

## 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 Annual report on Financial Inclusion and Welfare Benefits activities)**

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

**Date:** Monday, 12 July 2021

**Time:** 10.00 am

**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 14 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 8 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 - 4)

To approve and sign the minutes of the Decision Session held on 14 June 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 8 July 2021.**

To register to speak please visit [www.york.gov.uk/AttendCouncilMeetings](http://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](http://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](http://www.york.gov.uk/COVIDDemocracy)) for more information on meetings and decisions.

## 4. **Annual report on Financial Inclusion and Welfare Benefits activities** (Pages 5 - 52)

This report provides portfolio Executive Members with 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.

## 5. 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**



City of York Council

Committee Minutes

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Meeting	Decision Session - Executive Member for Finance and Performance
Date	14 June 2021
Present	Councillors Ayre

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### **17. Declarations of Interest**

The Executive Member was 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. He confirmed he had none.

### **18. Minutes**

Resolved: That the minutes of the Decision Session held on 13 March 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Executive Member.

### **19. Public Participation**

Shannon Edward (Committee member of the Community Benefit Society named Friends of the Jubilee Ltd) and Cllr Kallum Taylor (Holgate Ward Councillor) spoke on agenda item 4 - Application for Community Right to Bid under the Localism Act 2011. Both spoke in support of the listing of the Jubilee as an Asset of Community Value, noting the value and benefits of the Jubilee to the local community.

Cllr Taylor referred to the comments made by Nick Love (CAMRA) in support of the listing. The Executive Member declared a non-prejudicial interest as an acquaintance of Nick Love.

### **20. Application for Community Right to Bid under the Localism Act 2011**

The Executive Member considered a report that This report that detailed an application to list The Jubilee Hotel Public House, Balfour Street, York as an Asset of Community Value (ACV). The application was been received from the Friends of Jubilee York. The Head of Asset Management outlined the application.

With reference to paragraph 5 in the report, the Head of Asset Management explained that definition of 'land of community value' was set out in section 88 of the Localism Act 2011 and to be considered as such had to satisfy one of two criteria. One criteria related to the time in the recent past when an actual non-ancillary use of the building or other land furthered the social well-being or social interests of the local community. He noted that definition of 'recent past' was vague. The Executive Member commented that history of property over the last 100 years was in the recent past. He then;

Resolved: That The Jubilee Hotel Public House, Balfour Street, York, be listed as an Asset of Community Value (ACV).

Reason: To ensure the Council meets its legislative requirements of the Localism Act 2011 and promotes community access to community facilities.

## **21. Castle Gateway Update**

The Executive Member considered a report that provided an update on the progress of the Castle Gateway regeneration masterplan. The report recommended that the new public realm at the Castle and Eye of York forms part of the council's funding bid to central government's Levelling Up Fund, applications for which close on 18 June 2021. The Head of Regeneration Programmes gave an update on the masterplan noted that there would be a planning application for the public realm aspect.

The Executive Member acknowledged the challenges of engaging in public consultation during the pandemic. He noted that the plan was ambitious and the bid to central government's Levelling Up Fund was exciting. He then;

Resolved:

1) That the progress update on the delivery of the Castle Gateway masterplan be noted.

Reason: To note the work that has been carried out to deliver the Castle Gateway scheme since the last Executive approvals in October 2020

2) That approval be given to the inclusion of the Castle and Eye of York public realm in the council's wider Levelling Up funding bid to central government.

Reason: To pursue central government funding for the delivery of the new public realm to replace Castle Car Park and the Eye of York.

## **22. Additional Restrictions Grant – Restart element**

The Executive Member considered a report that provided an update on the restart element of the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG). The Head of Economic Growth outlined the report, adding that colleagues were waiting to find out that day with the country would be moving to step 4 of the Covid roadmap. He explained that the grants awarded under the ARG were based on the number of days that businesses are shut and he detailed the amounts that had been awarded. The Executive Member noted the importance of being able to support businesses and then;

Resolved: That retrospective approval be given to the decision taken by the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Executive Members for Finance & Performance and Economy & Strategic Planning on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2021 as follows:

Using the amounts allocated per 28 day period as agreed on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021, to provide restart grants to businesses on the basis of the Government's Roadmap steps as follows:

- Businesses reopening at Step 1: No further grant (reopening already provided for in grant paid from 1st March to 31st March)
- Businesses reopening at Step 2: One payment of 11 days at the agreed amounts plus a fixed payment of £200 (£396 to those with no premises, £724 - £1,379 for those in premises)
- Businesses reopening at Step 3: One Payment of 46 days at the agreed amounts (£821/£2191-£4,929)
- Businesses reopening at Step 4: One payment of 81 days at the agreed amounts (£1446/£3859-£8,679).

Reason: To support to York businesses which are affected by the Lockdown restrictions but not eligible for Restart Grant funding

Cllr Ayre, Executive Member

[The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 10.25 am].

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

**12<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

Report of the Director of Customer & Communities

**Annual Report on Financial Inclusion and Welfare Benefits Activities  
2020/21**

**Summary**

1. This report provides portfolio Executive Members with 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.

**Recommendation**

2. The Executive Members are asked to note the report and the progress made in supporting residents who are financially vulnerable.

*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.*

## **Welfare Benefits Update**

3. The council provides a broad range of welfare support to residents through the York Financial Assistance Scheme, Council Tax Support (CTS) and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). The breadth of this support was increased across 2020 to help residents during the Covid-19 pandemic and the additional schemes are picked up in the following paragraphs.

### **York Financial Assistance Scheme (YFAS)**

4. The YFAS scheme was established in April 2013, following the transfer of responsibility (and initially funding) from central government. The former national scheme, delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), was part of the Social Fund. YFAS is now fully funded and locally administered by the council and can assist residents to stay or move into the community or with emergencies.
5. In 2020/21, 1,707 YFAS applications were received. Full details of the spend and the trend in YFAS claims are set out in Annex C.
6. To assist with the financial impact on York residents arising from the Covid-19 pandemic in April 2020 emergency decisions were taken to allocate an additional £1m of support which is administered and managed through the YFAS scheme, within which the criteria was widened to include all residents finding themselves in financial hardship during the pandemic. Examples of spend against the fund for 2020/21 are shown in the Table 1 below including £75k allocated to support the work of the Community Hubs. The fund has also been used as follows:
  - to pay for the Free School Meals (FSM) vouchers of £15 per child during the October 2020 half term holiday at a cost of £50.5k. The subsequent holiday costs through to the May 21 half term have been met from the Government's Winter Support Grant (WSG) funding.
  - £78.8k has been used to supplement the £957k Council Tax Support (CTS) hardship grant funded by the government as outlined in paragraph 16 and in the table below.

Table 1 Hardship fund spending 2020/21

**OVERALL SPEND - YFAS Covid-19 Emergency Fund**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Actual spend</b>
Community hubs - pre pay cards	£ 10,255
Hub Support	£ 75,000
Community food parcels	£ 63,111
Mobile phones & internet	£ 11,000
Discretionary free school meals - Pupils confirmed	£ 50,505
Covid-19 Hardship Grant for CTS - Council Funding	£ 78,844
Winter Support Grant Charged to YFAS	£ 235,620
YFAS scheme	£ 304,526
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 828,861</b>

7. As part of YFAS Community awards for items such as white goods, furniture and carpets are currently provided through a contract with the York Community Furniture Store. A tender process was undertaken in February 2020 to comply with both transparency and competition rules for provision of the service. The new contract commenced on 1 May 2020.

**Winter Support Grant (WSG)**

8. On 8 November 2020, the Government announced a package of extra targeted financial support for those in need over the winter period. The Covid Winter Support Grant (WSG) 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.
9. The DWP provided funding to the council to administer the scheme and provide direct assistance to vulnerable households and families with children particularly affected by the pandemic. This included some families who normally have access to FSM during term time. The initial funding allocation for York was £416,729. Criteria for the use of the funding meant 80% had to be spent on food and utilities and 80% on families with children.

