



Notice of a public

Meeting to be held in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods (for agenda item 4 Approval of Financial Inclusion Grant Scheme Awards 2021/22, agenda item 5 Council Tax Hardship Fund 2021/22 and agenda item 6 Extension of Winter Grants Scheme)

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

Date: Monday, 15 March 2021

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: Remote Meeting

AGENDA

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 Wednesday 17 March 2021**

*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 Thursday 11 March 2021**.

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 - 2)
To approve and sign the minutes of the Decision Session held on 15 February 2021.

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 Thursday 11 March 2021.**

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. Approval of Financial Inclusion Grant Scheme Awards 2021/22** (Pages 3 - 8)

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.

- 5. Council Tax Hardship Fund 2021/22** (Pages 9 - 14)

This paper provides the Executive Member for Finance and Performance in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods with an option to provide a further Council Tax Support (CTS) Hardship Scheme in 2021/22 in the light of Government funding and the ongoing financial impacts on residents of the covid-19 pandemic.

6. Extension of Winter Grants Scheme (Pages 15 - 20)

This paper recommends to the Executive Member for Finance and Performance in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods, that the winter grants scheme is extended in line with the Governments additional funding to 16 April 2021.

7. Urgent Business

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

Democracy Officer:

Name: Angela Bielby

Telephone: (01904) 552599

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 مہیا کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ (Urdu)

 **(01904) 551550**

For more information about any of the following please contact the Democratic Services Officers responsible for servicing this meeting:

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 (01904) 551550

City of York Council

Committee Minutes

Meeting	Decision Session - Executive Member for Finance and Performance in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods (for agenda item 4 Winter Grants Funding)
Date	15 February 2021
Present	Councillors Ayre (Executive Member for Finance and Performance) and Craghill (Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods)

7. 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.

8. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the Decision Session held on 18 January 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Executive Member at a later date.

9. Public Participation

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

10. Winter Grants Funding

The Executive Members considered a report recommending that the funding shortfall in maintaining the winter grants scheme to 31 March 2021 was met through the extended York Financial Assistance (YFAS) scheme. This was supplemented in 2020/21 by £1m of council funds to support residents in hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Assistant Director Customer and Digital Services outlined the support that was currently in place noting that the government had confirmed that there would be further funding beyond 31st March 2021 available for food and activities through the school holidays. She then noted the take up of funding from families for food and utility bills and she encouraged families to claim the extra support if approved at this meeting.

The Executive Member for Housing and Safer Neighbourhoods supported the recommendations and whilst welcoming the support from the government, acknowledged that the original funding was insufficient and noted that she would like to see the government providing more ongoing support. The Executive Member for Finance and Performance also welcomed the report and it was:

Resolved: That approval be given to the funding the winter grants scheme through to 31st March 2021 through use of the extended YFAS funding at an estimated cost of £200k.

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

Cllr Ayre, Chair

[The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 10.08 am].



15th March 2021

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

Report of the Assistant Director (Customer & Digital Services)

**Recommendations for approval of grants from the Financial Inclusion
Innovation Fund 2021/22**

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 £113,276 of grants to fund seven projects for 2021/22 as set out below to deliver a range of financial inclusion activities in the city. There is an approved budget of £100,000 for 2021/22 plus a carried forward underspend from 2020/21 of £20,360 giving an available total of £120,360. All projects are of a twelve month duration.

Organisation	Project title	Brief Summary	Amount
Older Citizens Advocacy York (OCAY)	Benefits Advocacy	To provide advocacy support to help with applications, assessments and appeals	£5,818
Citizens' Advice York	Financial Inclusion at GP surgeries	Continue to develop co-ordinated advice work located in GP practices.	£13,229
Citizens' Advice York	Financial Inclusion in the Traveller Community	Working with the Travellers Trust to deliver and co-ordinate advice services to the Gypsy & Traveller community.	£5,385
Peasholme Charity	My Money, My Life	Continue delivery if its financial capability pathway service	£25,057

Welfare Benefits Unit	Advice Extra	Extend reach of services to underpin first tier advisors in responding to more complex cases.	£13,900
Experience Counts	50+ Project	Deliver four employment related programmes to residents aged 50+	£19,262
Changing Lives	Financial & Social Inclusion Worker	Support vulnerable and hard to reach residents to gain financial independence.	£30,625

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

The Financial Inclusion Innovation Fund 2021/22

3. The Financial Inclusion Steering Group (FISG)¹ is responsible for overseeing the delivery of a range of financial inclusion activities including strategic oversight of the council's Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP), York Financial Assistance Scheme (YFAS) and Council Tax Support (CTS) schemes. Six bespoke projects for 2020/21 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.

