

10.7. Rapid Antigen Testing

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ATTACHMENTS: Nil

PURPOSE:

This report is provided in accordance with the resolution of Council at its meetings of 14 November 2022 to review 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.

It is no longer mandatory to self-isolate if you test positive to COVID-19. NSW Health recommends that you stay home and take steps to protect others from infection.

With the progressive relaxation of rules around testing and isolation, it is recommended that the requirement for attendees at Council Meetings to provide evidence of, or a declaration of, an appropriate negative test prior to entering the Chambers be lifted.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

There are resource impacts in administering the current rules around provision of tests prior to Council Meetings. It is estimated that administering these requirements results in an additional two staff hours per meeting. This is for:

- liaison with members of the public prior to and at the meeting;
- liaison with and reminders to Councillors prior to the meeting;
- liaison with attending staff prior to the meeting; and
- ensuring an appropriate supply of tests for Councillors and staff.

RECOMMENDATION:

1.THAT Council lift 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 the General Manager continue to monitor the NSW Health advice and implement risk controls as appropriate.

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

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 8 August 2022, Council considered a further report in accordance with part 2 above and resolved as follows:

- 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.*

At its meeting held 14 November 2022, Council considered a further report in accordance with part 2 above and resolved as follows:

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 February Council Meeting regarding continuing this requirement to provide evidence of or a declaration of an appropriate negative COVID test prior to entering the Chambers.

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 at 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 Chamber.

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;
- physical distancing as far as practicable; and
- ability for remote attendance of Councillors.

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

From 14 October 2022 it was longer mandatory to self-isolate if you test positive to COVID-19. Health advice recommends that you stay home and take steps to protect others from infection.