10. In York approximately 50% of the WSG funding was used to fund FSM during Christmas, February and Easter holidays. The remaining funding was used for the WSG which went live from 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020 until 31st March 2021 initially.
11. The application process was made easy to access and use for those who are in financial difficulty. It was open to all York residents who require urgent financial assistance as a result of the pandemic and have savings of less than £2,000.
12. As well as supporting residents with food and utilities, support was also targeted to help with essential digital connections. The scheme has been publicised widely throughout the council, external networks and social media. Over 2,600 applications have been received the details are set out at Table 2 and 3 below:

Table 2

Total Spend	£ 546,876
Budget	£ 311,604
% spent	176%

Amount Charged to YFAS	£ 235,271
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No of applications received	2,636
No of refused applications	398
No of awarded applications	2,091

Table 3 - Type of awards made

Household	Food	Utilities	Other - Mobile phones/internet	Total	Total
<b>Families</b>	1,665	1,486	476	3,627	£ 488,549.49
<b>Other</b>	331	249	69	649	£ 58,327.03
<b>Total</b>	1,996	1,735	545	4,276	£ 546,876.52
<b>Split**</b>	98.5%		1.5%		

\* split of household must be at least 80% in favour of Families

\*\*split of expenditure must be at least 80% in favour of food and utilities

13. The Government provided further WSG funding for the period 31<sup>st</sup> March to 16<sup>th</sup> April 2021. They then introduced a Local Covid Support Grant (LCSG) through to 20<sup>th</sup> June 2021. The council received £98k of funding for this scheme £50k was top sliced for free school meal vouchers during the May half term 2021. A further £100k of Public Health funding was used to augment the Government's LCSG providing a total budget of £148K through to June 2021.

### Isolation Grants

14. The Government have provided funding (£500 per claimant) across the pandemic to support those on low income who would lose pay through self-isolating. The most recent position of the grants is set out in the table below:

*Table 4 – Isolation Grants*

ISOLATION PAYMENTS -Summary Totals      02/07/2021

Scheme	Budget	Spend	% spent	No of payments left
Standard Scheme	£ 229,500	£ 189,500	83%	80
Discretionary	£ 173,500	£ 150,500	87%	46
	£ 403,000	£ 340,000	84%	126

### Council Tax

15. Covid has had a significant impact on Council Tax Support (CTS) claims and on collection and recovery.
16. CTS awards amongst working age residents increased by 949 from March to September 2020, though has reduced by 119 from September 2020 to March 2021 as shown in the table below.

Table 5 – CTS Caseload

<b>Council Tax Support caseload</b>	<b>Working age</b>	<b>Pensioners</b>
March 2020	4,682	4,034
September 2020	5,535	3,997
March 2021	5,512	3,887

17. The Government provided a Hardship Fund as part of its Covid support to provide existing and new claimants of CTS with up to £150 towards their bill during 2020/21. This Government funding of £957k was exhausted at the end of October 2020 and the council agreed to fund the scheme for the rest of the financial year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. This has cost £78,844. Overall support has assisted over 13,078 residents with their council tax during 2020/21.
18. All council tax recovery action ceased in April 2020 and was not resumed until 14th October 2020 when 8,000 Council Tax reminders were posted; these included an insert signposting people to check if they are entitled to any benefits and letting people know where to go for advice and support if they were having difficulty paying. In addition residents were advised they could spread any arrears across their remaining monthly payments.
19. In November 2020 3,000 summons were issued for court in December and following the court hearing 2,241 liability orders have been issued.
20. Around 500 further reminders were issued in February 2021. The council is continuing to review work across customer services, revenues and benefits teams to ensure best practice around CTS and Council Tax recovery; and working with networks within the council and external advice providers to explore how we can best identify and support people who can't pay.
21. In addition tools and training have been provided to Customer Service staff to improve signposting to Council Tax discounts, Council Tax Support and to other support services for those who are in financial difficulties.

## Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)

22. The council received £298k in Government funding for DHPs for 2020/21 in order to help with housing costs and has additional CYC budget of £27k in reserve. Some 436 DHP's were awarded, totalling £298,252. All the government allocation was spent plus an additional amount of CYC funding. Total funding and expenditure and funding is shown in the table below.

*Table 6 - Discretionary Housing Payment*

	2019/20		2020/21	
Total DHP Fund available	£237,097	100%	£324,923	100%
Amount spent	£211,835	89%	£298,252	92%
Amount remaining	£25,262	11%	£26,671	8%

## Universal Credit (UC)

23. The impact of the pandemic on jobs and those in work but on Universal Credit is clear as shown in the table below. With the numbers increasing by 57% from March to April 2020 and numbers almost doubling by the end of September 2020. Further details are available at Annex A.

*Table 7 Number of claimants York Jobcentre Plus area*

	2019	2020	2021
<b>March</b>	1,699	13,987	13,187
<b>Difference</b>		12,288	-800

(This information is collated from the DWP official published data at <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk>.)

24. The Citizens Advice 'Help to Claim' service supports clients through the early stages of a UC claim, checking eligibility, offering assistance, completing the application, and support with that application through to the first correct full payment. This is a free, independent, confidential and impartial service provided by trained advisers from Citizens Advice. Clients can access the service through face to face appointments, a national Freephone helpline, or webchat through the Citizens Advice website – see below.

**Table 8 Citizens Advice York - Help to Claim Statistical Information**

2020 - 2021		Total	Telephone	Web Chat	Email
<b>Q1</b>	<b>April</b>	42	31	11	0
	<b>May</b>	50	46	4	0
	<b>June</b>	58	57	0	1
<b>Q2</b>	<b>July</b>	42	40	2	0
	<b>Aug</b>	39	34	3	2
	<b>Sept</b>	49	46	3	0
<b>Q3</b>	<b>Oct</b>	29	8	0	37
	<b>Nov</b>	47	3	1	51
	<b>Dec</b>	29	1	0	30
<b>Q4</b>	<b>Jan</b>	52	0	2	54
	<b>Feb</b>	39	2	3	44
	<b>Mar</b>	37	3	3	43
<b>Total</b>		<b>487</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>539</b>

### Work of Welfare Benefits Officers

25. The Income Services Team through its Benefits and Contributions Advisers officers have supported 1,560 residents providing advice and support which has generated welfare benefit gains £3,145,553 in 2020/21.

### Digital Inclusion

26. The pandemic has continued to highlight the importance of digital inclusion and the inequalities face by those without digital access. For those residents without IT equipment and/or internet access the following is now more difficult:
- making new or managing benefits claims for vital support
  - accessing online discounts for essential household costs, fuel, insurance, phones, for example
  - shopping online to avoid contact and adhere to social distancing
  - connecting with family and friends
  - accessing education, training and employment
  - accessing other help and support from organisations who have moved services online



- children are unable to do undertake school work and other learning.

27. Working with the Digital City team in ICT the council agreed a package of support for mobile phones and personal Wi-Fi hotspots with 3 months call/data, through an existing relationship with a local provider. This was funded through the YFAS hardship fund as shown in table 1, paragraph 6 above. This support is available to those who:

- do not have a landline or mobile phone or access to the internet in their home
- have health conditions or other additional factors which mean they are unable to access the support they need at this time without access to the internet.

28. This scheme has provided 55 mobile phone with 3 months inclusive data and 25 wi-fi hot spots with 3 months unlimited data.

29. During evaluation of the scheme people receiving assistance with a smartphone/dongle have told us:

*“The phone has improved my life and made me a lot happier. Without it I would have been miserable and not able to contact anyone. It has also enabled me to bid for new property on Home choice.”*

*“I have been able to shop online, as well as contacting friends daily.”*

*“It was extremely helpful for me to not be isolated both family who also had to shield and my support network on social media. Thank you.”*

*“The smartphone offers me a lot more independence now. The search for possible places for a voluntary or courses offered by York Learning is now possible without having to ask the keyworkers to log me in at one of the pcs in the hostel with the contract's included 5 GB. Most helpful are the free phone calls and SMS within the UK included in the contract as well. As it has all the important features of a smartphone I can also write my CV to prepare me to seek for a job. Also processes that require a mobile number like signing up for a bank account or the Universal Credit are now possible. I appreciate very much having received it and I'm using it a lot, thank you very much!”*

30. The recently launched York IT Reuse Scheme was developed as a result of the joint work of organisations and services in the city working across a wide spectrum of areas, all identifying a lack of digital access as a barrier to people with complex needs during the pandemic. The scheme has provided 54 reused computer devices to residents to get them online.
31. The scheme is funded by the Multiple Complex Needs network's Build Back Better Fund (BBBF) run by the Two Ridings Community Foundation. The scheme is operated through the York Community Furniture Store (CFS) which will use funding of £29k for a part time development and coordinator post for 12 months.
32. To further help deliver the scheme CFS have recruited a team of volunteers to:
  - i. *Collect and receive:* Develop facilities and a campaign to collect IT equipment, particularly laptops and tablets donated by local people and through partnerships with businesses, schools, universities and other organisations.
  - ii. *Refurbishment:* Inspect and classify all donations before preparing them for reuse. All data will be eradicated before operating systems and core apps are reinstalled. Devices will be setup to meet the needs of particular user groups. This process will provide volunteering opportunities for people to learn new skills.
  - iii. *Reuse:* Refurbished devices distributed to deliver social benefit. Partners in the scheme will work collaboratively to identify those who would most benefit from the scheme.
33. In addition work has been undertaken with Changing Lives to develop their successful bid to BBBF to provide an additional digital inclusion worker who will work with advice and support agencies across York to develop and manage an application process along with CFS for the scheme. In addition it will link to support and training to use the equipment.
34. Digital accessibility to services, support and supplies has become a critical aspect of financial inclusion work during the pandemic and will heavily feature in Financial Inclusion strategy work going forward. Annex

B sets out in detail the support provided.

