



**Notice of a public
Decision Session - Executive Member for Finance and Performance**

**Meeting to be held in consultation with the Executive Member for
Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods (for agenda item 4 Winter
Grants Scheme)**

To: Councillors Ayre (Executive Member for Finance and Performance) and Craghill (Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods)

Date: Thursday, 3 December 2020

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: Remote meeting

A G E N D A

Notice to Members – Post Decision Calling In:

Members are reminded that, should they wish to call in any item* on this agenda, notice must be given to Democratic Services by **4:00pm on Monday 7 December 2020**.

*With the exception of matters that have been the subject of a previous call in, require Full Council approval or are urgent which are not subject to the call-in provisions. Any items that are called in will be considered by the Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee.

Written representations in respect of items on this agenda should be submitted to Democratic Services by **5:00pm on Tuesday 1 December 2020**.

1. **Declarations of Interest**

At this point in the meeting, the Executive Members are asked to declare:

- any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests
- any prejudicial interests or
- any disclosable pecuniary interests

which they may have in respect of business on this agenda.

2. **Minutes**

(Pages 1 - 4)

To approve and sign the minutes of the Decision Session held on 5 November 2020.

3. **Public Participation**

At this point in the meeting members of the public who have registered to speak can do so. Members of the public may speak on agenda items or on matters within the remit of the committee. The deadline for registering at this meeting is at 5.00pm on Tuesday 1 December 2020.

To register to speak please visit www.york.gov.uk/AttendCouncilMeetings to fill out an online registration form. If you have any questions about the registration form or the meeting please contact the Democracy Officer for the meeting whose details can be found at the foot of the agenda.

Webcasting of Remote Public Meetings

Please note that, subject to available resources, this remote public meeting will be webcast including any registered public speakers who have given their permission. The remote public meeting can be viewed live and on demand at www.york.gov.uk/webcasts.

During coronavirus, we've made some changes to how we're running council meetings. See our coronavirus updates (www.york.gov.uk/COVIDDemocracy) for more information on meetings and decisions.

4. **Winter Grants Scheme**

(Pages 5 - 18)

This report provides the Executive Member for Finance & Performance in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing & Safer Neighbourhoods with the Winter Grants scheme for approval.

5. Urgent Business

Any other business which the Executive Member considers urgent under the Local Government Act 1972.

Democracy Officer:

Name: Angela Bielby

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Email: a.bielby@york.gov.uk

For more information about any of the following, please contact the Democracy Officer responsible for servicing this meeting:

- Registering to speak
- Business of the meeting
- Any special arrangements
- Copies of reports and
- For receiving reports in other formats

Contact details are set out above.

This information can be provided in your own language.

我們也用您們的語言提供這個信息 (Cantonese)

এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় দেয়া যেতে পারে। (Bengali)

Ta informacja może być dostarczona w twoim własnym języku. (Polish)

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde almanız mümkündür. (Turkish)

یہ معلومات آپ کی اپنی زبان (بولی) میں بھی میا کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ (Urdu)

 **(01904) 551550**

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City of York Council

Committee Minutes

Meeting	Decision Session - Executive Member for Finance and Performance
Date	5 November 2020
Present	Councillors Ayre (Executive Member)

32. Declarations of Interest

The Executive Member confirmed that he had no personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, nor any prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests, to declare in the business on the agenda.

33. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the Decision Session held on 27 October 2020 be approved, to be signed by the Executive Member at a later date.

34. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been three registrations to speak on Agenda Item 4 - Tier 2 Local Restrictions Business Grant Scheme at the session under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Martin Spencer spoke about Let's Be York in supporting York enterprises to make sure that all businesses are supported - including freelancers, directors, and businesses who trade in York but whose owners do not live in York. He made a number of suggested solutions to assist in this process.

Kevin Tuohy spoke about support for traders at the Shambles market who had lost trade at a time of year when they would be making a surplus to last the rest of the year. He noted that the market could help the way forward in igniting footfall in York. He asked whether local traders on Shambles market could get financial assistance for such as rents from CYC through the equivalent of the local restrictions business grant.

David Carruthers, the owner of a retail travel agency in Haxby requested that travel businesses be considered for the grant. He explained that due to

ever changing travel restrictions travel businesses had zero income since March and he felt that the industry has been ignored. He hoped that the council would look at how this has impacted sectors such as travel agencies and tour operators.

35. Tier 2 Local Restrictions Business Grant Scheme

The Executive Member considered a report that set out the principles of the Local Restriction Grants (LRG) for Tier 2, and Sector and Lockdown for approval to support York businesses. The report recommended that a further report be brought back as soon as possible to a future meeting, with recommendations on how the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) provided as part of the Government's covid-19 support can be used.

