



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 Local Covid Support Scheme (LCSS))

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

Date: Wednesday, 21 July 2021

Time: 12.00 pm

Venue: The George Hudson Board Room - 1st Floor West Offices (F045)

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 23 July 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 Monday 19 July 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 12 July 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 Monday 19 July 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. **Local Covid Support Scheme (LCSS)** (Pages 3 - 22)

The Government have announced a final extension of the Local Covid Support Grant scheme (formerly known as the Winter Grant Scheme (WSG)) to 30th September 2021, and further funding of £392k to be allocated to City of York Council. This report requests

retrospective approval to support the Holiday Activities and Food scheme that will operate for 4 weeks in the summer holiday by supplying funding for Free School Meal Vouchers in the remaining 2 weeks (£100k). This has been subject to an officer decision in the meantime due to preparation required ahead of the impending summer holidays.

5. Urgent Business

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

Democracy Officer:

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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 مہیا 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 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].



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

21st July 2021

Report of the Director of Customer & Communities

Local Covid Support Grant Scheme (LCSG)

Summary

1. The Government have announced a final extension of the Local Covid Support Grant scheme (formerly known as the Winter Grant Scheme (WSG)) to 30th September 2021, and further funding of £392k to be allocated to City of York Council.
2. This report will request retrospective approval to support the Holiday Activities and Food scheme that will operate for 4 weeks in the summer holiday by supplying funding for Free School Meal Vouchers in the remaining 2 weeks (£100k). This has been subject to an officer decision in the meantime due to preparation required ahead of the impending summer holidays.
3. The initial funding for the first LCSG was lower than that of the WSG and as such a more cautious approach had been taken in the level of funding awarded to residents to provide support across the full period 17th April to 20th June 2021. As the new level of funding is much higher and must be spent by the end of September 2021 the intention is to provide greater directed financial support to identified families currently claiming Council Tax Support (CTS). The report makes recommendations on the proposals to distribute the funding fairly to those in greatest need.

Recommendations

4. The Executive Member in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing & Safer Communities is asked to:
 - Retrospectively approve the top slice of £100k from the new LCSG grant for free school meal vouchers during the remaining

two weeks of the school summer holidays (as outlined in paragraph 10).

- Approve the methodology outlined in paragraph 16 below for allocating the remaining grant to families identified as in need using the Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme entitlement criteria.
- Approve the continuation of the existing scheme for anyone not on CTS but requires help with food and bills (paragraph 18).

Reason: to ensure government funding is utilised in the fairest and most direct way to support as many of families as possible affected by the financial impacts of the Covid19 Pandemic

Background

5. The Local Covid Support Grant scheme (LCGS) superseded the Winter Support Grants (WSG) on 17th April 2021. The principles of the scheme were similar to those of the WSG in supporting financially vulnerable families with food and utility costs arising from the covid pandemic using local discretion with the funding to be spent by 20th June 2021.
6. The funding for the initial LCSS scheme was £98k of which £50k was top sliced for free school meal vouchers during the May 2021 bank holiday. This left £48k remaining to be distributed from 17th April to 20th June. This equated to approximately £5k per week. The total spend was a little over this, £19k of the £100k Public Health (PH) funding was initially used to augment the government funding available. This was superseded with additional budget announced by the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP).
7. The Government have recently announced a final extension of the scheme to 30th September 2021 and further funding of £392k. At the same time there continues to be no direct Government funding for free school meals during many of the school holidays. The summer activities scheme (Holiday Activities & Food (HAF) programme) operating in York schools aims to make free holiday club places available to children eligible for free school meals for the equivalent of at least four hours a day, four days a week, six weeks a year (4 weeks in the summer and a week's worth of provision in each of the Easter and Christmas holidays).

8. This next amount of LCSG funding will not be paid to local authorities until November/December 2021 following submission of the final returns which are due by 22nd October. There is no opportunity to carry any LCSG funding beyond 30th September.
9. It is possible that further Government funding may become available during the autumn and winter but they have made clear at this point that there will be no further extension to the LCSG.

Options Analysis

Funding of free school meals vouchers during school holidays

10. The Education and Skills service have asked that funding of £100k for the other two weeks of the summer holidays be made available from the latest LCSS grant for free school meals vouchers. If approved this will leave £292k available for distribution to families excluding the balance of the Public Health money remaining.
11. Members can choose not to approve this option and leave a greater amount for distribution to families with children as described below, but note the officer decision already made in consultation with Executive Members which would require alternative funding provision.