35. The work of Explore York (library and archives service) in leading Digital Inclusion (DI) in partnership with the council, following a previous Executive decision to fund a workshop led by Citizens Online, will be key in taking this work forward. The initial outputs from that work includes developing the network of key partners and supporting Digital Champions that are already operating in communities and organisations across the city. A joint action plan will be developed to help identify and tackle areas of digital and social exclusion.

### **Housing Update**

36. In April 2020 arrears were £975,943. From the start of the pandemic April to September 2020 council tenant rent arrears increased by 36.63%. Currently rent arrears stand at £1,188,356 at the end of May 2021. Housing Services currently have 2174 people in receipt of UC. The balance of the debts at the commencement of their UC claim is £447274.58 and is currently now £580147.19. Therefore average arrears is £266.86 as opposed to £205.74 when they made their initial claims.
37. Housing officers have supported tenants and their families/communities through some very difficult times in the past year and are helping tenants to claim Discretionary Housing Payments, YFAS payments for white goods/food and food bank assistance, whilst trying to find alternative accommodation to help with their financial distress and encouraging payment by Direct Debit. During the pandemic the council established an £80k Financial Hardship Fund for council housing tenants. The hardship fund has supported a small number of tenants, is still available for applications and the scheme is continuously promoted with tenants and through partners.
38. In terms of enforcement activity low level, light touch letters have been used over the pandemic period and now the restrictions on enforcement of arrears have been lifted the enforcement approach will only be used in appropriate cases where all advice, support and payment arrangements have been tried and failed and where there are no exceptional circumstances. In accordance with new Breathing Space regulations (see paragraph 51-55 below) the council have received 4

applications with rent arrears and these are dealt with accordingly with suspension of any action on those arrears.

39. The complete range of financial support and help available to all residents including private tenants has been made available to private landlords and is published on the council's website. Those landlords in contact with the council were written to during the initial lockdown with useful information to help them support their tenants to maintain tenancies through rent payment help and mortgage holidays. A reminder about the support available to Landlords and Tenants was given to the York Residential Landlord Association on the 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021 and more recently a letter has been circulated to landlords asking them not to insist that tenants move in or out of homes where they have covid related issues including the need to self isolate. There has been no evident increase in people being made homeless in the private rented sector as yet but this is being monitored.

#### **Other activities funded by Financial Inclusion budgets.**

40. This section of the report covers other activities funded by the council that have supported financial inclusion during 2020/21 as well as activity in place for the current year.
41. The Financial Inclusion Steering Group (FISG) is responsible for overseeing the delivery of financial inclusion work and also has strategic oversight of the council's DHP, YFAS and CTS schemes. Membership continues to expand and now includes the York Food Justice Alliance joining the Welfare Benefits Unit, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York CVS, Explore York, Citizens Advice York, Community First Credit Union and a number of CYC directorate representatives. There is a standing invitation to a representative of the Parish Councils. The Executive Members for Housing & Safer Neighbourhoods, for Finance & Performance and for Adult Social Care & Health are members of the group.
42. 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'.*

43. The group regularly monitors grants awarded to local organisations to deliver projects that meet the group's objectives. It has an agreed base budget of £100k per financial year for approved grant schemes.

### Outcomes of projects funded in 2020/21

44. Six projects were funded for 2020/21. Despite the challenges and constraints of Covid all providers were able to continue to deliver high levels of support to residents by developing alternative methods of working. All partners responded swiftly and positively to the challenges of Covid-19 working collaboratively and innovatively to continue to support vulnerable residents in the city. The table below is a high level summary of what the projects hoped to achieve along with some of the key outcomes.

Table 9: Outcomes for projects funded for 2020/21

Organisation / Project Title/Funding amnt	Aim/Key Outcomes to 31/3/21
<p><i>Older Citizens Advocacy York (OCA Y)</i></p> <p><i>'Benefits advocacy'</i></p> <p>£5,500</p>	<p>Aim - Deliver comprehensive advocacy (emotional/ practical) support to residents aged 50+ to ensure they receive proper entitlement to benefits and prevent falling into poverty. Help to manage the difficulties experienced by making claims, which can aggravate existing health difficulties e.g. assist with form filling and supporting at appointments.</p> <p>Covid response - provided a telephone service and found innovative ways of completing paper-based forms with client. Used socially distanced 'garden' visits and worked over the phone with the 'sample' PIP form and then transferring information to the actual form.</p> <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Provided support to 71 residents across a range of benefit issues with a high level of resident satisfaction.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Changing Lives</i></p> <p><i>'Financial Inclusion and pre-employment worker'</i></p> <p>£15,150</p>	<p>Aim: Continue/enhance financial inclusion offer, supporting more vulnerable/ 'hard to reach' residents to achieve and maintain financial independence. Deliver a mix of 1-2-1 brief interventions, longer term support to enable access to financial products and services and increase understanding of the benefits system, and group work to facilitate increased social inclusion. Continue to engage with those experiencing at risk of homelessness accessing Changing Lives' and 'Community Links' services.</p> <p>Covid response -lockdown significantly limited project activity, severely limited education, employment &amp; training opportunities as well as restricting direct contact with clients.</p>

	<p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 39 new referrals, current caseload 14</li> <li>○ Support issues dominated by Covid 19/maintaining health &amp; well-being during lockdown</li> <li>○ 10 new bank accounts opened, 8 ID established</li> <li>○ 11 referrals onto employment training, 17 advised on impact on benefits from p/t employment / maximising benefit</li> <li>○ 2 CVs done, 3 found employment</li> <li>○ 18 started education course (17 at Askham Bryan)</li> <li>○ 26 clients supported accessing personal and social activities to reduce social isolation and facilitate relationship development with project staff, in particular through the 'Bike Project'.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Peasholme Charity</i></p> <p><i>'My Money, My Life'</i></p> <p>£23,426</p>	<p>Aim: Support the continued delivery of its financial capability pathway service offering a range of activities aiming to support individuals from a point of crisis through to a long-term change process to a place of financial stability. The charity defines 'crisis' as lacking security, shelter or the ability to sustain oneself.</p> <p>Covid response - continued to provide support activities for those already engaged with the service working flexibly to meet the challenges. Community based drop-in activities were cancelled (venues closed); the Financial Capability Coach (FCC) remained in contact with providers offering phone meetings and online sessions where technology allowed.</p> <p>Outcomes: Supported 226 people – with 81 from the last financial year – including referral from the Food Bank.</p> <p>Supported 44 people/families to manage the financial impact of the pandemic. Many others reported an increase in stress and anxiety, and a decrease in their mental health resulting from the lockdown.</p>
<p><i>Citizens Advice York</i></p> <p><i>'GP Surgeries Advice Service'</i></p> <p>£12,221</p>	<p>Aim: The project delivers advice to clients and continues to develop co-ordinated advice services delivered within GP surgeries in York. Clients will be referred by GPs in the practises or via the CVS-run 'Ways to Wellbeing' project.</p> <p>Covid response - All face-to-face services have switched to a remote / telephone advice format. New processes were put in place by both CAY and the GP surgeries allowing clients to access the service remotely (mostly via telephone).</p> <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 87 clients saw income gains of £206,943</li> <li>▪ 162 people received advice</li> </ul>

