme can be found here: Keep Wirral Well during COVID-19 www.wirral.gov.uk</p> <p>We have invested in our local Community Connector service, recruiting an extra 22 Community Connectors, to undertake proactive engagement with communities with lower testing and vaccination uptake.</p> <p>We have recruited nine Black and Minority Ethnic Link Workers, to enhance existing engagement with our ethnic minority communities, with emphasis on maximise participation with Testing and Vaccination take-up.</p>
<p>3) Higher-Risk Settings, Communities and Locations <i>Identify and support high risk workplaces, locations and communities to prevent and manage outbreaks.</i></p>	<p>The COVID-19 Hub continues to work closely with local partners to prevent and manage outbreaks in high-risk settings with a robust daily review process and use of local intelligence to proactively target settings at higher risk of outbreaks.</p> <p>There is a coordinated health and social care response; overseeing capacity, trends, resources and updated guidance, leading the partnership across the system including voluntary sector, to respond to emerging pressures and system needs. We will build on learning to date and work in partnership to ensure our Health and Care system is able to deliver high quality COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 care for Winter 2021, including surge capacity to respond to further surges in COVID-19, the emergence of new COVID-19 variants, and a potential surge in other respiratory viruses.</p> <p>The COVID-19 Hub School Support Team continue to successfully provide dedicated educational support and guidance on national policies and implementation of required measures.</p> <p>We are working with local third sector, voluntary and other organisations and groups to respond to the needs of local communities particularly at risk of COVID-19.</p> <p>Regular meetings are held with representatives from across the local business sector, including the Wirral Chamber of Commerce, to support COVID safe organisational settings as restrictions are relaxed in accordance with the Spring 2021 Roadmap. We have revised and updated the Council's Business Toolkit to ensure employers and employees understand their responsibilities and are supported to maintain safe environments.</p>

<p>4) Supporting vulnerable and underserved communities <i>Proactively support individuals and communities, ensuring services across test, trace, isolate and support systems are accessible and meet the diverse needs of our local communities.</i></p>	<p>We have maintained excellent community links with over 100 local community groups and organisations, through the Humanitarian partnership and regular meetings, working together to support local communities.</p> <p>We have ensured targeted communications in areas of high incidence, to over 35,000 properties, highlighting current guidance and support available as well as maintaining regular contact with our clinically extremely vulnerable residents.</p> <p>We have worked with the local multicultural third sector to support access to regular symptom free testing and will continue to promote access to testing for groups at higher risk of infection owing to range of social, economic, ethnic or geographical factors.</p> <p>We are currently developing cultural awareness training for local NHS staff to ensure they are sensitive to the diverse needs and cultural differences across our local population.</p>
<p>5) Vaccination <i>Support the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccine programme, identifying and tackling inequalities in vaccine coverage.</i></p>	<p>In partnership with NHS colleagues, we continue to support the roll out of the COVID-19 vaccination programme in Wirral. The prioritisation of roll-out has focussed on vaccinating our most vulnerable residents, as agreed by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. Our first COVID-19 vaccination was administered in Wirral on 8th December 2020, and since then significant progress has been made with the local roll-out. As of 19th May 2021, 72% of the eligible population of Wirral had received the 1st dose of the vaccine, with 45% having received both doses.</p> <p>We have locally prioritised homeless people and rough sleepers for the COVID-19 vaccine and will continue to use local data and intelligence, including a local programme of engagement based on insight, to identify any areas of low uptake within local communities.</p> <p>Citizen’s Advice Bureau’s social prescribing team has carried out targeted work with a small number of clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) patients (housebound and/or severely frail) registered as declining their vaccine offer. Using a general wellbeing call the team contacted individuals to understand their COVID-19 vaccine experience and offer a person-centred intervention. To date, 6 CEV individuals have actively accepted the vaccine.</p> <p>We have facilitated a targeted COVID-19 vaccination Q&A session for social care staff giving the opportunity to speak directly to a panel of clinical experts from midwifery,</p>

