

Record of officer decision

Decision title:	Communications and promotion – Covid-19
Date of decision:	19.03.20/ 29.04.2020 / 3.06.2020 / 26.06.2020
Decision maker:	Chief Executive
Authority for delegated decision:	Council constitution 3.7.9 all necessary decisions in the case of emergencies
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	n/a
Decision made:	Investment in additional communication support during the emergency response to the Covid-19 pandemic with a value of up to £235k.
Reasons for decision:	<p>As a category 1 responder and as the delegated communication lead for the Tactical Co-ordination Group, Herefordshire Council had a key role in getting Public Health messages and government messaging to the general public. As the pandemic continues, responsibility for the outbreak response and related lockdowns will be placed on the Local Authority, and there will be an ongoing need to warn and inform the public, as well as providing updates on test and trace and recovery.</p> <p>Key messages need to be delivered to audiences that do not use the internet and the council uses adverts in local newspapers, local banners and radio commercials to achieve this at a cost of £10,281. On-going promotion of local messages and advice to key vulnerable offline audience will need to continue, with an expected total advertising cost of £41,124 until April 2021 which included circulated newspapers within its emergency distribution food (whilst the council provided that).</p> <p>External communications support was commissioned from Be Bold Media in April and May to support the Communications Team, when the pandemic was at its peak, and the requirement and pace of information exchange was considerable. This provided extra capacity so that staff could address media, social media, internal communication and web demands of the Covid-19 response. Additional communication support is expected to be required for Test and Trace and the total cost for emergency response communications support is expected to be £77,186 up until April 2021.</p> <p>The council has also taken the decision to send correspondence direct to household with Covid-19 advice and signposting for support. This was considered helpful as direct and personalised contact particularly to people who are not on-line or/and have limited social networks (particularly during lock-down). The cost of the resident's letter in March 2020 was £64k including postage costs. There will be an additional follow-up resident's letter, with a cost of up to £35,000 and a letter to businesses at a cost of not more than £7,000</p>
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:	These are one-off costs to support the council in its role as a category 1 responder during the Covid-19 pandemic, and as the delegated lead communication agency for the Herefordshire Tactical Co-ordinating Group. It also allows for future spend in the demand arises related to the on-going response phase of the pandemic.
Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:	<p>The council could choose not to target offline audiences, however this would place vulnerable audiences at risk and could affect the health and lives of residents, in a county with a significant number of at risk residents.</p> <p>The alternative decision was to not commission additional communications support, which could leave the council open to risk and its statutory responsibility. Due to the urgency and reactive need for support, a recruitment process was not</p>

	an available option for the initial phase, however recruitment for Test and Trace communications can began once the regional and local outbreak plans have been shared by Public Health England.
Details of any declarations of interest made:	None

Signed..... Date:30.6.2020