<p><i>Citizens Advice York</i></p> <p><i>'Advice, Information &amp; Budgeting in community settings'</i></p> <p>£28,360</p>	<p>Aim: Continue with existing five community settings to provide AIB to residents, building on the existing well-received project. Enhance resident's financial capability through support with IT, signposting, finding useful information etc.</p> <p>Covid response - adapted ways of working, pooled some resources of wider outreach team using technology to make accessing advice as quick, efficient and convenient for the client as possible.</p> <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 375 clients given advice (detailed advice given to 147 clients (others signposted)</li> <li>○ 409 email/telephone enquiries</li> <li>○ 1,131 issues dealt with</li> <li>○ £370k income gains for 157 residents</li> </ul>
<p><i>Welfare Benefits Unit</i></p> <p><i>'Universal Credit Focus'</i></p> <p>£12,898</p>	<p>Aim: continue to deliver enhanced outcomes for York residents, building on existing successful project and developed in response to adviser need and the shifting UC picture. By offering pro-active follow-up, in-depth support and targeted training the project will provide support to advisers and other workers at a time of high complexity and change in the benefits system.</p> <p>Covid response - adapted to remote working and different service delivery model. Remote training delivered. Good case studies supplied. Positive feedback.</p> <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 118 UC queries handled</li> <li>○ 4 briefing sessions for advisers delivered</li> <li>○ Regular email briefings</li> <li>○ 19 instances of detailed case support provided</li> </ul>

45. Around 960 residents were directly supported by these projects. Specific outcomes include 244 residents who saw £577k increased income (annualised) gain. Over 2,600 unique benefit issues were handled with a noticeable increase from those who found themselves reliant on welfare benefits as a result of the economic impacts of Covid-19 particularly those having to claim UC for the first time. In addition, as a direct result of some of the project interventions 3 people found employment and 29 took up training or employment opportunities. The nature and focus of involvement with individual residents varies from project to project (some require high intensity prolonged one to one support) and is reflected in

the outcomes noted. Straight comparisons between them therefore is not appropriate.

### **Funding of projects for 2021/22**

46. The bidding round for funding projects during 2021/22 (completed in March 2021) saw nine bids from eight organisations for grants totalling £144,270, exceeding the £120,360 available. Four of the bids sought to build on projects already funded in 2020/21. Grants totalling £113,276 to fund seven projects for 2021/22 were approved as shown below. All projects will last for twelve months.

*Table 10 - Financial Inclusion projects funded for 2021/22*

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Project title</b>	<b>Brief Summary</b>	<b>Grant Amount</b>
Older Citizens Advocacy York (OCAAY)	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



## **Community Hubs**

47. In October 2020 a report entitled *Community Hubs – Post Covid Recovery* was considered by the Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Communities to assess how CYC could best support York's recovery from the impact of the pandemic. A key strand of this focused on signposting a clear transition from an emergency response to a longer term community approach. Whilst residents who have Covid-19 or are self-isolating will still need emergency support, the council wanted to highlight to residents that they were looking at longer term solutions - both for those directly affected by the virus and for those affected by the longer term impacts individually and within the community.
48. This model emphasises a person centred approach and supports applicants through crisis and helps build resilience to prevent future crises. The aspiration of this approach is to stop the cycle of crisis and response.
49. The approach and its ambitions dovetail into work currently taking place in Adult and Children's Social Care and Housing, as well as the voluntary sector, which seeks to emphasise preventative, asset based approaches to alleviate crises and reduce demand on high cost services. This alternative support model will achieve this through working more flexibly to support individuals and communities. This will mean less emphasis on the approach which looks to stabilise crisis, moving the focus to supporting applicants to identify ways to prevent crisis re-occurring and build resilient support networks.

## **Resident Experience**

50. The council is looking to use contact by residents for support arising from Covid-19, arrears of council tax and rent as trigger points for an initial indication of longer term challenges and intervention. The council is looking to use an integrated assessment allowing applicants to tell their story once and then be considered for support e.g. to pay rent, Council Tax or receive support to meet other needs. Using this approach should provide a much improved resident journey from first point of contact, improving the relationship between the Council and communities.

Those whose crisis requires immediate attention would potentially be provided with emergency support from YFAS, Community Hubs or other crisis services.

## **Breathing Space**

51. The Debt Respite Scheme, or Breathing Space aims to help relieve some of the pressure of dealing with creditors, so people can focus on getting debt advice and setting up their debt solution without worrying about being chased for payment or incurring extra charges. It's a free scheme, launched by the Government on 4 May 2021.
52. If people pass the eligibility checks, their creditors won't be able to add interest or fees to their debts, or take enforcement action, for 60 days. They will still need to keep making their regular payments if they can afford to.
53. Breathing Space is not a payment holiday, so they'll have to continue paying their debts during this time, but it does prevent action from being taken against them if they're unable to pay.
54. To apply for Breathing Space people need to get advice from a registered debt adviser. who will guide them through the eligibility checks. If they're eligible for Breathing Space, the adviser will submit the application on their behalf. This should give them time to get debt advice and set up a solution to deal with their debts. Local debt advice providers are
  - Citizens Advice York
  - CAP (Christians Against Poverty)
  - Step Change
55. Policies and processes have been agreed across the council to action Breathing Space notifications from the Insolvency Service and the Corporate Debt Policy has been updated.

## **Council Plan**

56. 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. The associated Financial Inclusion Policy review will be progressed in 2021 as current activity continues to be prioritised around the impacts of the Covid-19 crisis in terms of meeting immediate needs and planning for recovery impacts.

## Implications

57.

(a) **Financial** – The direct financial implications relate to the funding of both FISG bids and the YFAS scheme which are funded within approved budget allocations/reserves.

(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

58. The key risks are in relation to YFAS, DHP, and other available hardship funds and include:

- The covid-19 pandemic is still ongoing and which there is still available government and council funded support for residents, forward planning of ongoing support through future budget processes will be key as the expected impacts will exist into the long term.
- Managing the budget to ensure that customers get the same service and support irrespective of when they apply in the financial year.
- The pandemic has impacted on the funding of the council and of our partners in the voluntary and charity sector, so service resilience across all partners needs to be a key consideration for decision makers in the short and medium term to secure ongoing service delivery.
- Any failure to provide an appropriate service will have a negative impact on the wellbeing of vulnerable people.
- There remains anecdotal evidence from third sector organisations and the growing HRA debt that indicates there could be a growing challenge around managing the impacts of UC.

59. These risks are managed through constant monitoring and review. The actual figures for UC, YFAS, DHP and rent arrears are reported to each FISG meeting to allow early intervention.

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**Report Approved**

**Date** 1/7/2021

**Specialist Implications Officer(s)** *None*

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

✓ All
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**Annexes:**

Annex A	Universal Credit Statistics York 2020/21
Annex B	IT Support Scheme Report – March 2021
Annex C	Discretionary Financial Support Summary Report April 2021

**Background Papers:**

Approval of 2020/21 FISG Grant Awards:

[Agenda for Decision Session - Executive Member for Finance and Performance on Monday, 16 March 2020, 2.00 pm \(york.gov.uk\)](#)

Approval of 2020/21 FISG Grant Awards:

<http://modgov.york.gov.uk/documents/s148011/Financial%20Inclusion%20Grant%20Scheme%20Awards%20Report.pdf>

**List of Abbreviations**

ADS	Assisted Digital Support
AY	Advice York
BBBF	Build Back Better Fund
CAY	York Citizen's Advice York
CFS	Community Furniture Store
CMT	Council Management Team
CTS	Council Tax Support
CVS	Council for Voluntary Services
CYC	City of York Council
DD	Direct Debits
DI	Digital Inclusion
DHP	Discretionary Housing Payment
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
FI	Financial Inclusion
FISG	Financial Inclusion Steering Group
FSM	Free School Meals
HB	Housing Benefit
IT	Information Technology
k	Thousand
LCSG	Local Covid Support Grant
LHA	Local Housing Allowance

MH	Mental Health
PBS	Personal Budgeting Advices
UC	Universal Credit
WGS	Winter Grant Scheme
YFAS	York Financial Assistance Scheme

## Universal Credit Statistics York 2020/21

This information is collated from the DWP official published data at <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk>

Not all data is updated at the same time. High level claimant figures are released several months before detailed household information.

