

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 20 May 2020

Procurement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)



Cllr Mark Deaville, Cabinet Member for Commercial said,

“We know there is a global shortage of PPE and that’s why we have stepped into make sure no care provider in Staffordshire goes without the PPE it needs if it runs out.

Our army of carer workers are doing an amazing job in extremely difficult times and we are determined to make sure they have what they need to protect themselves.

We have supplied more than 700,000 pieces of equipment to Staffordshire’s care frontline already, and we are making sure that we have sufficient stock to maintain supplies.

We are planning ahead to ensure we have sufficient supplies in stock until the current emergency is over.”

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Authorises officers to continue to procure supplies of PPE with a view to maintaining a rolling supply sufficient to last 12 weeks based on usage.

Local Members Interest
N/A

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Recommendations of the Cabinet Member for Commercial

I recommend that:

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Report of the Director of Corporate Services

Reasons for Recommendations:

Background

1. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is a vital resource in Staffordshire's response to the impacts and effective infection control management of this pandemic. Care Homes and frontline workers need PPE beyond their normal stock levels, and their existing supply chains are often late with deliveries, have increased their prices significantly, or their orders are not accepted or delivered.
2. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has been arranging PPE drops for Local Resilience Forums (LRF), of which we have had three to date. The PPE provided is relatively low in quantity once split across the partnership, and a fraction (less than 4%) of what is needed to fully support the health and care sector for the Staffordshire LRF.
3. The government has plans to implement a PPE ordering service for Local Authorities and Care Homes which was due to commence on the 6th April. This was then delayed by 4 weeks and no confirmed date for launch has yet been announced. We are also informed that there will be lead-in times from order to delivery and these are not yet known.

Staffordshire's Response and Planning

4. In week one of the Council's Incident Management Team being set up it was clear that PPE would be of critical importance. With little information on national provision we made the decision to commence ordering emergency supplies.
5. A few weeks into the response we understood that need would be much more significant than first considered and so we immediately started to model future requirements. It was necessary to quickly place much larger orders and establish a procedure to allow us to supply PPE to our Adult and Children's care providers as an emergency provision when their supplies ran low or their orders were cancelled.

6. The Health Safety and Wellbeing Service has been operating the PPE store to manage the deliveries and onward distribution to providers. We have eight district locations at local fire stations where providers can collect PPE 24 hours a day at six of the locations, or between 8am and 8pm, seven days a week at the other two locations. For our own social work workforce, we have set up eight district office locations which are supplied weekly with PPE to meet the needs of frontline social work visits.
7. Care providers with significant needs due to outbreaks have received weekly drops to support them through this difficult period and to manage their PPE gaps.
8. Providers have been encouraged to keep ordering their own supplies and to ring the national helpline for support. Over the last two weeks we have seen increasing demand as providers' supplies and deliveries are delayed or do not arrive. The national helpline is now pointing providers back to LRF supplies.
9. We have also placed an order on the West Midlands Joint Procurement Pool. We placed our request four weeks ago and the procurement went out this week for quotes. We have not chosen to rely on these joint arrangements as to date they are not responsive enough to manage the immediate demands.
10. We have also not chosen to rely on LRF deliveries. Contact with MHCLG soon made it clear that these drops would not be enough, with notice of drops only coming at the last minute, with no understanding of provision until just before, or at, the point of delivery. For example, last week we indicated our 14-day requirements but the LRF drop was only 5% of what was requested.
11. At the time of writing this report, we have supplied almost 400,000 (383,084) items of emergency PPE to our providers. Last week we provided over 105,000 items alone.

Preparing for the next 12 weeks

12. Recently we have been working on securing what we considered would be the worst case requirements for each item of PPE to enable us to be prepared to meet increasing needs, a growing national shortage, and the impact of the new PPE guidelines that will see increased use of fluid resistant surgical masks and eye protection.
13. From the supply chain that we have established over the last eight weeks, we have ordered enough to meet our expected worst-case demand, with significant numbers of these deliveries having now arrived. We have other orders due shortly, and deliveries expected on the 4th May will see us covered on the risk items such as gowns and FFP3 masks. Once these deliveries arrive, we will have sufficient in stock to last the next 12 weeks and potentially longer.

Longer Term Planning

14. It is currently difficult to fully understand the longer-term (post 12-week) needs for PPE, but the current assumption is that the use of PPE will remain an important part of this battle against Covid-19 for the foreseeable future. Care homes and Care workers are likely to need PPE until the risks associated with Covid-19 have passed or there is a vaccine. Testing may also assist with reducing PPE needs. Currently it is difficult to know when increased PPE usage will reduce, and I am therefore advising that we plan to maintain a supply of PPE for the rest of this year.
15. There is the potential that as the lockdown is reduced face masks and other PPE may be needed more widely by workforces as they return to normal working arrangements. The government is not indicating a requirement for this at present but other countries are currently implementing this. There could also be a recommendation for some wearing of masks in public such as on public transport or when shopping. Whilst at present the government stance is not to do this, if this was to change it would have a major impact on the supply needs of such PPE items. I recommend that our planning accounts for this and we are ready to respond or maintain levels of PPE for Care Homes and Care Workers that would see us through impact of such a decision.
16. We will of course keep our approach under review so that we respond to the level of usage as it changes over time, but the intention will be to maintain a sufficient supply for a 12-week period until we are satisfied that the need has passed.

Procurement/Legal Issues

17. To date we have been procuring PPE under the emergency provision of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (i.e. the use of Regulation 32(2)(c) to 'direct' award to suppliers insofar as is strictly necessary where, for reasons of extreme urgency brought about by events unforeseeable by the contracting authority). As and when conditions in the market permit, we will revert to more traditional methods of procurement and only use the emergency provisions when strictly necessary.

Financial Implications

18. So far, we have spent approximately £1.3m on PPE. It is possible that this could rise as high as £3m or more if demand continues at its present level. For this reason, it is necessary to seek a Cabinet decision to continue to order PPE as outlined, to be funded from the additional Government grant received in respect of the pandemic.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

None.

Contact Details

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