

8.1. Rapid Antigen Testing

AUTHOR: Shane Sullivan, Executive Manager Governance

ATTACHMENTS: Nil

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to report to Council in accordance with the resolution of Council at its meeting of 23 May 2022 reviewing the requirements for Rapid Antigen Testing for Council Meeting attendees.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Since the Council Meeting of 21 February 2022, Council has required all attendees at Council Meetings to provide evidence of or a declaration of an appropriate negative test prior to entering the Chambers. This requirement is in addition to a number of COVID safety measures already in place.

The health advice continues to be monitored with recommendations implemented as required. Recently, the requirements around close contacts of those who have tested positive for COVID have been relaxed by NSW Health with the requirement being lifted for close contacts without symptoms to isolate.

While there has been a progressive relaxation of rules around testing and isolation, there is current medical advice that the instances of COVID in the community are increasing. The Chief Medical Officer has advised that the COVID winter wave is likely to peak in August. While in NSW there was a reduction in cases from April to May, the number of registered new cases has been rising consistently since mid-June.

Additional caution and personal responsibility is being recommended. For this reason, it is proposed that the testing requirement continue to remain in place subject to a further review in November 2022.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The cost of Rapid Antigen testing is approximately \$150 per Council Meeting. Council provides tests to Councillors and staff attending the Council meeting.

RECOMMENDATION:

1.THAT Council maintain the requirement for attendees at Council Meetings to provide evidence of or a declaration of an appropriate negative COVID test prior to entering the Chambers.

2. THAT a further report be provided to the November Council Meeting regarding continuing this requirement to provide evidence of or a declaration of an appropriate negative COVID test prior to entering the Chambers.

LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

4. Our Social Vitality

4.1 North Sydney is connected, inclusive, healthy and safe

5. Our Civic Leadership

5.2 Strong civic leadership and customer focussed services

BACKGROUND

At its meeting held 24 January 2022, Council resolved as follows:

- 1. THAT all attendees, staff, visitors, and Councillors to North Sydney Council Meetings provide evidence or declaration of a negative rapid antigen test taken within the previous two days (or a negative PCR test within the previous four days) before entering the Council chambers.*
- 2. THAT if Rapid antigen tests are unable to be sourced then the meeting should be held by remote or hybrid meeting.*
- 3. THAT a further report be presented to Council regarding the potential for Council to administer the tests.*
- 4. THAT this motion be reviewed in 3 months' time*

A process was implemented to meet the requirements of parts 1 and 2.

At its meeting held 21 February 2022, Council considered a further report in accordance with part 3 above and resolved as follows:

- 1. THAT Council note the report*
- 2. THAT that the current process with regard to Rapid Antigen Testing for Council Meetings be reviewed by way of a further report to Council to its May 2022 Meeting.*

At its meeting held 23 May 2022, Council considered a further report in accordance with part 2 above and resolved as follows:

- 1. THAT Council continue the requirement for attendees at Council Meetings to provide evidence of or a declaration of an appropriate negative COVID test prior to entering the Chambers and that this decision be reviewed by Council in three months.*
- 2. THAT the General Manager continue to monitor the NSW Health advice and implement risk controls as appropriate.*

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

Community engagement is not required.

DETAIL

The process in accordance with the resolution of Council of 24 January 2022 requires that all attendees, staff, visitors and Councillors to North Sydney Council Meetings provide evidence or a declaration of:

- a negative rapid antigen test taken within the previous two days or
- a negative PCR test within the previous four days

This evidence or declaration is required prior to entering the Council Chambers.

There is no current requirement under a Public Health Order for those attending Council Meetings to have had a negative rapid antigen test.

The following steps are currently in place to facilitate COVID safe Council Meetings:

- Antimicrobial surface cleaning
- Availability of N95 masks
- Availability of antibacterial hand sanitiser
- Pre-registration for public attendees
- Attendance of vaccinated staff only at Council Meetings
- Ability for remote attendance for Councillors, staff and the public

At the June Council Meeting, Council adopted a Code of Meeting Practice that has provision for Councillors, staff and the public to attend Council meetings remotely.

Staff will continue to monitor the health advice and any Public Health Orders as part of our obligations under the Work Health and Safety legislation.