Distribution of Remaining LCSG Funding

12. The initial funding for the first LCSG was lower than that of the WSG and as such a more cautious approach had been taken regarding the application criteria for residents to provide support across the last period to 20th June. As the new funding provision is more generous and must be spent by the end of September 2021 the intention is to allow a greater number of families to meet revised criteria for financial support where it is required.
13. The Government are also supportive of authorities seeking match funding to augment the pot:

'LAs are able to add their own funding or partner contributions from local organisations on top of the Grant, including seeking match funding from local community foundations'

14. Due to the timescales involved and current capacity in the sector it is unlikely that we can elicit further funding at this stage. The existing PH money is available until 31st March 2022 unlike the LCSG monies which must be spent by the end of September so could support the existing elements of the scheme for longer.
15. This is positive news as the council can return to providing increased help to those suffering from hardship arising from the covid-19 pandemic. A note of caution is that a monthly scheme has been running since December 2020 and many families could become dependent on the support which will create a 'cliff edge' at the end of September when it ends. This date coincides with the end of Furlough and the move into autumn and winter where indications are that with covid alongside the flu season is likely to be challenging and fuel costs will increase for families.
16. To avoid the risk of monthly reliance on this fund and to ensure the money is targeted at families in need the following scheme is proposed:
 - Families receiving Council Tax Support will be invited to apply for a one off grant to help with food and fuel bills. This would be a limited light touch application process to allow verification checks and bank payments to be made. This money will be paid in addition to the £75 hardship payment each customer has received towards their 2021/22 Council Tax bill.
 - One off cash payments will be made.
 - The awards will be based on the set levels already agreed for the previous WSG scheme, based on family size.
 - Letters will be sent to all CTS customers along with media releases.
 - An application deadline will be specified and bulk payment made to all applicants after this date.
17. The proposed levels of payment and current numbers in each category are as follows:

Row Labels	Count of Claim No	Award	Total
Couple - 1 Child	185	£ 170	£ 31,450
Couple - 2 child	187	£ 195	£ 36,075
Couple - 3 Child	107	£ 220	£ 40,700
Couple 4+ Child	71	£ 245	£ 45,325

Single - 1 child	795	£	150	£	27,750
Single - 2 Child	566	£	175	£	32,375
Single - 3 Child	256	£	200	£	37,000
Single - 4+ Child	120	£	240	£	44,400
Grand Total	2287			£	295,075

18. It is also proposed that for anyone affected financially by covid (not on CTS or otherwise) and requires further help with food and bills, the current scheme (which commenced on 20th April 2021) will continue. This has a full application process will continue to be available alongside the one off payment scheme described in paragraph 16. The Public Health funding will allow this scheme to continue (at current rates will probably cost £50k) and allow for a contingency of around £25-30k if needed if claims increase.
19. Members can choose not to approve this option and consider the following options:
- **leave only the existing scheme in place**, however the council will only receive what it has spent and could result in a substantial amount remaining unclaimed. Whilst this has a higher award it has a stricter criteria around who can apply as described here: <https://www.york.gov.uk/people-communities/covid-local-support-grant/2>
 - **return to the Winter Grant scheme** ie a monthly grant available to all families in hardship. Whilst this scheme in total generated grant payments of an average of £30k per month, which is affordable with the new funding, the following risks could arise:
 - i. for those that claim - the risk of reliance on a monthly payment which stops in September as described earlier;
 - ii. many families could miss out on funding that is an easier to access directly targeted scheme makes available to them;
 - iii. from a fairness perspective all families on CTS would be given the opportunity to apply which would reduce the risk of exclusion.

Council Plan

20. The outcomes in this report contribute to the key Council Plan priority focussed on delivering 'Well-paid jobs and inclusive economy' and the related focus on financial inclusion impacts of the Covid-19 crisis in

terms of meeting immediate needs and planning for ongoing impacts on families and children.

Implications

21.

(a) **Financial** – All contained in the body of the report. The funding is provided by the Department of Work & Pensions.