### Number of claimants York Jobcentre Plus area

	2019	2020	2021
<b>March</b>	1699	13987	13187
<b>Difference</b>		12288	-800

### York UC Claimants 20/21

Month 20/21	Not in employment	In employment	Total
Apr-20	6040	4265	10305
May-20	7215	4941	12158
Jun-20	7217	5235	12453
Jul-20	7093	5432	12523
Aug-20	7113	5578	12689
Sep-20	7080	5761	12841
Oct-20	6917	5837	12756
Nov-20	7040	5888	12930
Dec-20	7180	5956	13137
Jan-21	7301	5843	13143
Feb-21	7491	5744	13236
Mar-21	7530	5661	13187

<b>Gender</b>				
<b>Month</b>			<b>Unknown/</b>	
<b>2020/21</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Missing</b>	<b>Total</b>
Apr-20	4,834	5,485	10	10,305
May-20	5,898	6,288	10	12,200
Jun-20	6,006	6,433		12,443
Jul-20	6,004	6,511	6	12,523
Aug-20	6,068	6,609	6	12,689
Sep-20	6,119	6,714	6	12,841
Oct-20	6,053	6,696	6	12,756
Nov-20	6,079	6,847	6	12,930
Dec-20	6,196	6,934	6	13,137
Jan-21	6,190	6,939	7	13,143
Feb-21	6,235	6,992	7	13,236
Mar-21	6,181	6,999	7	13,187



Age														
Month 2020/21	16-20	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-65	Over 65	Missing	Total	Increase
Apr-20	363	1334	1665	1617	1379	1003	906	823	673	542	20	..	10330	3767
May-20	443	1647	1944	1889	1594	1174	1064	993	792	633	25	..	12,200	1,895
Jun-20	431	1,780	1,985	1,910	1,622	1,203	1,108	1,017	810	638	32	..	12,534	376
Jul-20	423	1,837	1,968	1,888	1,637	1,200	1,075	996	823	653	27	..	12,523	140
Aug-20	433	1,888	2,004	1,911	1,648	1,196	1,082	1,012	819	659	28	..	12,689	166
Sep-20	426	1,940	2,007	1,934	1,674	1,216	1,082	1,027	820	674	41	..	12,841	152
Oct-20	431	1927	1983	1915	1652	1226	1075	1009	828	672	36	..	12,756	85
Nov-20	454	1940	2011	1936	1673	1253	1090	1031	834	677	31	..	12,930	174
Dec-20	469	1994	2065	1997	1678	1285	1105	1051	860	696	34	..	13,235	305
Jan-21	449	1938	2044	1994	1698	1274	1118	1055	845	687	33	..	13143	-92
Feb-21	465	1935	2044	1986	1714	1312	1138	1065	840	704	36	..	13236	93
Mar-21	458	1865	2013	2007	1734	1324	1137	1063	840	711	46	..	13187	-49

<b>UC duration</b>									
<b>Month 2020/21</b>	<b>Up to 3 months</b>	<b>3 months - 6 months</b>	<b>6 months - to 1 year</b>	<b>1 year - to 2 years</b>	<b>2 years - to 3 years</b>	<b>3 years - to 4 years</b>	<b>4 years - to 5 years</b>	<b>5 years and over</b>	<b>Total</b>
Apr-20	4631	857	1350	1889	1426	78	56	10	10305
May-20	6138	943	1446	1929	1587	86	60	12	12200
Jun-20	6168	1007	1532	1960	1710	84	61	18	12534
Jul-20	2949	4028	1553	2011	1819	89	59	18	12523
Aug-20	1577	5201	1703	2040	1863	223	65	28	12689
Sep-20	1437	5215	1788	2085	1860	364	71	29	12841
Oct-20	1370	2657	4090	2213	1814	514	68	33	12756
Nov-20	1563	1401	5099	2303	1768	693	67	40	12930
Dec-20	1697	1298	5143	2424	1722	841	67	39	13235
Jan-21	1587	1211	5018	2527	1737	943	72	45	13143
Feb-21	1546	1379	4757	2608	1746	1074	71	51	13236
Mar-21	1340	1484	4562	2732	1723	1214	73	60	13187

<b>UC Conditionality</b>								
<b>Regime</b>								
<b>Month</b> <b>2020/21</b>	<b>Searching for work</b>	<b>Working – with requirements</b>	<b>No work requirements</b>	<b>Working – no requirements</b>	<b>Planning for work</b>	<b>Preparing for work</b>	<b>Unknown or missing regime</b>	<b>Total</b>
Apr-20	3925	1763	2214	1803	174	422	5	10305
May-20	4604	2382	2261	2299	190	459	..	12200
Jun-20	4327	2449	2280	2833	195	442	..	12534
Jul-20	4338	2635	2313	2596	181	456	..	12523
Aug-20	4501	2663	2357	2507	192	462	6	12689
Sep-20	4338	2538	2388	2920	192	458	..	12841
Oct-20	4154	2393	2420	3148	182	454	..	12756
Nov-20	4194	2516	2495	3077	181	475	..	12930
Dec-20	4275	2550	2551	3200	179	485	..	13235
Jan-21	4075	2456	2612	3327	173	487	12	13143
Feb-21	4424	2604	2666	2850	181	507	..	13236

April 21

Mar-21	4438	2580	2719	2753	189	508	..	13187
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## Households on Universal Credit

**By household type**

<b>Month 2020/21</b>	<b>Single, no child dependant</b>	<b>Single, with child dependant(s)</b>	<b>Couple, no child dependant</b>	<b>Couple, with child dependant(s)</b>	<b>Total</b>
Apr-20	4687	2250	615	1185	8735
May-20	5399	2354	718	1332	9802
Jun-20	5561	2398	697	1321	9977
Jul-20	5776	2439	664	1305	10194
Aug-20	5976	2488	665	1320	10445
Sep-20	6133	2530	652	1334	6133
Oct-20	6166	2570	627	1337	6166
Nov-20	6345	2633	618	1368	6345
Dec-20	6381	2654	598	1361	6381
Jan-21	6425	2689	603	1396	6425
Feb-21	6453	2716	587	1422	6453
Mar-21					

**Housing cost entitlements**

<b>Month 2020/21</b>	<b>No Housing</b>		<b>Unknown or</b>	
	<b>Entitlement</b>	<b>Social</b>	<b>Private</b>	<b>missing</b>
Apr-20	3017	2101	61	5185
May-20	3163	2472	61	5699
Jun-20	4158	3214	2540	65
Jul-20	4226	3283	2617	66
Aug-20	4346	3358	2674	75
Sep-20	4476	3739	2855	104
Oct-20	4460	3436	2673	81
Nov-20	4422	3499	2694	85
Dec-20	4535	3577	2764	88
Jan-21	4497	3617	2787	95
Feb-21	4522	3661	2831	101
Mar-21				

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**With element entitlements**

<b>Month 2020/21</b>	<b>Carer Entitlement</b>	<b>Child Entitlement</b>	<b>Child Care Entitlement</b>	<b>Disabled Child Entitlement</b>	<b>Limited Capability for Work Entitlement</b>
Apr-20	454	3438	240	208	1274
May-20	469	3686	84	226	1304
Jun-20	481	3718	119	227	1341
Jul-20	481	3747	179	230	1353
Aug-20	484	3809	224	233	1368
Sep-20	495	3868	268	241	1414
Oct-20	512	3908	299	246	1428
Nov-20	541	4000	296	254	1463
Dec-20	544	4021	281	255	1472
Jan-21	550	4089	263	257	1494
Feb-21	559	4136	254	268	1533
Mar-21					

**UC payment amounts**

Month 2020/21	No payment	£0.01	£100.01	£500.01	£1000.01	£1500.01 or over
		to £100.00	to £500.00	to £1000.00	to £1500.00	
Apr-20	663	217	2284	3145	1865	564
May-20	1380	291	2812	3267	1701	353
Jun-20	1251	301	2962	2962	3231	349
Jul-20	1287	301	3030	3030	3288	355
Aug-20	1693	291	2993	2993	3255	376
Sep-20	1927	318	2936	933	1783	379
Oct-20	1787	347	3113	3404	1806	390
Nov-20	1796	351	3113	3484	1790	412
Dec-20	2060	356	2996	3403	1923	393
Jan-21	1665	351	3208	3580	1923	383
Feb-21	1492	353	3329	3627	1994	393
Mar-21						

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## IT Support Scheme Report – March 2021

### Background

At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic frontline teams working to support people affected by Covid-19 situation quickly began to identify people who were unable to access self help and support services because they do not have access to a telephone or internet access. At the same time Customer Services and Revenues and Benefits services identified that closure of council and community buildings would cause particular difficulty for those without internet access to be able to apply for benefits and discretionary support available through the council.

