
SPECIAL MOTION NO. 2 – FIXING THE GOVERNMENT’S FAILED NATIONAL TEST AND TRACE SYSTEM

Standing in the names of:

- (i) Councillor Ben Coleman
- (ii) Councillor Helen Rowbottom

This Council:

- Believes that a well functioning testing and tracing system is essential to combatting the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Notes that in March 2020, the Director General of the World Health Organisation called on all countries to “test, test, test”, saying, “Without testing, cases cannot be isolated and the chain of infection will not be broken”.
- Regrets that from early on in the pandemic, rather than harness the long-standing expertise of local public health officials, local authorities and publicly funded laboratories, the government created a centralised testing system and outsourced much of it to private companies who are widely seen as having failed.
- Notes that the centralised test and trace system isn’t reaching enough people who have Covid.
- Regrets that as a result of failures in the national system, the government is now rationing tests, reducing the availability of test kits, cutting back on walk-in testing in favour of booked appointments, and making it harder to get appointments through 119 or online.
- Regrets that it took months of pressure from local council leaders before councils were brought more into the test and trace system and essential data on infected residents was shared with them.
- Notes that Hammersmith & Fulham Council has pushed the boundaries of what councils are able to do on testing and tracing:
 - It was the first council to test care home residents being discharged from hospital.
 - It was the first council to test all care staff, including asymptomatic ones, and ensure compliance by guaranteeing staff up to £200pw if they tested positive and had to self-isolate.

- It is piloting an enhanced test and trace service which includes knocking on the doors of residents who the central system has failed to contact, encouraging them to self-isolate.
 - It was the first council to make welfare calls to residents who have Covid, supporting self-isolation and helping to identify sources of infection and target activity.
 - It communicates with residents more effectively than the government does – with only a day's notice it got 650 people to turn up to a weekend walk-in testing centre at Westfield.
- Notes that the Chief Executive of Public Health England, Duncan Selbie, said on 31 July 2020: "Hammersmith and Fulham Council... moved early and fast to put an enhanced level of protection around social care ahead of national guidance and based on the strength of their local relationships and knowledge about what works.... They have much to be proud of and have undoubtedly saved lives."
 - Notes that the Council has taken all of its extraordinary actions on testing and tracing despite Covid leaving a hole of at least £18m in its finances after the government broke its promise that councils would be fully funded for the financial impact of the pandemic.
 - Urges the government to recognise that the national system it has created has failed.
 - Calls on the government to turn NHS Test and Trace into a locally led service, putting local authorities and local public health officials in the driving seat in the battle against coronavirus, with appropriate delegated powers and funding.