The Head of Customer and Exchequer Services reported that the council had received income of £4million and the government had indicated that this would be one off funding to potentially last 15 months. He noted that the information on the grants would be included on the COVID-19 pages on the council website. In response to questions from the Executive Member he confirmed that the Tier 2 grants would be superseded by the new lockdown grants. He added that there were different types of businesses eligible for the grant and the simplest way to ensure that the grants were paid to the right people was through the application process.

The Executive Member welcomed the grant and noted the importance of communications as an important and challenging approach to allocating the grants. He then:

Resolved:

- a) That approval be given to the distribution of the Tier 2 local restrictions grant in line with the Government principles set out at Annex A of the report.
- b) That approval be given to the distribution of the Lockdown business grants in line with the Government principles set out in Annex A of the report.
- c) That approval be given to the distribution of the Sector grants in line with the Government principles set out in Annex A of the report.
- d) That a further report to be brought back to the next available decision session of the Executive Member for Finance & Performance, to approve a scheme for the discretionary

funding provided as part of the Government Lockdown (in consultation with the Executive Member for Economy and Strategic Planning).

- e) That delegation for any future changes resulting from Government guidance in relation to this scheme be given to the Chief Finance Officer (s151) in consultation with the Executive Member Finance and Performance/Executive Member Economy & Strategic Planning, and approval process outlined at paragraph 17 of the report.

Reason: To provide urgent financial support to the city's Hospitality and Leisure businesses who are most effected by the Tier 2 restrictions.

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**Decision Session - Executive Member for
Finance & Performance**

3 December 2020

Report of the Assistant Director, Customer & Digital Services

Winter Grants Scheme

Summary

1. This paper provides the Executive Member for Finance & Performance in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing & Safer Neighbourhoods with the Winter Grants scheme for approval.

Recommendations

2. The Executive Member is asked to approve:
 - a) The top slicing of the Winter Grant Government allocation in the sum of £200k for Free School Meals in respect of Christmas, February Half Term and the start of the Easter Holidays 2021.
 - b) The Winter Grant scheme Annex A to support families with or without children with Food and Utility bills through to 31st March 2021.
 - c) To approve the additional spend of £3,810 for October Half Term Free School Meals as set out at Para 9.
 - d) The delegation for any future changes resulting from Government guidance in relation to this scheme to the Chief Finance Officer (s151) in consultation with the Executive Member Finance and Performance.

Reason: To provide financial support to the city's most financially vulnerable residents through the ongoing covid-19 pandemic.

Background

3. On Sunday 8 November 2020, the government announced a package of extra targeted financial support for those in need over the winter period. The COVID Winter Grant Scheme will see new funding issued to councils to support those most in need across England with the cost of food, energy and water bills and other associated costs.
4. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will provide funding to the council, who will administer the scheme and provide direct assistance to vulnerable households and families with children particularly affected by the pandemic. This will include some families who normally have access to Free School Meals (FSM) during term time. The funding allocation for York is £416,729.
5. This scheme is part of a wider Government winter support package for families and children, including:
 - planned but not yet confirmed expansion of the Department for Education's (DfE's) Holiday Activities and Food programme, which has provided healthy food and enriching activities to disadvantaged children since 2018, across England next year. This investment of up to £220 million will be delivered through grants to local authorities. Further information will follow shortly from DfE.
 - increasing the value of the Department for Health and Social Care's Healthy Start vouchers from £3.10 to £4.25 from April 2021. Healthy Start supports lower-income pregnant women and families with children under four to buy fruit, vegetables, pulses, milk and infant formula, providing an important nutritional safety net.
 - DEFRA will provide further funding for local charities through well-established networks to provide immediate support to front-line food aid charities, including food banks, who are supporting those most vulnerable due to the economic impacts of COVID-19.

Funding

6. The Winter Grant funding will be provided in instalments 50% up front in early December 25% after initial management information (in February 2021) then based upon spend a final balancing payment of up to 25%. As with other grants returns will be required and the full available monies must be spent by 31st March.

Free School Meals

7. Although the funding from the DWP is not specifically earmarked for free school meals (FSM) York along with many other authorities receiving the grant are looking to allocate an element of the budget for this purpose as no further similar funding is due from the DfE until April 2021 as set out above.
8. The estimated weekly cost of FSM in York is approximately £50k and the required budget through to and including the first week of the Easter holidays 2021 is up to £200k and this report recommends that this money is top sliced from the budget. This will need to be done proportionally as the first 50% payment will only be £218K and top slicing the full FSM costs up front would leave no funding for any other support to families or individuals until February 21 without using council budget. It is recommended that the £100k for the Christmas holiday FSM is top sliced from the initial payment leaving just over £100k for other support as described in our proposed schemes (see Annex A).
9. An officer decision was made on the 23rd October to support FSM during the October Half Term from the extended welfare fund. The value of the decision was £42,750 but the actual costs were £46,560. This paper asks the Executive Member to approve the additional spend of £3,810.