As a result of these concerns, funding was allocated and provision set up to enable residents to apply for smart mobile phone and wi-fi hot spots to enable internet access.

Once this provision was in place it became apparent, through resulting conversations, that access to computer devices was also needed.

Building on existing relationships with York Community Furniture Store (CFS), through the York Financial Assistance Scheme contract, we discussed setting up a computer reuse scheme for the City. This resulted in establishing a working group to take the ideas forward. The working group involved Customer Services, Digital City, York Community Furniture Store, Local Area Coordinators, York Learning, Age UK York, York Cares, JRF, plus community volunteers who had been working with local schools to reuse equipment.

### Mobile phone & wi-fi hot spots

The Digital City team were able to set up provision for smart mobile phones and wi-fi hot spots with a local provider. A budget of £10,000 was allocated to the project, for an estimated 80 devices.

Support for the provision of a mobile phone is available for people affected by the current Covid-19 situation

- Who do not have either a landline or mobile phone?
- Another member of their household does not have a mobile phone
- They have health conditions or other additional factors which mean they are unable to access the support they need at this time without access to a telephone.

Support for the provision of internet is available for people affected by the current Covid-19 situation

- Who do not have access to the internet in their home
- They have health conditions or other additional factors which mean they are unable to access the support they need at this time without access to the internet.

Anyone needing support is referred for advice and support to maximise income and identify the most appropriate support. If this assessment identifies mobile phone or internet access as a priority an application can be made to the scheme by the support worker.

The mobile phone package includes a

- Alcatel One 5033x 4G handset
- 5GB of data with unlimited UK calls & SMS for 3 months.

The internet Package includes

- Huawei E5783B wi-fi hotspot
- Unlimited UK data usage for 3 months

The phone or wi-fi hot spot is owned by the customer. At the end of the 3 months the calls & data package will stop, unless an application is made to extend the calls and data package. At this time to continue to use the phone/wi-fi hot spot customer will need to purchase a new sim card to, either pay-as-you-go or set up a contract.

Nearing the end of the data package notification is sent to the customer and their support worker, with information on how to choose a new package.

A number of packages were due to end in December when the further lockdown was announced, therefore these calls and data packages were extended to end of February.

## **Applications**

- 40 support workers have made applications on behalf of their clients
- 86 applications have been received
- 55 mobile phones have been awarded
- 25 wi-fi hot spots have been awarded

## IT reuse scheme

The York IT reuse scheme project has developed as a result of the joint work of organisations and services in the City who work across a wide spectrum of areas, all have identified lack of digital access as a barrier to people with complex needs during the Covid-19 pandemic. The covid-19 pandemic has shone a spotlight on the inequalities in our society, front and centre of those has been digital exclusion.

The outline aims of the project were to set up a scheme to collect and clean used computers/laptops and distribute these to people on low income.

- Undertake a coordinated campaign to solicit donations of suitable equipment to the scheme from businesses and residents.
- Promote the scheme to residents and support workers to ensure as many people as possible are able to access support.
- Explore the best way to provide cost effective internet broadband with CYC Digital City team, linking with the City's digital strategy.
- Liaise with York Learning and York Explore, along with other partners, to provide support to customers to make sure they have the skills and confidence to use the equipment.

We agreed York Community Furniture (CFS) would be the lead partner for the collection of used equipment, clean and check equipment as well as setting it up for future use. Whilst the application process for equipment would be set up and run by other partner organisation/s.

CFS initially recruited a team of volunteers to support the work and explored the legal and licensing requirements for the scheme.

The application for equipment was included as part of the application process for the mobile phone and wi-fi hot spot scheme.

A soft launch to request donations for equipment was made by York Cares and through the working group's networks.

This enabled the scheme to begin on a small scale.

Once the model was established funding bids were made to secure resources for staff and running costs to up scale the scheme. A bid was made to the Build Back Better Fund through Two Ridings Community Foundation. As a result of this CFS was able to secure funding for a scheme coordinator for 12 months and we were able to develop a partnership with Changing Lives to provide and develop the administration of applications for digital support. See appendix 2 for more information.

CFS appointed the coordinator in January enabling wider publicity to ask for donations of IT devices. This has been successful and they have received an increasing number of donations.

The working group is now being developed into the steering group for the project and a task group is being set up to develop the application process in partnership with Changing Lives.

54 people have so far received refurbished computer devices through the scheme. The devices will come with the standard running software for access and running of the internet, communication and or Google Classroom apps if needed for education. These devices will belong to the customer and will become their responsibility.

A number of those receiving computer devices have also received wi-fi hot spot packages to provide internet access for their device.

We are also working with others, such as York Learning and York Explore, to provide wrap around support on how to use the device safely after delivery.

## **Evaluation**

Evaluation of the IT support scheme has been undertaken with those whose data packages are coming to an end. We have received 6 completed evaluation forms and a number of additional comments.

The overall feedback is this support has made a big difference to people. See appendix 1. It has been a lifeline for people, both in relation to health and finances.

Susan Wood

Welfare Benefits Strategic Partnership Manager

March 2021

**Appendix 1.****Mobile phone / wi-fi hot spot / computer device evaluation**

1. *How was the process of getting the phone?*

- Easy.
- Not easy but worth it, No charger in the wi-fi box came separately. It's broken nearly I think I need to order another.
- Very easy through my advocate.
- Support Worker sorted it all out for me! I would not have been aware of such a thing if not for him.
- It was a bit complicated as it was delivered to the wrong address, and I had to request a new sim card, but after this it was okay.
- Good it arrived very promptly

2. *When you got it were you able to set it up?*

- Yes easy to set up.
- No
- Yes
- I was able to set it up once I got the new sim card through
- Yes set up was very easy.

a. *If you needed help, did you get this?*

- Yes – Ari came to my flat to set it up
- I have not needed any.
- I received help with getting the new sim card and installing this
- Never has one of these phones so a friend helped me.

b. *How easy was it to get help? Who helped you?*

- Support worker came to my flat
- My advocate was always available.
- If needed I would have seen my support worker.
- My housing support worker who applied for the scheme on my behalf helped me with this
- I had a friend across the road who I could ask to help me.

3. *What difference has having the phone and internet made to you?*

- A lot of difference, it has helped us get in touch and keep in touch with people on the internet. My daughter has been able to stay in touch with friends and getting food shopping.
- Big difference. Really kept me in touch with important essential services & government departments. Able to order food clothes etc.

- Was able to access my DWP journal. Apply for jobs, which was successful & keep in touch with family.
- Some difference - It made it easier to access the internet, especially after I got my laptop. I could stream shows more easily.
- Big difference – Huge difference, my son lives in Finland so I have been able to keep in contact with messaging, videos and pictures.
- Allowed me to keep in touch with friends and groups on social media. It has helped me to get info I needed from the internet.
- It has been an absolute essential. I am very grateful.

a. *Has it made a difference to your financial situation? If yes how?*

- Yes it has enable me to order cheaper food, clothes and look at 2nd hand websites for household and personal items.
- I was able to do bills and sort mortgage holiday.
- Yes, it has saved me money on paying for it from my own finances, and has helped me to access online banking (with the help of my support worker)
- Hard to quantify as I just wouldn't have been able to do this myself as cannot afford.

b. *Has it made a difference to your mental health? If yes how?*

- Hard to say but I could solve more problems having the internet.
- Yes, very much I have been able to stay in touch with friends and I have YouTube for music, entertainment, etc.
- Yes because it's provided a distraction, when I have to stay at home all day in lock down
- Allowed me to maintain control over issues through lockdown.
- Yes, also a huge difference related to my earlier answer about my son
- Without it I would not have got internet, and would have been very bored.

- Yes absolutely I can keep in touch with others, I can play music and am in contact with the world,

c. *Has it made a difference to your physical health? If yes how?*

- Yes it has enabled me to stay in more and rest, when i would have struggled to get my shopping, etc.
- By getting a job, I have now lost 2 stone.
- Also big yes because I can pop the unit in my pocket and send my son pictures, videos from out and about and I have peace of mind he can always reach me.

d. *Has it had any other impact/made any other differences to situation? If yes how?*

- I have been able to send photos of letters to my Financial Coach as she has not been able to meet with me, I have been able to keep in touch with work.
- It will from Monday as I have a course starting that is now being run remotely. Vital for this!
- It's helped with morale and my independence during lockdown. I'm very grateful for this.
- Was able to stay in touch with my advocate.
- Well... the above course may become very difficult to complete I cannot afford more data personally.