	<p>pharmacy and General Practice. The session also sought to increase access opportunities (on site and local).</p>
<p>6) Testing <i>Identify cases of COVID-19 by ensuring access to testing for those with and without symptoms and for outbreak management.</i></p>	<p>We have worked with local, regional and national partners to develop an appropriate and flexible local testing offer across symptomatic, asymptomatic and outbreak testing. In December 2020, Wirral was one of the first areas to commence symptom-free Community Testing.</p> <p>Wirral's Testing Strategy was revised in February 2021, aligning to the national plans for Community Testing, maintaining accessible testing for people with symptoms, complemented by mobile testing units and outreach testing and distribution. We have also continued to promote testing within local settings and workplaces, offered alongside training and quality assurance processes.</p> <p>We continue to review our local strategy as national policy changes and testing capacity and capabilities continue to emerge – ensuring that we retain our ability to respond and mobilise surge mass testing as required, for example due to a Variant of Concern, and align to enhanced contact tracing.</p> <p>We will review the outcomes and learn from national pilots related to 'test to release' (daily testing to reduce self-isolation period) and 'test to enable' (e.g. to attend events) approaches to ensure their successful usage locally.</p>
<p>7) Contact Tracing <i>Effectively deploy local contact tracing to reduce the onward transmission of COVID-19.</i></p>	<p>Wirral's local contact tracing service is now directly delivered by the COVID-19 Hub, with a skilled and fully trained dedicated team in place to ensure a sustainable service for the future. This local approach, as well as our participation in the 'Local 0' programme, has subsequently improved case completion rates with intelligence gained confirming that local people with COVID-19 are grateful for the local knowledge and support imparted as a result of this in-house service.</p> <p>We have worked collaboratively with the Cheshire and Merseyside Hub, Public Health England and the Department of Health and Social Care Local Tracing Partnership forums, to influence and strengthen the local contact tracing system, enabling us to reach people who the national system has been unable to contact and to prioritise and respond to high-risk complex cases and settings.</p> <p>We have continued to support health and social care, schools, local businesses and other settings through intelligence led contact tracing and where a focused outbreak response is appropriate. Wirral's COVID-19 Hub</p>

	<p>has also commenced formal support of local NHS Trusts, providing assistance where contacts of positive inpatients or recent discharged residents are identified.</p> <p>Going forward, we will look to gain a better understanding of reasons for failure to engage and utilise this insight to shape communications and support, as well as developing adaptable systems and suitable delivery models for focused contact tracing for areas with high transmission, exploring contact tracing via home visits in specific circumstances.</p>
<p>8) Support for Self-Isolation <i>Ensure access to support, including where appropriate financial support, to ensure people who need to self-isolate can do so.</i></p>	<p>We have produced guides on self-isolation for a range of target audience cohorts, which included advice and guidance on accessing the self-isolation payment scheme, wider welfare support and non- financial support available, as well as working with Wirral Chamber and local businesses to support awareness of employer responsibilities in supporting staff to self-isolate when required.</p> <p>We have supported our local contact tracing support to isolate through follow up text messaging and through Community Connectors supporting individuals, with both cases and contacts now proactively contacted by the contact tracing team for welfare checks and practical support throughout their isolation period.</p> <p>We will continue to engage with local communities, to further our understanding of the breadth and extent of the barriers for self-isolation across our population, using this insight to identify any gaps in our local response, both in terms of the financial support available, including the discretionary fund, as well as the non-financial practical and other areas of support.</p> <p>We will also embed the guidance set out in the advisory framework for self-isolation recently issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS Test and Trace, when considering local communications, practical support, our support offer and improving outcomes.</p>
<p>9) Responding to Variants of Concern (VOC) <i>Develop robust plans and working with local, regional and national</i></p>	<p>In February 2021, Wirral responded locally to the identification of a Variant of Interest across the North West, working with national and local partners to undertake enhanced contact tracing, access to additional symptomatic testing capacity and effective public communications.</p> <p>We have developed local plans outlining how we would enable surge responses related to enhanced contact tracing, and testing – within a specific geographical area, or</p>

