

Meeting	Decision Session - Executive Member for Finance and Performance in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods (for agenda item 4 - Annual report on Financial Inclusion and Welfare Benefits activities)
Date	12 July 2021
Present	Councillors Ayre (Executive Member for Finance and Performance) and Craghill (Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods)

23. Declarations of Interest

The Executive Members were asked to declare, at this point in the meeting, any personal interests, not included on the Register of Interests, or any prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests that he might have had in respect of business on the agenda. They confirmed they had none.

24. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the Decision Session held on 14 June be approved as a correct record and signed by the Executive Member.

25. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

26. Annual report on Financial Inclusion and Welfare Benefits activities

The Executive Members considered a report that detailed the Financial/Welfare Benefits 2020/21 outturn report including:

- the ongoing impact of Coronavirus as well recent welfare benefits changes in York, including Universal Credit (UC), and importantly the support available for residents in dealing with these challenges;

- an update on benefits statistics and performance as administered by the council including the York Financial Assistance Scheme (YFAS);
- other financial inclusion (FI) activity during 2020/21 including delivery of FI grant schemes.

The Director of Customer & Communities gave an overview of the report, explaining the support that had been given to residents during the pandemic through different funding streams by officers, volunteers and charitable organisations. This included the winter support grants, COVID support grants and council tax support. The work of the Welfare Benefits Unit was highlighted and thanks to all staff and volunteers was noted. The impacts of digital inclusion were outlined and it was noted that the work of the community hubs on the Breathing Space scheme had commenced on 1 May.

The Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods welcomed the wide ranging support for York residents and she noted the support of the Welfare Benefits Unit, Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) trained volunteers and other organisations in helping residents to access support and manage their debts. She was pleased that the council could fund free school meal provision, access to the internet and extension of council tax support and she noted concerns about ongoing support at the end of furlough in September. The Executive Member for Finance and Performance commended the work undertaken to support residents and he extended his thanks to staff and volunteers. It was then;

Resolved: That the 2020-21 Annual report on Financial Inclusion and Welfare Benefits activities and progress made in supporting residents who are financially vulnerable be noted.

Reason: To ensure councillors, residents and stakeholder groups are aware of the ongoing financial inclusion activity across the city and use of associated funding including covid-19 support, and to be updated on welfare benefits changes and their impacts.

Councillor Ayre, Executive Member for Finance and Performance

[The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 10.21 am].