

Report of the Assistant Director, Customer & Digital Services

Winter Grants Scheme Funding

Summary

1. This paper recommends to the Executive Member for Finance & Performance in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing & Safe Communities, that the funding shortfall in maintaining the winter grants scheme to 31st March 2021 is met through the extended York Financial Assistance (YFAS) scheme. This was supplemented in 2020/21 by £1m of council funds to support residents in hardship during the covid pandemic.

Recommendations

2. The Executive Member is asked to approve:
 - a) Funding the winter grants scheme through to 31st March 2021 through use of the extended YFAS funding at an estimated cost of £200k.

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

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 is £416,729.

- 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. Takeup of the element of the grant for food and bills has been high and without additional funding being found will need to close within the next few weeks and possibly by week ending 5th Feb 2021.

Winter Grant Expenditure

- Table 1 below sets out the position of funding as at 5th February 2021.

Table 1

Winter Support Grants

05/02/2021

Households Helped =

739

Payments

	Food		Utilities		Mobile and Phones		Other		Total		split*
	No	£	No	£	No	£	No	£	No	£	
Household											
Families	572	£ 114,680.00	471	£ 52,637.07	96	£ 1,880.01	0	£ -	1139	£ 169,197.08	89%
Other	113	£ 12,790.00	81	£ 7,029.73	8	£ 319.99	0	£ -	202	£ 20,139.72	11%
Total	685	£ 127,470.00	552	£ 59,666.80	104	£ 2,200.00	0	£ -	1341	£ 189,336.80	
Split**	98.8%				1.2%						

No of applications received		1248
No of refused applications		167
No of pending applications		122
No of awarded applications		739
No of outstanding applications		220

Total Spend	£ 189,336.80
Budget	£ 216,729.66
% spent	87%

* 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

- The payments and outstanding applications in the table reflect December and January and with 2 months remaining. The request in this paper is for an additional £200k which will ensure adequate funding to the end of the 2020/21 financial year. The existence of the Winter Grant has, in effect, diverted some of the pressure that would have resulted in more claims to YFAS and so it is considered to be the appropriate source of alternative funding at this time.

Recommendations

8. This paper recommends that the Executive Member for Finance & Performance approves the additional funding of £200k to maintain the scheme to 31st March 2021. Any unused funding at the end of the scheme will be returned to YFAS.

Consultation

9. 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 scheme's promotion and this has been effective in providing support to over 600 financially vulnerable families across the city.

Implications

10.

Financial

The financial impact of this decision is that it will reduce the remaining balance of approximately £625k in the extended YFAS scheme by £200k in the current financial year. The Winter Grant has in effect supplemented the support intended by the YFAS scheme and the remaining balance will be carried forward in 2021/22 to continue to provide financial support to those families in hardship.

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

11. The key risk associated with this paper is that by providing this support there may be less money available in the 2021/22 financial year to continue supporting residents made financially vulnerable by the covid-19 pandemic.

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 5th February 2021

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:

[Agenda for Decision Session - Executive Member for Finance and Performance on Thursday, 3 December 2020, 10.00 am \(york.gov.uk\)](#)

Annexes

None