

**Joint Decision Session – Executive
Members for Finance & Performance, and
Housing & Safer Neighbourhoods**

16 March 2020

Report of the Assistant Director (Customer & Digital Services)

**Recommendations for approval of grants from the Financial Inclusion
Innovation Fund 2020/21**

Summary

1. This report seeks approval of the recommended awards of grants under the above scheme following a round of competitive bids and a selection panel process.

Recommendations

2. The Executive Members are asked to approve the award of £100,000 of grants to fund six projects as set out below to deliver financial inclusion activities in the city. All projects are of a twelve month duration

| Organisation | Project title | Summary | Amount |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|---------------|
| Older Citizens Advocacy York (OCAAY) | Benefits Advocacy | To provide advocacy support to help with applications, assessments and appeals | £5,500 |
| Citizens' Advice York | Financial Inclusion at GP surgeries | Continue to develop co-ordinated advice work located in GP practices. | £13,000* |
| Citizens' Advice York | Advice, Information & Budgeting in community settings | Continue to provide and develop community settings for advice | £30,026 |
| Peasholme Charity | My Money, My Life | Continue delivery if its financial capability pathway service | £23,426 |
| Welfare Benefits Unit | Universal Credit Focus | Continue to provide second tier in depth support to advisers | £12,898 |

| | | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|--|----------|
| Changing Lives | Financial & Social Inclusion Worker | Support vulnerable and hard to reach residents to gain financial independence. | £15,150* |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|--|----------|

* Note: two bids were partially funded

Reason: to ensure that funds set aside to support the delivery of financial inclusion activity are allocated appropriately.

The Financial Inclusion Innovation Fund 2020/21

3. The Financial Inclusion Steering Group (FISG) ¹ is responsible for overseeing the delivery of a range of financial inclusion work including strategic oversight of the council's Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP), York Financial Assistance Scheme (YFAS) and Council Tax Support (CTS) schemes. A number of bespoke projects are currently funded through FISG which has an approved base budget of £100k per year which is available for Financial Inclusion schemes.
4. The group's purpose is:

'To ensure that local people have the knowledge of and access to appropriate services, allowing them to make more informed choices to achieve and maintain financial stability'.
5. The aim of the group is to secure the following outcomes:
 - Ensure that residents have the knowledge to manage their finances effectively
 - Better coordination of advice services across the city
 - Advice givers and those 'sign posting' better understand the welfare benefits system
 - Explore opportunities to reduce general living expenses.
6. To target resources effectively to support those that need it most, bids are invited from partners across the sector for projects that promote financial inclusion. The group monitors on an ongoing basis grants awarded to local organisations to deliver projects that meet the group's objectives.

¹ Membership includes CYC directorate representatives, the Welfare Benefits Unit, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Citizens Advice York, Community First Credit Union and Executive Members for Housing & Safer Neighbourhoods and for Finance & Performance.

7. The council provides a broad range of support to residents in need of support through a number of channels. The most recent summary of work in this area was reported to Executive on 21/2/20². This included an update on the effectiveness of the projects that FISG already directly funds.
8. Invitations to bid for funding projects for 2020/21 were sent on 28 January closing on 21 February 2020. Eleven bids from nine organisations for grants were received totalling £205,169. Nine of the bids sought to build on projects already funded by FISG in 2019/20.
9. Bids were subject to panel selection with organisations making a presentation about their proposals. Rigorous selection is made against a range of criteria. Funded schemes are subject to the council's Financial Regulations and a Service Level Agreement is put in place for each project. Grants are paid by instalment with regular reporting on progress built in to ensure delivery. All eleven attended a selection panel held on 4 March 2020. The panel consisted of two senior CYC officers and a representative of the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust.
10. Competition was very strong and all the bids had merit but given the amount of grants requested not all could be successful. Two of the bids recommended for funding are for amounts less than requested. The panel were extremely grateful for the interest shown and the quality of the submissions.

Consultation

11. None required as this report is not a policy paper.

Analysis

12. There is no further analysis other than the existing information provided in the report.

Council Plan

13. Outcomes achieved through the council and its partners will contribute to the Council Plan commitment to help deliver 'Well paid jobs and an inclusive economy'. This includes tackling financial exclusion by investing in financial inclusion projects with measurable outcomes.

² See item 9:

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=733&MId=11115&Ver=4>

Implications

14. (a) **Financial** – The direct financial implications relate to the funding of the Financial Inclusion Innovation Fund bids which is funded within approved budget allocations/reserves. The funding available in 2020/21 is £100,000.
- (b) **Human Resources (HR)** - There are no implications
- (c) **Equalities** – There are no direct implications
- (d) **Legal** – There are no implications
- (e) **Crime and Disorder** - There are no implications
- (f) **Information Technology (IT)** - There are no implications
- (g) **Property** - There are no implications

Risk Management

15. The key risk is that projects do not deliver required output – this is managed by an individual service level agreement per project and regular monitoring of outputs by the Financial Inclusion Steering Group. The outputs are also reported to Executive in a Financial Inclusion update every 6 months.

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Ian Floyd - Deputy Chief Executive & Director
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Report Approved



Date 05/03/20

Specialist Implications Officer(s) *None*

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

Annexes:

None

Background Papers:

Welfare Benefits Update and Financial Inclusion Outturn Report 2018/19

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=733&MId=11107&Ver=4>

Recorded decisions on Awards under the 'Improving Finances, Improving Lives' grant scheme:

- 2018/19 Awards:
<http://modgov.york.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=5217>
- Extension of 2018/19 Awards:
<http://modgov.york.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=5434>
- Further Extension of Awards:
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=875&MId=11415&Ver=4>
and
<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=5634>

List of Abbreviations

| | |
|------|------------------------------------|
| CYC | City of York Council |
| FISG | Financial Inclusion Steering Group |