4. *What would you have done without it?*

- Gone mental!!
- I would've been unhappy, no communication or food deliveries, etc.
- Sank without a trace.
- Contact with my son would have been minimal & that would definitely made me depressed. It is still hard being away from him.
- No idea! I was totally isolated in lockdown so would have had no contact with anyone at all in lockdown and no way of getting hold of support networks.

5. *What would have happened to you and your circumstances without getting the phone?*

- Lost my house, still been unemployed.
- I can't imagine to be honest.

6. *What have you used the phone for - please tick*

- 4 Making phone calls
- 4 Family /Friends
- 4 Support
- 1 Household issues/affairs/bills etc.

What have you used the internet for?

- 6 Getting information
- 3 Shopping online
- 5 Entertainment
- 5 Contact
- 4 Claiming benefits
- 4 Other support
- 5 Other                    Internet banking

7. *What will you do now with the phone?*

a. *Will you be able to pay for the service yourself?*

- I presume give the unit back to you guys. I can't afford it.
- I will top up the dongle myself
- I will keep it and put my own credit on.
- Don't know I haven't looked at the deals yet
- Not a chance!

*How will you do this?*

- i) Pay as go 4
- ii) Contract



8. *Any other comments*

- Thank you!!
- Thank you so much for extending this service into a third lockdown it brought me a tremendous amount of pleasure and reassurance in isolation. Kindest regards.
- I can't thank you enough for providing me with the phone it was a life saver.
- Thank you so much for this service! It has been a lifeline for me & I will mourn its passing!!
- I see the ad's for EE doing data for school kids who need it but what about folk like me? No chance of finding work or support without such a thing.
- I am incredibly grateful for this phone through lockdown. It came at just the right time for me.
- It was extremely helpful for me to not be isolated both family who also had to shield n my support network on social media
- Thank you  
The wi-fi has been very useful to have for these 3 months to access the internet, especially as internet charges are so high in my area and I would've had to pay a large installation fee.
- Feedback from recipients is that the phones arrived very quickly and work well for everything they need. R in particular was very thankful that he was able to see his son and father on video over Christmas, as otherwise he would have had very limited contact. For S it has enabled him to access the internet while in his own property, and having very limited contact with others due to the lockdown otherwise. We're able to help them if they need to learn how to use these, as is the case with an older tenant.
- Some more feedback I've heard from several of them is that while the data and minutes are much appreciated, it would be a great improvement if it was possible to have a top up available for their own sim, so they could keep using their own number for texts and calls rather than using a new sim for three months.
- The smartphone offers me a lot more independence now. The search for possible places for a voluntary or courses offered by York Learning is

now possible without having to ask the keyworkers to log me in at one of the pcs in the hostel with the contract's included 5 GB. Most helpful are the free phone calls and SMS within the UK included in the contract as well. As it has all the important features of a smartphone I can also write my CV to prepare me to seek for a job. Also processes that require a mobile number like signing up for a bank account or the Universal Credit are now possible. I appreciate very much having received it and I'm using it a lot, thank you very much!

- Just thought I would share these videos of M connecting with his drama group that he loves so much. Took a little time to get his internet sorted but it was all worth it, he gets a couple of hours support to help him set it up etc., as he has a learning disability. He loves the laptop.
  
- I am very appreciative that I received a laptop recently. Having a laptop provides me with the opportunity to be productive. I am at present studying Personal Training and Counselling at level 3. By having a laptop it has allowed me to access Microsoft Teams. Prior to that I was having to travel to college and with the present circumstances of Covid, the college would have been closed and I would have problems to continue with studying. I am able to continue the course with the laptop and become more organised. The laptop serves a great purpose in recreational activities, movies, music and social media such as Facebook. By using these features it often encourages better mood and is beneficial for my mental health. I have recently set up Savvey Social Health and Fitness, by having a laptop it allows me to develop the venture further. I am trying to create and maintain a sustainable service for the people of York. This is to support and influence an improved sense of wellbeing in people. Included in this is the whole holistic approach, body and mind in social, health and fitness aspects. Thank you!

## Appendix 2

## Build Back Better Fund – Digital Inclusion Overview

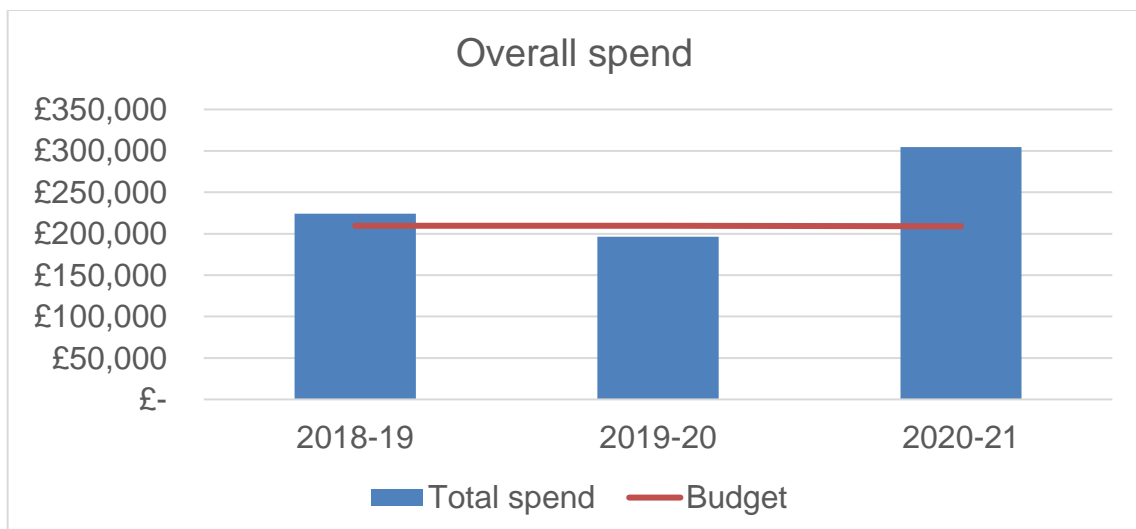
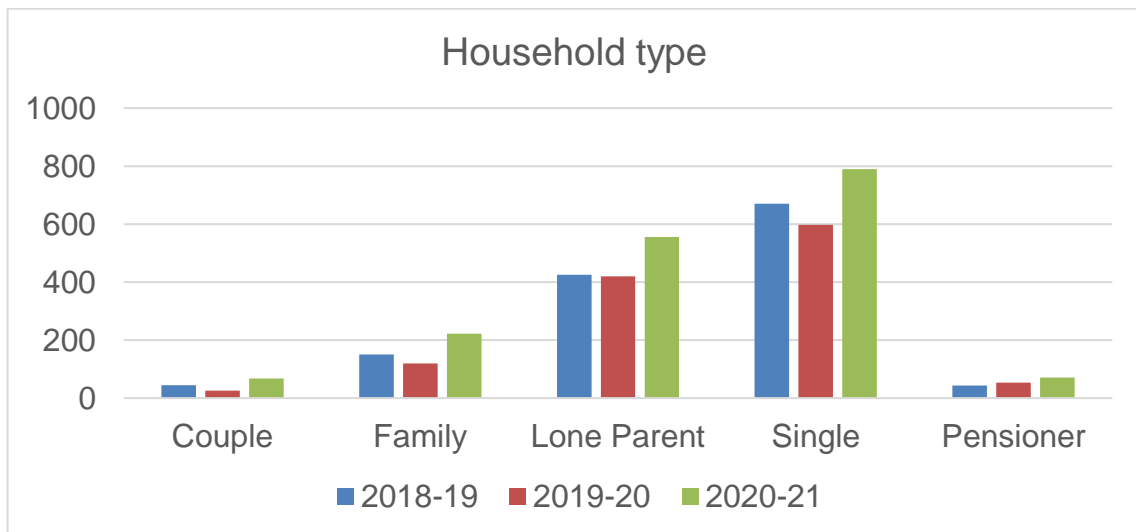
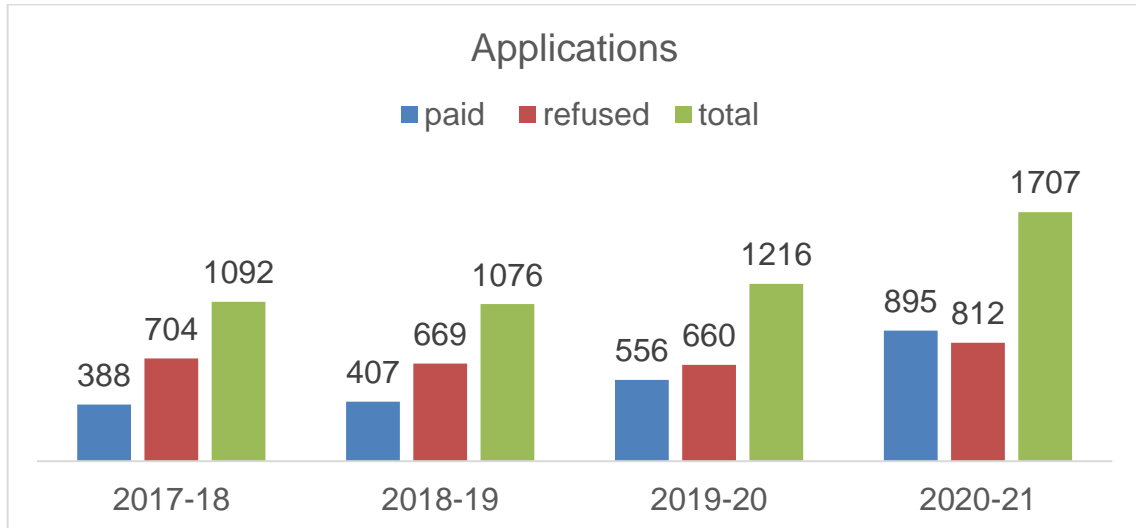
IT Reuse Scheme - Delivered by Community Furniture Store	Client digital inclusion - Delivered by Changing Lives	Digital service development - Delivered by Changing Lives
Development post 22.5/week		Digital inclusion coordinator post F/T
<p><b>Collect and receive:</b> We will develop facilities and a campaign to collect IT equipment donated by local people and through partnerships with businesses, schools, universities and other organisations.</p> <p><b>Refurbishment:</b> We will inspect and classify all donations before preparing them for reuse. All data will be eradicated before operating systems and core apps are reinstalled. Devices will be setup to meet the needs of particular user groups. This process will provide volunteering opportunities for people to learn new skills.</p> <p><b>Reusing it:</b> Refurbished devices distributed to deliver social benefit. We will work collaboratively to identify those who would most benefit from the scheme.</p> <p><b>Volunteer placements:</b> Recruit, train and support a volunteer team. Including providing training and volunteer placements for Changing Lives clients.</p>	<p>Coproduce a scheme to allocate equipment from the reuse scheme to people who are digitally excluded. Including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Application process for equipment from advice and support services across the City.</li> <li>- Receive and process applications and liaise with Community Furniture Store to identify and provide suitable devices.</li> </ul> <p>Work collaboratively to identify those who would most benefit from the scheme and promote the scheme across the city.</p> <p>Work with partners to develop affordable internet connectivity, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Managing funding allocation to provide connection/data packages</li> <li>- Gathering knowledge and links, signposting and referral routes with organisations providing low cost packages or funding.</li> </ul> <p>Work with partners to ensure people have access to support and training to use devices effectively. Gathering knowledge and develop signposting and referral routes with support and training providers, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CYC volunteers</li> <li>- Digital champions</li> <li>- York Learning</li> <li>- York Explore</li> </ul>	<p>Respond and build on the shift to delivery of services through digital channels by developing Changing Lives digital offer. Improve digital content, connectivity and communication with service users and stakeholders.</p> <p>Sharing good practice and learning to provide strategic and practical support not only for CL's services but to local partners around communication, social media digital service delivery</p>