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

6. To target resources effectively to support those that need it most, bids were 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.
7. The council provides a broad range of support to residents in need of assistance through a number of channels which has extended during 2020/21 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The most recent summary of work in this area was reported to the Executive Member for Finance and Performance on 18/1/21². This included an update on the outcomes of the projects that FISG already directly funds.
8. The bidding process to fund projects for 2021/22 opened on 22 January and by the closing date of 19 February 2021 nine bids from eight organisations for grants were received with a total value £144,270, exceeding the £120,360 available. Four of the bids sought to build on projects already funded by FISG in 2020/21.
9. Bids were subject to panel selection and were assessed against a range of criteria drawn from the outcomes noted in paragraph 5 above. The panel convened on 2 March 2021 consisting of two senior CYC officers and a representative of the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust. Approved projects are subject to the council's Financial Regulations and a Service Level Agreement is put in place for each. Grants are paid by instalment with regular reporting on progress built in to ensure delivery.
10. Competition was very strong and whilst all the bids had some merit not all met the criteria sufficiently. The panel were extremely grateful for the interest shown and the quality of the submissions. Constructive feedback has been offered to the two unsuccessful bidders.

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

² <https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=875&MId=12483>

inclusive economy'. This includes tackling financial exclusion by investing in financial inclusion projects with measurable outcomes.

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 2021/22 is £120,360.
- (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 Members in a Financial Inclusion update every 6 months.

Contact Details

Author:

Pauline Stuchfield
Assistant Director
Customer & Digital
Services
Tel No.01904 551706

John Madden
Strategic Manager
Corporate Strategy & City
Partnerships
Tel No.01904 551132

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Ian Floyd - Chief Operating Officer

Report Approved



Date 3/5/2021

Specialist Implications Officer(s) *None*

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

All

Annexes:

None

Background Papers:

Financial Inclusion/Welfare Benefits Update Report 18/1/21 (Supplementary item 1):

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=875&MIId=12483>

Recorded decision on 2020/21 Awards (16/3/20):

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=875&MIId=12267&Ver=4>

List of Abbreviations

CYC	City of York Council
FISG	Financial Inclusion Steering Group

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Executive Member for Finance & Performance

15th March 2021

Report of the Chief Finance Officer & Assistant Director, Customer & Digital Services

Council Tax Hardship Fund 2021/22

Summary

1. This paper provides the Executive Member for Finance & Performance in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing & Safer Neighbourhoods with an option to provide a further Council Tax Support (CTS) Hardship Scheme in 2021/22 in the light of Government funding and the ongoing financial impacts on residents of the covid-19 pandemic.

Recommendations

2. The Executive member for Finance and Performance is asked to approve the preferred option (£75) as set out at paragraph 12

Reason: To provide financial support to the councils most financially vulnerable residents in managing the ongoing impacts of the covid-19 pandemic.

Background

3. The Government have provided the council with covid support funding for the 2021/22 financial year. A notional amount of this funding (£1.2m) is to provide support to the CTS scheme. This acknowledges that the scheme may be more expensive as a result of increasing numbers claiming in 2021/22 but it does not prescribe how the money should be used e.g. through providing further direct support payments to working age CTS customers as in 2020/21.

4. During 2020/21 Government hardship funding provided each Council Tax Support (CTS) customer with £150 of financial support towards their council tax bill. In providing the hardship funding the Government recognised that Covid-19 was likely to cause fluctuations in household incomes and recognised that, as a result, some individuals may struggle to meet council tax payments.
5. The Government funding of £956K in 2020/21 was inadequate to provide this support (£150 per CTS customer) across the full financial year (Funding ran out in late October 2020). As a result of this the council approved using additional YFAS funding to extend the scheme to 31st March at an approximate cost of £60k to £70K to the council,

