

## **8.11. 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 21 February 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.

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:**

Council obtained a quotation for the provision of point-of-care testing prior to Council Meetings. The total estimated cost per meeting for the administering of Rapid Antigen Testing is \$1,177.50. This is on the assumption of two technicians and thirty tests.

### **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.*

## **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. There is also current advice that those who have recently had and recovered from COVID 19 should not take rapid antigen tests for a period as they may return a false positive.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) have approved two methods of rapid antigen testing. There are the self-testing kits which can be done by the individual and do not require medical supervision.

The other method is point-of-care testing which is implemented on-site and requires medical supervision. These tests are considered by the TGA to be appropriate for larger-scale professional testing.

The TGA has issued guidance to assist businesses in understanding the key considerations for the safe implementation of point-of-care testing. This is guidance only and it is not a TGA requirement that Council comply with the requirements for supervision of testing, however it is recommended.

The proposal obtained by staff to administer point-of-care rapid antigen tests includes the provision of medical screeners who are appropriately trained in the correct use of the test and access to a health practitioner responsible for supervision of the testing program. This supervision may be provided remotely.

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
- Ability for remote attendance for Councillors

The current Meeting Regulations provide an exemption permitting Councillors to attend remotely through to 30 June 2022. Council has resolved to include a provision to extend this ability to attend remotely in the draft Code of Meeting Practice currently on public exhibition.

At this time, neither point of care testing or a declaration of having self-completed a Rapid Antigen Test is required before the public attend Council customer services facilities, Library, Administration Centre or other facilities.

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.