

Meeting	Decision Session - Executive Member for Finance and Performance in consultation with the Executive Member for Economy and Strategic Planning (for agenda item 4 Urgent Business - Additional Restrictions Grant) and Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods (for agenda item 5 Financial Inclusion/Welfare Benefits Update Report)
Date	18 January 2021
Present	Councillors Ayre (Executive Member for Finance and Performance), Waller (Executive Member for Economy and Strategic Planning), and Craghill (Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods)

---

### **1. 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.

### **2. Minutes**

Resolved: That the minutes of the Decision Session held on 3 and 14 December be approved as a correct record and signed by the Executive Member at a later date.

### **3. Public Participation**

It was reported that there had been two registrations to speak on agenda item 6 [Urgent Business - Additional Restrictions Grant] at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

Martin Spencer noted that York York's business community is here to help CYC to get vital grant assistance to the maximum number of York's independent traders. They were grateful for the adjusting of the criteria for the ARG and supported the proposed amendments. He made a number of

suggestions with reference to market traders and noted that the suggested changes would help those traders to get the grants.

Kevin Tuohy gave thanks for the review of the ARG and hoped that the Shambles Market traders would be included in the scheme, particularly with tax returns needing to be made by 31 January. He noted that market traders were in a difficult position now that payment holidays had ended. He highlighted the benefits of the market and the diversity that local independent traders brought to the city.

#### **4. Urgent Business - Additional Restrictions Grant**

This was taken as the next item.

The Executive Members considered a report that presented the review of the criteria for the Additional Restriction Grants (ARG), as a number of businesses were ineligible under the criteria following the implementation of the scheme in November 2020.

The Interim Director of Place gave an update to the ARG report presented to the Executive Member at his Decision Session held 12 12 November 2020. She outlined the paper including the changes to the eligibility criteria. She noted that York was one of the fastest authorities to roll out the payment of the grant.

The Executive Member for Economy and Strategic Planning thanked officers for producing the report promptly and for ensuring the rapid payment of grants and business eligibility checks. He recognised that there was insufficient resources for some sector and he noted that a longer period of restrictions would heighten the need for the lifting of restrictions. He added that issues with the supply chain had been reported to the economic growth team, He thanked the Federation of Small Businesses, Chamber of Commerce, and other partners for their support. He supported the recommendations.

The Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods supported the additional funding coming forward. The Executive Members thanked officers and it was:

Resolved:

- a) That the criteria for ARG grants be extended to cover:
  - Eligible businesses trading at least 75% in York where the proprietor is not a York resident if support is not available the proprietor's Local Authority of residence.

- Accommodation businesses which are run outside of the NNDR regime, instead paying Council Tax, will be eligible for payments equivalent to the lowest level of grants for businesses in the rates system. This would provide grants of
- £1,334 per 28-day qualifying restriction period to such businesses
- In recognition of their strategic importance in enabling employment and the financial challenges that are currently being faced, nurseries will be eligible for payments at the higher level of £3000 per 28 day qualifying period. Other childcare businesses will be encouraged to apply under the existing criteria, with their sector added to the list of those eligible.
- Supply chain businesses which have not received mandatory rates-related grants, where they have lost at least 75% of their income due to closure of their customers, will be eligible for one-off top-up grants of £25k.

- b) Should any element of this scheme be changed by subsequent government guidance it is proposed that the Executive Member delegates the decision under this scheme to the Chief Finance Officer (s151) in consultation with the Executive Member Finance and Performance/Executive Member Economy & Strategic Planning, with changes approved retrospectively in public at the next available Executive Member decision session

Reason: To support to York businesses which are affected by the Lockdown and Tier 3 restrictions but not eligible for Local Restrictions Grant (Closed) funding.

## **5. Financial Inclusion/Welfare Benefits Update Report**

The Executive Members considered a Financial/Welfare Benefits 2019/20 outturn report and the 2020/21 mid-term position. Annex A detailed Financial Inclusion projects funded to 31/3/20 and Annex B detailed Financial Inclusion projects funded for 2020/21. The report included:

- the ongoing impact of Coronavirus as well recent welfare benefits changes in York, including Universal Credit, 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;

- other financial inclusion (FI) activity during 2020/21 including delivery of FI grant schemes.

The Assistant Director Customer and Digital Services noted the support that the financial inclusion grants provided and she acknowledged the hard work of staff in the community hubs and welfare support schemes. She detailed support that was available and highlighted the work taking place for digital inclusion. She then gave a housing update noting the support that housing officers had given to tenants during the pandemic. She explained that the housing hardship fund had been set up to extend existing funding and that all landlords had been written to remind them of support available. She also noted the work of the financial inclusion group.

The Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods commented that the paper underlined how many people were in financial difficulty due to the pandemic, which the council was responding to. She gave recognition to the range of support available and commended partnership working. She urged people to contact the council and citizens advice as early as they could for support. The Executive Member for Finance and Performance welcomed the support available particularly in relation to free school meals and support for businesses. He noted that additional income had been brought in to support residents and noted the importance of digital inclusion.

It was then:

Resolved:

- a) That the report and the progress made in supporting residents who are financially vulnerable be noted.
- b) That the commencement of the 2021/22 Financial Inclusion grants scheme as described in paragraph 54 of the report be approved.

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.

## **6. Health & Safety Update Report**

The Executive Member considered a report that provided:

- the Health & Safety (H&S) 2019/20 outturn and the 2020/21 mid-term report from the Head of Health & Safety;

- an update on the action being taken to address the risks raised in the report;
- key areas of work for 2021;
- client overview of the performance of Health & Safety (H&S) shared service formed by North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) and City of York Council (CYC) which operates under a partnership agreement

The Assistant Director – Customer and Digital Services gave an update on the key areas of work and the Shared Head of Health and Safety outlined the CYC Annual Report 2019-20 which was included at Annex A of the report. He noted the impact of the pandemic, namely on schools as a result of changing guidance. He explained that health and safety themes remained regarding incident reporting, child aggression and physical and violence aggression. He noted the work to mitigate this and added that it was expected that all staff should be treated with respect. Aside the pandemic he noted that the biggest issue was the Fire Safety Bill for which fire risk assessments had been undertaken and control measures had been amended.

In response to questions from the Executive Member he explained that:

- It was thought that the increase in reporting child aggression was due to a willingness to report.
- The decrease in physical and verbal aggression was due to officers not going out because of the pandemic.
- With regard to officers health and safety working from home, the new Be Safe assessment had been rolled out. This allowed for early identification of chronic conditions. Additionally, the Joint Health and Safety Committee monitored the pandemic impacts, display screen assessments (DSEs). In terms of staff welling, this was through the results of the staff survey.
- It was hard to quantify the return for investment from the cost recovery schemes for capital projects.

It was then:

Resolved:

- a) That the report covering the 18 month period including the council's response to managing and responding to significant H&S risks including those relating to the pandemic ne noted;
- b) That the performance of the Shared H&S Service be noted;
- c) consider any areas of H&S risk management for further reporting at future decision sessions.

Reason: To ensure the Executive Member and residents are assured that H&S services are appropriately managed and resilient and the

council has proper arrangements in place for managing and responding to H&S risks.

Cllr Ayre, Chair

[The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 3.11 pm].