Proposed Support 2021/22

5. The council as well as residents are facing financial challenges across 2021/22 as a result of the covid pandemic. It is impossible to predict what will happen in terms of the economy and jobs and a prudent approach is needed to protect both the council and its residents in the coming year.
6. The notional funding of £1.2m would allow for a further £150 per working age CTS customer to be provided if the numbers both claiming for the full year and those moving on and off benefit across the year do not change significantly compared to 2020/21. However it is possible that as furlough comes to an end and the economy restarts the numbers claiming CTS could rise substantially. This has two financial impacts on the council it both increases the value of support payments (£150 per CTS customer 20/21) and reduces collection fund income as residents move from paying full CT to CTS.
7. To provide some context the average weekly cost of support provided through the CTS scheme to the council is £13.82 per customer. If there was an increase of 1,700 CTS claims in 2021/22 the additional cost to the council would be £1.2m which equates to the Government support we have been given. It's difficult to predict how many more claimants may claim CTS across 2021/22 but it is unlikely we will get this number of additional full year claims from the 1st April 2021.
8. There are currently approx. 5,500 CTS customers so the cost of providing an additional £150 of additional support in 2021/22 would

be in the region of £825k. As we saw in 2020/21 as customers move on and off benefit across the year this inflates the cost so the 2020/21 scheme is likely to outturn at approx. £1,050k by 31st March. This year's CTS figures to date are set out at Table 1 below:

Table 1

Feb	4,623	Jun	5,445	October	5,458
Mar	4,682	July	5,932	November	5,460
Apr	5,061	Aug	6,180	December	5,460
May	5,398	Sept	6,873	January	5,442

9. Awarding this level of support (£150) in 2021/22 with a risk that the base could rise as set out at para 7 is not prudent. At the same time such a large increase in new claimants is unlikely as those numbers were not seen during 2020/21. Therefore the option is there to provide some direct support to residents but maintain an element of the Government funding to meet any increase in the number of CTS customers.

Options

10. The approach set out above at paragraph 9 provides options around the level of direct support. The amount needs to be meaningful so it is suggested that the two following options are considered:

Option 1 - £75 per CTS customer approx. cost £625K

Option 2 - £50 per CTS customer approx. cost £350K

Option 3 – Provide no direct support to CTS customers

11. As the council is already in the annual billing process it is not possible to amend the CTS bills before they are issued so CTS customers will need to be rebilled. The council's software provider can provide software to allow us to apply any level of award but this will incur a one off cost of £2K which would need to be recovered from the Government grant.

Recommendations

12. The likelihood that demand for CTS support will rise during 2021/22 is high. The fluctuations in customer numbers across 2020/21 (shown in Table 1) would indicate even when furlough ends the numbers are unlikely to be as high as 1,700 new

claimants. Balancing this against the funding available and the beneficial financial effects to residents of contributing to their council tax bill it is recommended that the award in 2021/22 should be Option 1 (£75).

Consultation

12. A number of neighbouring local authorities have been approached to ask what plans they have for CTS support in 2021/22. Many are still to make up their minds. Only Hull who have said they are looking to retain the full amount in case of an increase in CTS customers and East Riding of Yorkshire who are looking to provide some direct support but less than the £150 and retain an element for growth in the CTS base have responded so far. The development of the software from Northgate has been requested by local authorities nationally which suggests many will run some direct support schemes for CTS customers.

Implications

Financial

- 17 The council has received a notional £1.2m towards its CTS costs in 2021/22 as part of the Government covid support funding. The options in this paper have no direct costs on the council's revenue budget.

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

18. The key risk associated with this paper is that it is not possible to predict with any accuracy what the growth if any will be in the

number of residents claiming CTS during 2021/22. The approach set out is prudent as it manages the council's financial risk by retaining an element of the funding for any growth that may materialise across the year.

Author responsible for the report:

David Walker
Head of Customer & Exchequer Services

Chief Officer responsible for the report:

Pauline Stuchfield
Assistant Director Customer and Digital Services
Debbie Mitchell
Chief Finance Officer

Report Approved



Date
05/03
/21

Specialist Implications Officer(s):

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

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

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Executive Member for Finance & Performance

15th March 2021

Report of the Assistant Director, Customer & Digital Services

Extension of Winter Grants Scheme

Summary

1. This paper recommends to the Executive Member for Finance & Performance in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing & Safer Neighbourhoods, that the winter grants scheme is extended in line with the Governments additional funding to 16th April 2021.

Recommendations

2. The Executive Member is asked to approve:
 - a) Extending the Winter Grants scheme through to 16th April 2021 with an estimated additional cost to the council of approx. £5k above the £200k set out in Februarys report and as set out at Table 2.
 - b) Limit the April Winter Support Grant payments to 16th April rather than a full monthly payment as set out at paragraph 11.
 - c) Delegate any decision to spend above the revised £205k to the councils section 151 officer in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance & Performance as set out at paragraph 13.