<p><i>partners to enable surge capacity, to respond to local outbreaks and VOC.</i></p>	<p>targeted at specific common exposures for a select time period - including door-to-door testing and face-to-face contact tracing as required.</p> <p>A key part of our response to VOCs will be effective communication and community engagement to ensure local communities understand the purpose of the surge response, why it is targeted and time limited and what they need to do to contain the spread of the virus.</p> <p>We will also continue closely working with Public Health England, the Department of Health and Social Care and North West Local Authority colleagues to ensure we have agreed local processes in place for managing outbreaks linked to a VOC.</p>
<p>10) Compliance, Enforcement and Living with COVID-19 (COVID secure) Work <i>collaboratively to guide, inform and support local compliance with regulations and restrictions, support local enforcement where necessary, and plan for gradual re-opening of wider society.</i></p>	<p>We have an established system in place to ensure effective partnership working and communication between the COVID-19 Hub and local Environmental Health and Enforcement teams, to manage compliance and enforcement across Wirral.</p> <p>Alongside this internal system, we have actively participated in joint working across the Liverpool City Region, through multi-agency co-operation, the Compliance and Regulations Cell and sub-groups, to ensure a consistent approach to supporting local compliance and enforcement measures across Merseyside and to develop effective processes and systems.</p> <p>We have monitored the operations and compliance of local businesses including responding to reports of non-compliance, conducting 1,557 visits to local businesses, across hospitality, close contact services, supermarkets, retail and other premises. As restrictions are relaxed as part of the Spring 2021 Roadmap plans, we will continue to support organisations to operate safely.</p> <p>We will continue to contribute to the strategic design and planning for local recovery, a gradual re-opening of wider society and the local economy, the interface with testing and vaccination programmes, and local plans to manage summer events, providing clear and consistent advice and guidance, and a strong community engagement approach.</p>
<p>11) Governance, accountability, and resourcing <i>Establish robust governance structures for</i></p>	<p>We have adapted the robust emergency response governance system established in March 2020, revising the local COVID-19 governance structure recently to continue to holding organisations to account, taking decisions and agreeing necessary actions to manage and respond effectively to COVID-19.</p>

<p><i>decision making with clear accountability and effective resource use.</i></p>	<p>We will continue to manage and respond effectively to COVID-19 by strengthening existing partnerships at strategic and operational levels across local, regional and national stakeholders.</p> <p>The Wirral COVID-19 Hub will be retained until at least Summer 2022, extending temporary contracts and building resilience in our experienced and established local teams.</p>
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3.14 Emerging themes developed through strategic recovery and renewal planning will also help determine future spending priorities for the COMF;

- Children & Families
- Communities
- Economy
- Inequalities, Health & Wellbeing

3.15 In addition to utilising COMF to extend existing response and COVID-19 Hub activities (summarised in 3.9), there are a number of specific proposals, and emerging priorities to be given further consideration, through COMF.

3.16 Delivery of community testing

3.17 Ringfenced funding for Community Testing is confirmed until end of June 2021. The Chief Medical Officer has expressed there is a continued role for local authorities with testing, and the importance of testing and the role of local authorities is also set out in the Spring 2021 Roadmap. If no further dedicated funding is allocated for community testing to local councils, it is proposed to utilise COMF to continue with the local testing offer, to deliver local symptom-free testing and testing in the event of outbreaks in Wirral, until at least March 2022.

3.18 Support to self-isolate

3.19 Practical support for self-isolation – Supporting people who need to self-isolate remains a key priority in the response to COVID-19, helping halt the spread of the virus. In addition to the direct financial support available, local authorities have received ring-fenced funding to support people self-isolating with any practical needs until June 2021. It is unclear whether any further funding will be made available to extend this support beyond June 2021. We are monitoring the impact and outcomes of a proactive approach and will use local intelligence to consider innovative practice, through use of COMF funding, to support residents that need to self-isolate.

3.20 Sustaining and strengthening resilient communities.

3.21 Recovery for Communities Fund - Communities have played a unique role in responding to local needs over the last year. Development of an outcome focused grant funding for local community groups, providing the opportunity for one-off funding to support local communities with addressing direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19 within the borough.

