

Meeting	Decision Session - Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Health (in consultation with Executive Leader (incorporating Finance and Performance))
Date	14 September 2017
Present	Councillors Runciman and Carr (Executive Leader (incorporating Finance and Performance))
In Attendance	Councillor Neil Barnes

5. Declarations of Interest

At this point in the meeting, the Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Health and the Executive Leader (incorporating Finance and Performance) were asked to declare if they had any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests or any prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests in the business on the agenda. They confirmed that they had none.

6. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the last decision session, held on 13 July 2017, be approved and signed by the Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Health as a correct record.

7. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been two registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme in relation to agenda item 4 (Options for the additional provision of financial advice/support following the introduction of Universal Credit)

Councillor Neil Barnes spoke on behalf of local residents. He presented a petition to the Executive Member, signed by nearly 1800 people, which called for the funding of an additional 2 advice sessions per week to respond to the current unmet demand for independent advice required to help residents respond to the challenges of the introduction of universal credit (including need to claim online and payments being made in

areas). He expressed concern that funding for extra sessions may only be made available until April 2018 and asked the Executive Members to consider longer term sustainability of the service to ensure that impartial independent advice continued to be available to those who needed it.

John Short, Chair of Citizens Advice York (CAY) then addressed the Executive Members. He stressed that CAY was an independent charity which was dependent on grants and that the drop in advice service, run mainly by volunteers, was at the heart of what they did and evidence showed that it made a life changing difference to those who needed it. He explained that the number of drop in sessions had had to be reduced in April due to a fall in available income and this did not allow them to meet demand and they were having to turn people away each day leaving them residents frustrated and distressed. He asked the Executive Members to increase the funding available to allow them to increase the number of drop in sessions and requested that discussions in relation to the renewal of the service level agreement (SLA) be expedited to ensure decisions could be taking quickly on the future funding of the service.

8. Options for the Additional Provision of Financial Advice/Support Following the Introduction of Universal Credit

The Executive Members considered a report which provided a response to a council motion which was presented and agreed at full Council as amended on 20 July which requested that the relevant director urgently produced an assessment for presentation to the relevant Executive Member Decision Session which set out practical measures that the council and its partners could quickly put in place to mitigate the risk of residents being adversely affected by the introduction of Universal Credit Full Service (UCFS)

The report provided a response to the council motion and the progress the council had made in respect of the further detailed points within the motion, with a focus on options and recommendations to further support Citizens Advice York (CAY) and/or the advice sector around UCFS advice/information. It also took into account a detailed submission which had been received from CAY with regard to funding.

The Executive Members considered the following options:

Option 1 – do nothing at the present time

Option 2 – agreed to fund £12k to restore the two drop in sessions in 2017-18

Option 3 – agree to fund a greater amount.

The Assistant Director, Customer and Digital Service and the council's Head of Housing attended the meeting to present the report and they responded to queries raised by the Executive Members.

Members were advised that there had been clear support from limited consultation to increase the number of CAY drop in sessions and for closer partnership working.

Members acknowledged that the current 3 year SLA was due to end and negotiations would start soon to review the SLA. They were advised that CAY had undertaken work over the last 6 months to examine the operation of the service and costs and that they had also given a commitment to explore new sources of funding. It was agreed that full engagement was needed between the council and CAY with regard to any future changes to the service.

Both Members agreed that in a time of financial constraints, the recommendation provided a generous compromise and expressed pleasure that the council and CAY were working together to find a way forward as quickly as possible.

Resolved:

That the Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Health (in consultation with the Executive Leader, Finance and Performance)

- (i) notes the information provided and progress made in relation to Housing Services and York Financial Assistance Scheme (YFAS) in response to the related aspects of the Council motion;
- (ii) agrees to pay a one off sum of £12k to restore the drop in sessions to the end of March 2018 as detailed in the Citizen's Advice York's (CAY) proposal, as outlined in Option 2 of paragraph 28 of the report.

(iii) agrees that CAY's longer term requirements be reviewed as part of the next three year SLA negotiations (2018/21).

Reason: To fully respond to the requirements as outlined in the related Council motion as amended on 20th July 2017.

Councillor Runciman,
Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Health

[The meeting started at 12.00 pm and finished at 12.40 pm].