

# Report to Cabinet

**29 September 2021**

<b>Subject:</b>	Use of COVID-19 Emergency Funding & Contain Outbreak Management Fund
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources Councillor Maria Crompton
<b>Director:</b>	Director of Finance Simone Hines
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Rebecca_Maher@sandwell.gov.uk

## 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That approval be given for the COVID-19 Emergency Funding to be used as set out in Appendix 1, totalling £18.377m.
- 1.2 That approval be given to use some of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) to cover the continuation of the Contact Tracing team (£0.701m) and various additional deep clean/sanitising requirements at the Aquatic Centre build site (£0.415m).

## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The Council received a total of £33m COVID-19 Emergency Funding between 2020 and March 2021. An allocation of £11.2m has also been received for 2021/22. This funding is unringfenced and can be used more flexibly than most other COVID grants.
- 2.2 The Council has also been allocated £2.9m of Contain Outbreak Management Fund for 2021/22 and brought forward grant of £7.6m from 2020/21. This must be used for more specific purposes aimed at reducing the chances of any COVID outbreaks within the borough.



- 2.3 At the beginning of the pandemic, the Council's Financial Regulations were revised to allow the S151 Officer to make use of this emergency funding in the most appropriate and efficient way. Any significant spending decisions were approved by Emergency Committee. As the Council is no longer considered to be in an 'emergency' situation, Cabinet are now required to approve planned expenditure against these grants.

### **3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?**

- 3.1 Details of the individual proposals in Appendix 1 set out how these deliver the objectives of the Corporate Plan.

## **4 Context and Key Issues**

### **Emergency Funding**

- 4.1 At the end of 2020/21 £20.245m COVID-19 Emergency Funding was remaining and held in a reserve for future COVID-19 related budget pressures.
- 4.2 Leadership Team have been working on identifying COVID related budget pressures and these have been split between items to be funded from the Emergency Funding or COMF grant. The proposals for the use of the COMF grant will be presented to the October Cabinet meeting. The majority of pressures relating to the loss of income up to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021, as a result of COVID, are not included here and will be claimed for through the Sales, Fees and Charges grant. Income pressures for the remainder of the year will need to be funded from the Emergency Funding.



4.3 Sandwell Children's Trust (SCT) have submitted a Type 1 Change Request requesting additional funding of £0.522m in the current financial year. This can be accommodated within the £1.9m proposal in Appendix 1.

4.4 All of the proposals have been thoroughly reviewed and agreed by Leadership Team and Cabinet are now requested to approve. The planned use of the COVID-19 Emergency Funding leaves approximately £6m of grant to fund continuing pressures relating to the long-term impact of the pandemic. There is no further COVID related funding expected for 2021/22 or beyond so this remaining funding will need to be carefully managed especially if the Council's income sources, such as car parking, take a longer period to recover.

## COMF

4.5 Proposals are still being collated for the use of the COMF grant. However, there are two immediate requirements which relate to: -

- The continuation of the Contact Tracing Team during 2021/22 at a total cost of £701k.
- Additional deep clean/sanitising requirements at the Aquatic Centre build site in order to minimise the spread of COVID amongst workers. The cost of this is approximately £415k in total.

4.5 A further report will be bought to Cabinet in October on further spend to be funded from COMF, and officers are mindful that there may be a greater call on this funding if there are further waves of the pandemic during the winter months.

## 5 Alternative Options

5.1 The alternative option would be for these proposals to not be agreed and for Cabinet to request alternatives to be presented for approval. This will delay the expenditure against these grants.



## 6 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	The resource implications are set out in the main body of the report.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	Legal Services will be consulted and involved in any of the proposals that require contracts or Service Level Agreements to be drawn up or in any other circumstances considered necessary.
<b>Risk:</b>	The main risk of Cabinet agreeing to these recommendations is that there may be some clawback of unspent grant by central government. However, this is highly unlikely with regard to the Emergency Funding as it has been paid as a Section 31 unringfenced grant with no conditions attached. There is also a contingency remaining of £6m therefore all of the funding is not currently committed.
<b>Equality:</b>	Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken for individual proposals where it is considered appropriate.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	The use of the COVID-19 funding will help to support areas that have been adversely impacted by the pandemic or reduce future outbreaks in the borough.
<b>Social Value</b>	Social Value targets will be included in any contracts as appropriate.

## 7. Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Proposed Use of COVID-19 Emergency Funding

