

## **Test and Trace System**

### **Cllr Karin Haverson**

A recent cross party government advisory committee has stated that during the current pandemic, the Test and Trace system has only made a marginal impact in the UK. This system is run by private companies at huge expense to the tax payer.

It is now apparent that local authorities are much more successful in tracing contacts, they also have the local knowledge for backwards tracing, ie tracing the source of an outbreak. North Somerset like many other local councils have run a supplementary service since January, contacting local residents who could not be contacted by the existing service. Some other LAs such as Sandwell (West Midlands) and others have taken all of contact tracing on as early as last summer, Lambeth Borough Council have recently done so.

A functioning Test and Trace system is still absolutely vital to stopping this virus spreading over the coming months and year, as Independent SAGE members led by Sir David King, the WHO and public health experts like Prof. Devi Sridhar have asserted time and time again. Scientists also expect future pandemics.

I therefore move that North Somerset Council expresses concern about the poor performance of the existing Test and Trace system and ask our Chief Executive and our Leader to write to the Secretary of State for Health Matt Hancock and to Robert Jenrick. Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government as well as our local MPs, to ask for meaningful dialogue with local authorities on co-designing our future health protection rather than receiving a national policy decision. This should include considering the Contact Tracing system to be devolved to Local Government, with rapid data transfer from the testing service and appropriate funding support. This may be both more cost effective and more successful in encouraging compliance, as local authorities know their communities and are trusted. However, this will have to be clearly dependent on adequate funding both for staff and data systems.

I also move to explore the possibility of expanding our current follow up system by involving volunteers such as retired GPs and nurses, analogous to our successful North Somerset Together scheme. This could be brought forward in time for the next 'wave' expected by many scientists for the autumn.