- 3.22 Support for Mental Health – Funding to address the identified needs of local people and communities in relation to the impact of COVID-19 on mental health, including isolation, loneliness, anxiety, depression, bereavement, ill health, and loss of income.
- 3.23 Build on joined-up working from public services and community/voluntary group - Ensure our residents remain supported after Covid-19.
- 3.24 **Behavioural insight to support better outcomes**
- 3.25 Resourcing a system and infrastructure for generating qualitative insights and applying scientific analysis to inform policy, improve public services, and deliver positive results for people and communities in Wirral.
- 3.26 **Information and advice**
- 3.27 Funding the extension of an existing commission for information and advice services in relation to fuel poverty, supporting our most vulnerable residents with advice, support and signposting. A longer-term approach to effective Borough wide information, advice and support will be delivered through the Change Programme aligned to the Wirral Plan.
- 3.28 **Supporting children, young people and families.**
- 3.29 Addressing the impacts of COVID-19 for children, young people and families, with plans focussed around five emerging thematic areas:
- Support for 'hidden harms'
 - Digital Exclusion/Poverty
 - Mental Health
 - Education & Aspiration
 - Support to low-income families
- 3.30 A programme of work will facilitate and enable the renewal of Wirral from the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on the impacts at community and Borough wide level, and the opportunities to reimagine and rebuild a better future for the Borough, its places, and communities. To oversee the distribution of recovery funding – aligned to an agreed renewal programme it is proposed that a sub-group of P&R is created to ensure political oversight of programme activity and performance.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Wirral Council has received a total of £14,784,032 from the Test and Trace Contain Outbreak Management Fund that covers the period July 2020 to March 2022. The table below details where resource has been allocated to:

Area	Planned spend to end of September 22
Hub operations	£2,772,471
Community Engagement	£1,968,259
Infection Prevention Control service	£853,549
C&M- Regional Test and Trace Hub	£618,021
Supporting Educational Settings	£500,000
Communications	£471,812
Intelligence	£162,975
To be allocated	£7,436,945
Total	£14,784,032

4.2 Within the £14,784,032 total, there is £7,436,945 that is presently being reviewed to determine how it can be effectively allocated. To note £6,817,546 of the £14,784,032 funding was received after February 2021. Resource and service planning is underway led by public health, to develop spending plans which will be reported at a future meeting.

4.3 We are currently undertaking a review of the commitments within the Tranche funding as some of the expenditure allocated to the Tranche funding meets the criteria for COMF and had been included within that forecast before the additional COMF was provided. Therefore, there is a rationale to transfer eligible commitments from the Tranche funding to the COMF, thereby releasing Tranche funding to reduce the value of exceptional financial support. This is currently being investigated and will be reported at a future meeting.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

5.2 A duty for the management of communicable diseases that present a risk to the health of the public requiring urgent investigation and management by the Council, in conjunction with Public Health England, sit with:

1. The Director of Public Health under the National Health Service Act 2006;

and

2. The Chief Environmental Health Officer under the Public Health (Control of Diseases) Act 1984

5.3 The Director of Public Health has primary responsibility for the health of the local community. This includes being assured that the arrangements to protect the health of the communities that they serve are robust and are implemented through developing and deploying local outbreak management plans. Each authority must make available the necessary resources to investigate and control any outbreak at the request of the Outbreak Control Team. The Council's Local Outbreak

Management Plan has been developed in accordance with the Authority's statutory duties and Public Health England guidance.

- 5.4 The existing powers afforded to Environmental Health Officers and others have been bolstered by new additional powers to support enforcement of Covid specific restrictions and control which have been reviewed and appropriately utilised locally.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 This report is for information to Members and as a result there are no resource implications.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 It should be noted that data relating to case rates, hospitalisation and operational management of the COVID-19 response is frequently changing and as a result, some of the information contained within this report is likely to be outdated by the time of publication.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 No direct public consultation or engagement has been undertaken in relation to this report. However, community engagement is a key priority in ensuring an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity. Equality considerations were a key component of the actions noted in this report, however there are no further direct equality implications arising.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no direct environment and climate implications arising from this report.

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APPENDICES

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Wirral Local Outbreak Management Plan 2021: [Wirral Local Outbreak Management Plan - April 2021](#)

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	13th October 2020
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	19th November 2020
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	18th January 2021
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	2nd March 2021
Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee	7th June 2021