(b) **Human Resources (HR)** - There are no implications

(c) **Equalities** – There are no negative implications of the proposal as it provides funding to the city's most financially vulnerable. The scheme is a continuation of an existing scheme that has been in place since December 2020. The scheme has and will be promoted through council communications and liaison with our third sector partners. It will ensure that all low income residents will benefit depending on their circumstances and that the Government funding is spent before it can be clawed back.

(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

22. The key risks are

a. if the money that is allocated is not spent and has to be returned to government at the end of the period or

b. the process is too complex for people to apply.

The recommendations in this report seek to mitigate these risks.

Contact Details

Author:

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Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Pauline Stuchfield Director of Customer &
Communities
Tel No.01904 551706

Report Approved

✓

Date 13/7/2021

Specialist Implications Officer(s) *Chief Finance Officer*

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

✓ **All**

Annexes:

Annex 1 - Equalities Impact Assessment

Background Papers:

None

List of Abbreviations

CTS	Council Tax Support
DWP	Department of Work & Pensions
IT	Information Technology
k	Thousand
LCSG	Local Covid Support Grant
PH	Public Health
WGS	Winter Grant Scheme

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City of York Council
Equalities Impact Assessment

Who is submitting the proposal?

Directorate:	Customer and Communities		
Service Area:	Customer & Exchequer Services		
Name of the proposal :	Local Covid Support Grant Scheme		
Lead officer:	David Walker		
Date assessment completed:	12/07/21		
Names of those who contributed to the assessment :			
Name	Job title	Organisation	Area of expertise
David Wright	Revenue & Benefits Subsidy Manager	CYC	Welfare Benefits
Debbie Plummer	Housing Benefit Manager	CYC	Housing Benefits
Susan Wood	Welfare Benefits and Strategic Partnership Manager	CYC	Welfare Benefits and Third Sector Partners

Step 1 – Aims and intended outcomes

1.1	<p>What is the purpose of the proposal? Please explain your proposal in Plain English avoiding acronyms and jargon.</p>
	<p>The proposal is to ensure that Government Grant for supporting financially vulnerable residents with food and utilities is full spent by the September 21 deadline as grant must be returned if any is remaining.</p>
1.2	<p>Are there any external considerations? (Legislation/government directive/codes of practice etc.)</p>
	<p><i>Yes this is Government funding for the specific purpose set out above</i></p>
1.3	<p>Who are the stakeholders and what are their interests?</p>
	<p>They key stakeholders are residents who are suffering financial hardship arising from Covid -19, the Council, Central Government and Third sector support agencies</p>
1.4	<p>What results/outcomes do we want to achieve and for whom?</p>
	<p>The purpose of the proposed scheme is to support financially vulnerable residents as quickly as possible and before the grant period ends.</p>

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Step 2 – Gathering the information and feedback

2.1	What sources of data, evidence and consultation feedback do we have to help us understand the impact of the proposal on equality rights and human rights?	
	Source of data/supporting evidence	Reason for using
	n/a	n/a

Step 3 – Gaps in data and knowledge

3.1	What are the main gaps in information and understanding of the impact of your proposal? Please indicate how any gaps will be dealt with.		
Gaps in data or knowledge		Action to deal with this	
There are no gaps in the data or knowledge as the customers are known to the council as been potentially financially vulnerable. This is from information we hold on Council Tax Support recipients and support provided to families from the outset of the covid pandemic.		The scheme remains open as the former schemes were to any resident experiencing financial difficulty.	

Step 4 – Analysing the impacts or effects.

4.1	Please consider what the evidence tells you about the likely impact (positive or negative) on people sharing a protected characteristic, i.e. how significant could the impacts be if we did not make any adjustments? Remember the duty is also positive – so please identify where the proposal offers opportunities to promote equality and/or foster good relations.		
Equality Groups and Human Rights.	Key Findings/Impacts	Positive (+) Negative (-) Neutral (0)	High (H) Medium (M) Low (L)
Age	n/a		
Disability	n/a		
Gender	n/a		

Gender Reassignment	n/a		
Marriage and civil partnership	n/a		
Pregnancy and maternity	n/a		
Race	n/a		
Religion and belief	n/a		
Sexual orientation	n/a		
Other Socio-economic groups including :	Could other socio-economic groups be affected e.g. carers, ex-offenders, low incomes?		
Carer			
Low income groups	The aim is to provide support with food and utility bills for this group which could include any of the categories in this assessment	Positive	High
Veterans, Armed Forces Community			
Other			
Impact on human rights:			
List any human rights impacted.	n/a		

Use the following guidance to inform your responses:

Indicate:

- Where you think that the proposal could have a POSITIVE impact on any of the equality groups like promoting equality and equal opportunities or improving relations within equality groups
- Where you think that the proposal could have a NEGATIVE impact on any of the equality groups, i.e. it could disadvantage them
- Where you think that this proposal has a NEUTRAL effect on any of the equality groups listed below i.e. it has no effect currently on equality groups.