Winter Grant Schemes

10. The DWP guidance sets out two elements to the payment where they expect support to be made available:

- at least 80% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to support families with children, with up to 20% of the total funding to other types of households, including individuals.
 - at least 80% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to provide support with food, energy and water bills (including sewerage), with up to 20% on other items.
11. The two elements will be provided through a single application and the scheme criteria are set out at Annex A. These criteria are in respect of the 80% funding for families with children and the 20% discretionary funding to other types of household including individuals.
 12. The support through this scheme is not dissimilar to that provided through the council's own York Financial Assistance (YFAS) scheme. It is therefore suggested that in the hierarchy of support that this scheme sits above the YFAS scheme. The rationale for this is that we need to ensure that we maximise the full funding available to the council from this scheme before 31st March 2021 and therefore each claim should be considered against the criteria of this scheme in the first instance before referral to YFAS.
 13. Access to the scheme will be through an application process this can be accessed digitally online, through support agencies who can apply on behalf of customers and over the phone directly with the council.
 14. The council is ensuring that the scheme is well communicated both internally and externally. This includes schools and partner agencies across the city including York CVS and Advice York. Local Area Coordinators and Hubs also play a vital role in getting the message out that the funding is available.

Fraud and Error

15. In line with all Central Government grant schemes there is a risk of fraud, as recipients might appear to be eligible when they are not. One of the biggest risks for this scheme is impersonation fraud, where fraudsters work through a residential area and falsely claim under the names of eligible recipients.

16. The DWP are encouraging the council to mitigate this risk, by ensuring checks are in place to verify the applicant's identity. The council have access to a range of data sources and checks can be carried out against this data to verify the identity of the recipient.
17. It is for the council to decide how payments are made to recipients. However, when making this decision consideration should be given to the risks involved. Although vouchers still carry fraud risks, vouchers should be used instead of cash where possible as this helps to mitigate the risk of the money being spent by the recipient on things outside the policy intent therefore undermining the purpose of the scheme.

Recommendations

18. This paper recommends that the Executive Member for Finance & Performance in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing & Safer Neighbourhoods approves the funding of FSMs through to 31st March 2021 from this funding, the additional spend at October Half Term from the council's welfare fund and the Winter Grant scheme set out at Annex A.
19. Should any element of this scheme be changed by subsequent government guidance it is proposed that the Executive Member for Finance & Performance delegates the decision under this scheme to the Chief Finance Officer (s151) in consultation with the Executive Member Finance and Performance with any changes approved retrospectively in public at the next available Executive Member decision session.

Consultation

20. This is a Central Government scheme and there was no consultation with City of York Council on its implementation. In terms of supporting the council's residents there has been internal consultation in respect of vulnerable children and FSM's.

Implications

Financial

21. There are no direct financial implications arising from this scheme as the Government provide funding.

Human Resources (HR)

There are no HR implications.

Equalities

This report will impact on all communities equally.

Legal

No implications

Crime and Disorder, Information Technology and Property

No implications

Risk Management

22. The key risks associated with this paper are:

- There is insufficient funding to meet demand. To a certain extent this is mitigated by the councils own YFAS scheme as this is where the demand would have fallen without the Government’s additional funding.
- That the scheme overspends. As in the point above additional costs would fall against the council’s YFAS scheme however the scheme will be closely monitored and Government returns completed.

Author responsible for the report:

Chief Officer responsible for the report:

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Head of Customer & Exchequer Services
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Report Approved **Date** 25/11/20

Specialist Implications Officer(s):

Wards Affected: All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

Annexes

Annex A – Winter Grant Scheme

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Annexe A

COVID Winter Grant Scheme

- 1 COVID Winter Grant Scheme is provided by City of York Council to support people who require urgent financial assistance as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic.
- 2 COVID Winter Grant Scheme will provide assistance to families with children and other vulnerable households.
- 3 COVID Winter Grant Scheme can provide assistance with
 - Food and other household essentials, such as toiletries
 - Energy bills – electricity, gas, oil
 - Water bills (including sewerage)
 - Mobile phone and internet connection/data bills
 - Other exceptional emergency costs
- 4 Where possible assistance will be provided in the form of e-Vouchers. Other grant award payments will be made to the applicant's bank account.
- 5 The scheme is discretionary, awards will be assessed on the criteria set out. Applicants who are assessed as outside the criteria will be directed to alternative advice and support as appropriate.

Who can apply?

