
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:

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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