

Treasury and Exchequer Ministerial Decision Report



RESERVE FUNDING FOR THE COVID-19 HELPLINE RESOURCE

1. Purpose of Report

To enable the Minister to approve an allocation of up to £500,000 from the General Reserve (Covid-19 Contingency) to the Covid-19 Response head of expenditure to fund the Covid Helpline.

2. Background

The Covid-19 Helpline was established in March 2020 and has been an essential component of the Island's response to Covid-19. The Helpline provides a single point of contact for Islanders and visitors seeking information on wide-ranging issues, including health concerns, public health requirements, travel, benefit entitlements, employment, and business support. The Helpline has been the focal point for various requests, directing these to the relevant Government departments as necessary. The service has also supported co-ordination of various Government responses to the pandemic, including the Testing and Tracing Programme and the Covid-19 Vaccination Programme.

Government Plan 2022-25 provided up to £500,000 in reserves to deliver the Helpline should that prove necessary. The on-going response to the pandemic means the service has continued to operate in 2022 and this funding will therefore need to be drawdown to support the service for the remainder of the year. As the current Government of Jersey policy of de-escalation progresses, demand upon the Covid-19 Helpline is expected to reduce and resources will be flexed to meet changing demand.

The continued funding of the Helpline supports the continuation of a well-coordinated response to the pandemic and enables a joined-up approach across Government Departments.

3. Recommendation

The Minister is recommended to approve an allocation of up to £500,000 from General Reserve (Covid-19 Contingency) to the Covid-19 Response head of expenditure to fund the Covid Helpline.

4. Reason for Decision

Article 15(3) of the Public Finances (Jersey) Law 2019 states that the approval by the States of a Government Plan authorises the Minister to direct how an approved appropriation for a reserve head of expenditure in the plan may be spent (including on another head of expenditure) in the first financial year covered by the plan.

The current Policy for Allocations from the Reserve, presented to the States Assembly as R.60/2021, sets the requirement for all allocations from the General Reserve (Covid-19 contingency) once recommended for approval by the Treasurer of the States, to be referred for review to either the Council of Ministers or the relevant Competent Authorities Ministers and to seek comments from the Principal Accountable Officer (PAO) prior to submission to the Minister for approval.

The Council of Ministers agreed to provide funding for the Covid-19 Helpline as part of the Government Plan 2022-25 subject to confirmation of need. This Decision has been circulated to the Council of Ministers in accordance with the requirements of the policy.

The Investment Appraisal Team has reviewed the business case for this request. Following this review, the Treasurer, taking into account comments from the PAO, recommends that the Minister allocates funding from the General Reserve.

The Treasurer of the States, under delegation from the Principal Accountable Officer, will appoint the Director General for Customer and Local Services as the Accountable Officer for the allocation to the Covid-19 Head of Expenditure.

5. Resource Implications

The Covid-19 Response Head of Expenditure to increase by £500,000 and the General Reserve (Covid-19 Contingency) to decrease by an identical amount.

This decision does not change the total amount of expenditure approved by the States Assembly in the Government Plan 2022-25.

Report author: Specialist – Business Cases	Document date: 29 March 2022
Quality Assurance / Review: Acting Group Director, Strategic Finance and the Head of Financial Governance	
MD sponsor: Treasurer of the States	