- 6 The scheme is open to City of York residents who are over 16 years of age, who require urgent financial assistance as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic.
- 7 To be considered you must have been financially impacted by the pandemic **and** have savings of less than £2000
And you are
- 8 A family with a child / children
Or
- 9 A person in need of additional support

A family with a child / children is a single claimant or couple claimants who are responsible for

- one or more children under 16, or
- one or more qualifying young person
 - someone aged 16 to 19 and in full time non-advanced education or training
 - someone age 24 or under with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC)
 - someone age 19 or under classed as not in education, employment or training (NEET).

A person in need of additional support may include, but is not restricted to:

- Anyone suffering severe financial hardship, including people with mortgages arrears and rent arrears in private rented accommodation.
- A person identified as COVID clinically extremely vulnerable
- A person who has a physical or sensory impairment, learning disability or mental health problem¹.
- Elderly, frail or confused older people
- People who are seriously ill or have a severe long term health condition.
- People who are recently bereaved
- Pregnant women or those who have recently given birth
- Recently unemployed people
- Care leaver
- Those fleeing domestic abuse
- Those who have difficulty in understanding, speaking or reading English

Who cannot apply?

10 The following categories of people do not qualify for help:

- People who do not live within the City of York Council boundaries

¹ The Royal College of Psychiatrists and Money Advice Trust's Debt collection and mental health: ten steps to improve recovery provides useful guidance and further definition of what constitutes a mental health problem

What assistance can I apply for?

- 11 COVID Winter Grant Scheme can provide assistance with
- Food and other household essentials, such as toiletries
 - Energy bills – electricity, gas, oil
 - Water bills (including sewerage)
 - Mobile phone and internet connection/data bills
 - Other exceptional emergency costs
- 12 Assistance will be considered based on monthly expenses and liabilities for your household.

What information I will need to provide

- 13 We will need to ask you for information and evidence to show
- You meet the criteria as
 - your household includes a child/ren
 - you are a person in need of additional support
 - Your household income, savings, and expenditure, including
 - Earnings
 - DWP benefits
 - Any other income
 - Readily available funds - cash in hand, in the bank or building society accounts;
- 14 We will need to establish why you are applying for financial support. We may ask you about your personal circumstances in depth to make sure that you are seeking all necessary support.
- 15 If you are applying for assistance with
- Energy bills – electricity, gas, oil
 - Water bills (including sewerage)
 - Mobile phone and internet connection/data bills
 - Other exceptional emergency costs

we will need to see evidence you are liable for these costs and the amounts owed and how your utilities are paid for e.g. Pre-payment meter, monthly direct debit, quarterly.

- 16 If you are not seeking the support you need we will suggest agencies that may be able to help you. For example this could be getting you some advice and help on how to prepare an income and expenditure budget or by helping you to access more specialist agencies such as, for example, the StepChange debt charity.
- 17 If you apply to the scheme again and you are not getting the support that you need we will refer you to a support agency and often this may be a condition of receiving the second award.

How many times can I apply?

- 18 You can apply for a maximum of 1 COVID winter grant award per month. The funding is ring-fenced and covers the period from 1 December 2020 until the end of March 2021.

How do I apply?

- 19 Applications should be made on-line at www.york.gov.uk.
- 20 If applicants do not have access to the internet or need help making an application on-line the customer service team can complete the on-line application over the phone on the applicants behalf by calling 01904 551550.

Advice and support workers can also complete applications on behalf of residents. See www.york.gov.uk/BenefitsAdvice

How will awards be made?

- 21 Food and other household essentials, such as toiletries
- Awards will be made by supermarket e-vouchers
- 22 Energy bills – electricity, gas, oil
Water bills (including sewerage)
Mobile phone and internet connection/data bills
- Awards for monthly bills will be paid direct to peoples bank account

23 Other exceptional emergency costs

- Awards will be made by supermarket e-vouchers where possible
- Where this is not possible, awards will be paid direct to peoples bank account

Reviews

- 24 You have the right to a review if you are unhappy with our decision. The decision will be looked at again by someone who did not make the original decision.
- 25 Where the Council cannot help it will provide you with information about other agencies that may be able to help and where appropriate, make a referral on your behalf. If you remain unhappy you can use the Council's complaints process.

Annexe

Definition of clinically extremely vulnerable groups

- People who are defined as clinically extremely vulnerable are at very high risk of severe illness from COVID-19. There are 2 ways you may be identified as clinically extremely vulnerable:
- You have one or more of the [conditions listed](#), or
- Your hospital clinician or GP has added you to the [Shielded patients list](#) because, based on their clinical judgement, they deem you to be at higher risk of serious illness if you catch the virus.

[Guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19](#)

Definition of a family with a child /children

A family as a single claimant or couple claimants who are responsible for

- one or more children, or
- one or more qualifying young person
 - someone aged 16 to 19 and in full time non-advanced education or training
 - someone age 24 or under with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC)
 - someone age 19 or under classed as not in education, employment or training (NEET).