## Discretionary Financial Support Summary Report April 2021

### York Financial Assistance Scheme (YFAS)

Total number of applications processed during financial year.



**Main reasons given for application**

% Applications

	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>
Exceptional pressures	19.2	18.9	29.9
No food	5.5	7.6	15.6
Emergency	11.7	9.4	11.0
Vouchers	3.9	4.6	9.5
Resettlement - homeless	9.7	8.1	7.8
Stay in the community	10.0	4.0	6.0
Fuel	7.3	10.0	16.9
Resettlement - other	7.1	8.4	3.9
Unknown	0.0	14.0	3.9
Repair	2.9	3.8	1.8
Debt	3.3	2.8	1.5
Expenses	0.4	0.2	0.9
Disaster	0.4	0.2	0.8
Benefit delay or Universal Credit	18.6	8.6	0.9

**Grant amounts awarded**

	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>
Average award	£396	£352	£455	£172
Lowest award	£20	£23	£20	£10
Highest award	£193	£1,961	£1,961	£2,324

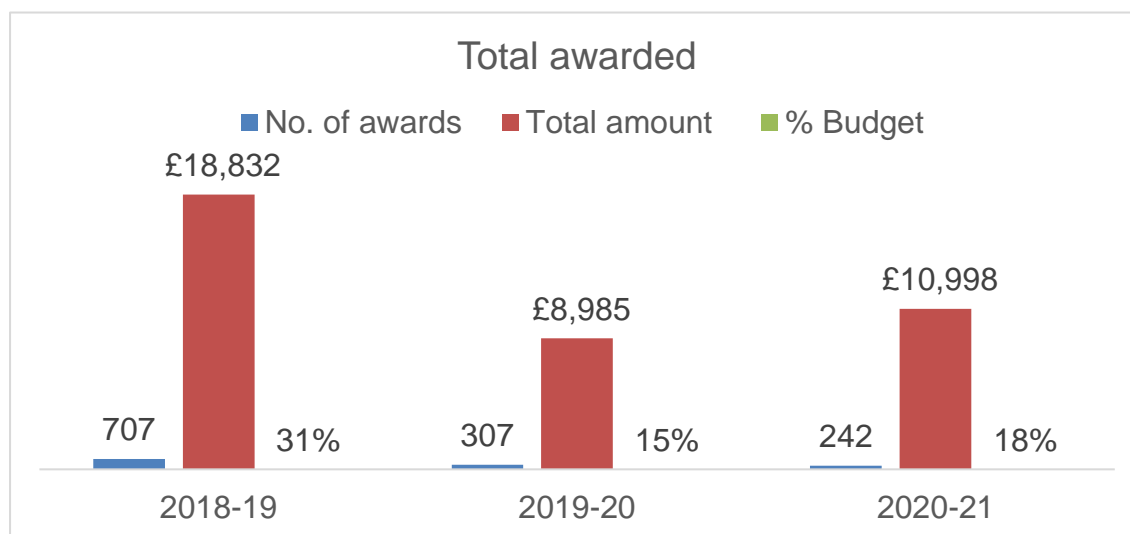
**Items awarded**

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Bed	43	45	31	66
Bedding	2	7	0	0
Clothing	98	4	3	17
Cooker	63	36	55	91
Curtains	30	10	18	21
Floor cover	48	36	36	37
Fridge	37	30	51	69
Large fridge	20	0	0	0
Fuel	189	67	100	46
Kitchen pk1	50	79	55	73
Kitchen pk3	2	4	5	3
Microwave	10	2	0	1
Removal	4	2	8	2
Repair	7	2	1	2
Resettlement packages	69	126	162	145
Sofa /chair	9	9	15	26
Supermarket vouchers	337	134	244	451
Table/ chair	1	0	0	0
Travel cost	26	0	7	13
Wardrobe	9	8	21	25
Washer	38	37	39	55
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>1092</b>	<b>638</b>	<b>851</b>	<b>1143</b>

**Requests for decisions to be reviewed**

	2017/18	2018/19	2019-20	2020-21
Decision overturned	27	41	23	18
Decision upheld	62	36	23	19
Total received	89	77	46	37

## Discretionary Council Tax Reduction



## Discretionary Housing Payment

The council received £298k in government funding for DHPs for 2020/21 in order to help with housing costs and has additional CYC budget of £27k in reserve. 436 DHP's were awarded, totalling £298,252. All the government allocation was spent plus an additional amount of CYC funding.

	2019/20		2020/21	
	£	%	£	%
Total DHP Fund available	£ 237,097	100%	£ 324,923	100%
Amount spent	£ 211,835	89%	£ 298,252	92%
Amount remaining	£ 25,262	11%	£26,671	8%