

**A MEETING OF THE POLICY AND ORGANISATION BOARD
WAS HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2021**

The Mayor

Councillors Hook, Burgess, Ms Ballard, Bradley, Casey, Chegwyn, Mrs Hook, Mrs Huggins, Hylands, Jessop, Pepper, Philpott and Raffaelli

PART II

100. ADOPTION LEAVE AND PAY POLICY

Consideration was given to a report of the Acting Head of Human Resources detailing the updated adoption policy.

Resolved: That the Board approves the adoption leave and pay policy for a child under 5 with enhanced pay that reflects the current maternity provisions.

101. ANY OTHER ITEMS - UPDATE TO COVID SELF ISOLATION PAYMENT SCHEME.

The Board was advised that there was an urgent item that needed to be considered.

By reason of special circumstances, the Chairman determined that the following item be considered at this meeting notwithstanding the fact that the item had not been available for public inspection in accordance with the provisions of Section 100B(4)(a) of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.

The special circumstances were that the SIPs scheme has been in place since October 2020 to assist residents on low incomes when they have to isolate due to Covid and lose salary/wages. Changes were needed to ensure the Council helped as many residents as possible through the winter especially with Covid rates rising and other winter pressures.

Notification was received on the 18/11 that Gosport would receive some additional funding for our Discretionary scheme so an urgent report has been prepared to ensure maximum help to residents as soon as possible.

Councillors Huggins, Chegwyn, Burgess and Philpott declared that they were County Councillors but that this would not impact on their decision.

Councillor Jessops declared an interest as he had received a payment and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Benefits, Procurement and Insurance detailing an update on progress so far with both the Test and Trace Self Isolation Payment standard scheme and the Gosport Discretionary Test and Trace Self Isolation Payment scheme, with a proposal to widen the discretionary scheme to increase numbers of people eligible. The recommendations will ensure that funding is used to maximise support to residents who have been asked to self-isolate and need additional financial support.

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On 14th September 2021, the Government confirmed the Test and Trace Schemes will be extended until 31 March 2022 and on the 18th November 2021 additional discretionary funding was also announced. Ministers agreed to extend the scheme based on analysis that shows it supports people to self-isolate, encourages them to get tested, is reaching individuals on low incomes and in deprived areas, and has prevented hospitalisations and deaths.

In answer to a Member's question some typographical amendments which were clarified and it was clarified that figures stated in the appendix were provided by Hampshire County Council

A Member noted that there had been three quarters of applications refused. The Board was advised that a large number of these had been because they fell below the earning threshold. Other reasons for refusal included the non supply of earning details or track and trace proof.

It had been recognised that the threshold for earnings was low and that the report was recommending an increase.

The Board was advised that with regards to the non-receipt of evidence attempts had been made to contact the applicant by text and email.

A Members advised that they felt with regard to Covid 19 Elected Members should be advised if another Member tested positive and requested that a protocol be considered in the event an elected member tested positive.

The Senior Solicitor advised that Track and Trace was in place to advise close contacts of any positive cases and that this was not part of the agenda item being considered.

It was requested that this be considered away from the meeting.

Members recognised the increased support that the proposal would give and requested that it be publicised widely.

RESOLVED

That the Board:

- i) Amends the Council's Discretionary Self Isolation Payment scheme by increasing the income bracket criteria within the Discretionary Scheme from £300 per week to £400 per week.
- ii) Provides delegated authority to the Borough Treasurer to make any further amendments to Gosport's Self Isolation Payment scheme as necessary.
- iii) Approves the administration of the HCC Voucher scheme as described in 2.7 of the report

CHAIRMAN

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Concluded at 6.17 pm