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 saw 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) provided funding to the council, who has administered the scheme and provided direct assistance to vulnerable households and families with children particularly affected by the pandemic. This has include some families who normally have access to free school meals (FSM) during term time. The funding allocation for York was £416,729.
5. Although the funding from the DWP was not specifically earmarked for free school meals, York along with many other authorities allocated an element of the budget (£200k) for this purpose as no further similar funding is due from the DfE until April 2021.
6. On the 15th February the council took the decision to fund the scheme through to the initial end date of 31st March 2021. This intervention was required as the Government funding had been spent in full during week commencing 15th February and the estimated additional cost of doing this was £200K
7. On Monday 22 February 2021, the government announced that as part of its COVID roadmap, the COVID Winter Grant (CWG) Scheme will be extended to the 16 April 2021, providing an additional £59.1 million of extra targeted financial support for those in need during the pandemic. This equates to an additional £144,875 of funding for York.
8. At a similar time to this announcement the Government also indicated that there would be no additional funding paid to Local Government for Free School Meals (FSM) at Easter.

Financial Implications

9. This additional funding and keeping the scheme open to Friday 16th April has broader financial implications. Table 1 below sets out the current position of the funding.

Table 1

Initial Winter Support Grant	£416,729 Cr
Allocation for FSM	£200,000 Dr

Spend at W/C 15 th Grants	£216,229 Dr
Additional Est Spend to 31 st March	£200,000 Dr
Predicted Outturn	£200,000 Dr

10. In extending the funding over the full Easter period it is estimated that a further £50k will be required to support FSM's. The cost of running the scheme for an extra 16 days is difficult to estimate. The current additional cost above the initial funding is £60k against an estimate of £200k by 31st March. However there are still some 400 claims to assess so the actual cost at this point will be much higher. Table 2 below sets out the estimated financial implication of the 16 day extension:

Table 2

Initial Winter Support Grant	£416,729 Cr
Additional Winter Support Grant	£144,875 Cr
Initial Allocation for FSM	£200,000 Dr
Additional Allocation for FSM	£50,000 Dr
Spend at W/C 15 th Grants	£216,229 Dr
Additional Est Spend to 31 st March	£200,000 Dr
Est Additional Spend to 16 th April	£100,000 Dr
Revised Outturn Cost to CYC	£204,675 Dr

11. On the basis of the figures in Table 2 extending the scheme out until the 16th April has little impact on the additional costs to the council due to the further Government grant. However we do not yet know the value of all outstanding winter support grant claims and as many residents claim on a monthly basis we could still have substantial costs for the 16 days in April above that estimated in the table. A way of mitigating this would be to limit April payments to 16th April and not provide the full monthly payment. This would only apply to applications after 31st March.

Recommendations

12. The council will have spent all its winter support grant funding by 31st March including an additional EST £200k. On this basis it could stop paying winter support grants as it has no funding to do so. The additional funding will allow the council to continue to pay until 16th April with the financial risk being slightly above the £200K already estimated. It is not clear if we will receive the additional funding if

we do not run a scheme in April so it will benefit both residents and recipients of FSM for us to do and mitigate this risk.

13. This report also recommends that if the spending in April looks to exceed the revised figure of £205k the decision to spend above this figure is delegated to the councils S151 officer in consultation the Executive Member for Finance and Performance.

Consultation

14. This is a Central Government scheme and there was no consultation with City of York Council on its implementation. The council did consult with its third sector partners in the initial scheme's promotion and this has been effective in providing support to over 1,000 financially vulnerable families across the city to date.

Implications

Financial

The financial implication of this decision does not alter greatly from the 15th February paper (background paper) in that the cost to the extended YFAS scheme will be in the region of £200K.

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

15. The key risk associated with this paper is that due to a large demand it is not possible to know the full cost at any one point so the outturn spend could be higher than estimated. To manage this risk the paper recommends any application after 31st March is only paid to 16th April rather than providing a full monthly payment.

Author responsible for the report:

Chief Officer responsible for the report:

David Walker

Pauline Stuchfield

Head of Customer & Exchequer Services

Assistant Director Customer and Digital Services

Report Approved

Date
05/03
/21

Specialist Implications Officer(s):

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

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Winter Grants Scheme Funding Executive Member for Finance and Performance 15th February 2021

Annexes

None

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