It is important to remember that a proposal may be highly relevant to one aspect of equality and not relevant to another.

<p>High impact (The proposal or process is very equality relevant)</p>	<p>There is significant potential for or evidence of adverse impact The proposal is institution wide or public facing The proposal has consequences for or affects significant numbers of people The proposal has the potential to make a significant contribution to promoting equality and the exercise of human rights.</p>
<p>Medium impact (The proposal or process is somewhat equality relevant)</p>	<p>There is some evidence to suggest potential for or evidence of adverse impact The proposal is institution wide or cross-Unit, but mainly internal The proposal has consequences for or affects some people The proposal has the potential to make a contribution to promoting equality and the exercise of human rights</p>
<p>Low impact (The proposal or process might be equality relevant)</p>	<p>There is little evidence to suggest that the proposal could result in adverse impact The proposal operates in a limited way The proposal has consequences for or affects few people The proposal may have the potential to contribute to promoting equality and the exercise of human rights</p>

Step 5 - Mitigating adverse impacts and maximising positive impacts

5.1	<p>Based on your findings, explain ways you plan to mitigate any unlawful prohibited conduct or unwanted adverse impact. Where positive impacts have been identified, what is been done to optimise opportunities to advance equality or foster good relations?</p>
<p>There are no negative implications of the proposal as it provides funding to the city's most financially vulnerable. The scheme is a continuation of an existing scheme that has been in place since December 2020. The scheme has been broadly promoted through communications and liaison with our third sector partners. It will ensure that all low income residents will benefit depending on their circumstances and that the Government funding is spent before it can be clawed back.</p>	

Step 6 – Recommendations and conclusions of the assessment

6.1	<p>Having considered the potential or actual impacts you should be in a position to make an informed judgement on what should be done. In all cases, document your reasoning that justifies your decision. There are four main options you can take:</p>
<p>- No major change to the proposal – the EIA demonstrates the proposal is robust. There is no potential for unlawful discrimination or adverse impact and you have taken all opportunities to advance equality and foster good relations, subject to continuing monitor and review.</p>	

- **Adjust the proposal** – the EIA identifies potential problems or missed opportunities. This involves taking steps to remove any barriers, to better advance quality or to foster good relations.
- **Continue with the proposal** (despite the potential for adverse impact) – you should clearly set out the justifications for doing this and how you believe the decision is compatible with our obligations under the duty
- **Stop and remove the proposal** – if there are adverse effects that are not justified and cannot be mitigated, you should consider stopping the proposal altogether. If a proposal leads to unlawful discrimination it should be removed or changed.

Important: If there are any adverse impacts you cannot mitigate, please provide a compelling reason in the justification column.

Option selected	Conclusions/justification
No major change	This is an extension to an existing scheme, the latest Government guidance allows for some latitude in terms of scheme design. This proposal will ensure the most financially vulnerable in the city automatically get some financial support for food and utilities. The core scheme remains open to all. The full funding must be spent by the end of September or the money will be clawed back by central government.

Step 7 – Summary of agreed actions resulting from the assessment

7.1 What action, by whom, will be undertaken as a result of the impact assessment.			
Impact/issue	Action to be taken	Person responsible	Timescale
N/A			

Step 8 - Monitor, review and improve

8. 1	<p>How will the impact of your proposal be monitored and improved upon going forward? Consider how will you identify the impact of activities on protected characteristics and other marginalised groups going forward? How will any learning and enhancements be capitalised on and embedded?</p>
	<p>This is a one off change to the existing scheme that ends in September when Government funding is withdrawn. The money has to be accounted for through Government return and progress is monitored each week and reported to Members along with the other Covid support schemes at the end of each month.</p>

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